

Editorial

Civics and Citizenship Education in Its Global Context: The Complexity of Global Citizenship Dialogues

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Despite much rhetoric around the notion of a global citizenship, the overriding focus of civics education, from the viewpoint of examining the international educational curriculum, seems to be on national identity and establishing national boundaries for citizenship education. Historically, national identity and adherence to its definition has supported individual national states and, hence, traditions have been established that must now be renegotiated due to global forces without necessarily abrogating to them. Secondly, economic and security issues such as the Global Financial Crisis and 9/11 has led to a return of a more conservative view where at least the nation state is one which we understand and have some control over, whereas global communities are less predictable. Thirdly, civic knowledge in the citizenship curriculum is usually focused around national civic processes with less emphasis on international global structures. As Kennedy [1] points out in this Special Edition, social and personal aspects of civic and citizenship tend to be treated more often than political and global aspects despite the diversity of approaches taken internationally. Nevertheless from the diversity of viewpoints taken in this Special Edition, we can see that the idea of global citizenship is at the forefront of many educators' thinking and studies are exploring the myriad ways in how this may be apparent in schooling. This Special Edition includes authors from five different continents and examines data from school processes and procedures, multinational curriculum studies, students' views from emerging nations, from an ableism perspective, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) usage and broad global sustainability projects and how they could be implemented. Efforts to see the ways in which the national civics agendas are being played out in a global context and with global perspectives applied are significant. It is really a story in progress: despite some less than exemplary global rhetoric in school curriculum documents, there is a steady global activism from many quarters. Perhaps that is how citizenship education is best implemented? Questioning curriculum to see what is left out enables activism both from students and teachers and the many ways that civics

education is implemented internationally, from community service to learning formal governmental structures and processes, allows this diversity.

Kerry Kennedy from Hong Kong in his article ‘Global Trends in Civic and Citizenship Education: What Are the Lessons for Nation States?’ [1] establishes the broad dimensions of the quandary above by examining international comparative studies of civics and citizenship education to establish the extent to which they encompass global, as opposed to national, agendas. As he points out, although national agendas prevail, the global agenda is also evident. Other authors in this Special Edition provide some clear examples. David Zyngier (‘Rethinking the Thinking on Democracy in Education: What Are Educators Thinking (and Doing) About Democracy?’) [2] reminds us of the diversity of groups in a national context and how, even with the seemingly mono-voiced Australian educational community, that ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ views of democracy affect citizenship curriculum implementation. Teachers in schools surveyed tended to have a neoliberal view of democracy and saw their role as teaching *about* democracy, as opposed to teaching *for* democracy, with the aim of *doing* democracy. Global issues can be taught as ideas from afar or as ideas that can be acted upon; they can be seen simply as an extension of the longstanding debate concerning how best to teach citizenship. Alistair Ross from the United Kingdom in ‘Controversies and Generational Differences: Young People’s Identities in Some European States’ [3] provides a different perspective—an intergenerational one—when he explored young peoples’ views on national identity in newly formed national states in Europe. He found these younger people differentiated themselves from their parents and grandparents by establishing themselves as having both a national and a European identity. These identities were differentiated culturally and institutionally. Although it is easy to consider this could be unique to the newly formed states, the idea that there may be intergenerational differences in expressions of global citizenship is not often examined and could perhaps be studied further in more longstanding national states.

Teresa Sarmiento and Ilda Freire from Portugal provide some background to school reform in that country where schools encourage parents to be democratically involved in school practice. In ‘Making School Happen: Children-Parent-Teacher Collaboration as a Practice of Citizenship’ [4] they point out that using schools to teach citizenship is a very useful concept but, unless the school, the parents and the children all embrace the idea of citizenship, it will not work well. This harkens back to Zyngier’s [2] point that learning about democracy is one thing but learning to do it is so much more valuable. Partnership between school, child and parents provides strong foundations for ‘thick’ democracy.

Brad Maguth from the USA investigated ICT usage of Social Studies in what many would anticipate to provide some strong evidence of global citizenship in ‘Investigating student use of technology for engaged citizenship in a global age’ [5]. Although, as anticipated, he did find evidence of ICT enhancing students’ understanding of global events, issues and perspectives; and it assisted them to participate in global networks to communicate and collaborate with global audiences, it did not seem to lead to them advocating on global issues and acting globally. Presumably the motivation to act as a global citizen is not purely related to the ICT opportunity to do so. That does fit with what we know of motivation to act in citizenship issues generally. There is a link between this ICT study [5] and the study by Mat Jones, Narges Dailami, Emma Weitkamp, Richard Kimberlee, Debra Salmon and Judy Orme in the United Kingdom in ‘Engaging Secondary School Students in

Food-Related Citizenship: Achievements and Challenges of a Multi-Component Programme' [6]. A group of secondary schools participated in a Food for Life program where schools chose a series of activities to further the idea of 'food citizenship' where students become more aware of the local and global implications of the food they eat, from the personal health consequences to global economic and social issues associated with food. They found that although the 24 schools involved quite successfully implemented a series of useful initiatives, there did not seem to be long term change in student attitudes to food citizenship. They argued that coordination of initiatives and strong school leadership would provide better long term results, but perhaps also providing students with ways in which they can take the initiative and feel they can make a difference; in other words, an action focus and a critical pedagogy, may help too.

Lastly Gregor Wolbring from Canada in 'Citizenship Education through an Ability Expectation and "Ableism" Lens: The Challenge of Science and Technology and Disabled People' [7] provides a unique lens to the idea of global citizenship—to what extent is rhetoric around global citizenship ignoring the divide between those who are seen as 'able' to participate in the civics and citizenry and those who are not, and to what extent has this been changing? His notion of 'body able' being an unidentified constraint on citizenship, can also be used to consider how global citizenship provides an opportunity for those not previously able to participate in citizenship at all, due to poverty, nationality, health and so on, to now participate. The 'Ableism' lens, although arising from disability studies, can have wide ranging repercussions.

It has been a privilege to work with such talented authors and I hope readers learn as much, and feel as motivated, as I have been by the ideas expressed within this Special Edition's selection of articles.

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