

Global Citizenship Education: Challenges and Successes

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BOOK REVIEW

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSSES

REVIEWED BY

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Aboagye, Eva., & Dlamini, S. Nombuso (Eds.). (2021). *Global Citizenship Education: Challenges and Successes*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Pages: 344. Price: 65.00 CAD (hardcover).

Aboagye and Dlamini's recent publication gathers a rich array of Canadian perspectives on issues of global citizenship education (GCE). As suggested by the volume's title, the chapters highlight how globalization is both a source of "crises and challenges" and "a period of hope and opportunity" (p. vii) for educators, students, and citizens. While such framings are not new – it has been more than a decade since O'Sullivan and Pashby (2008) compiled a similar volume – *Global Citizenship Education* arrives amid renewed attention to issues of social justice, human rights, and environmental sustainability. Perhaps the most obvious example of globalization in 2021 lies in the COVID-19 pandemic, which has infected more than 240 million and killed nearly 5 million people worldwide (World Health Organization, 2021). Simultaneously, systemic reckonings are occurring with respect to anti-Black, anti-Asian, and anti-Indigenous racism (Government of Canada, 2021), and in response to the lingering effects of colonialism as exemplified by recent discoveries of hundreds of unmarked graves surrounding former Canadian residential schools (Mosby & Millions, 2021). As Aboagye and Dlamini highlight,

These ensuing world events have forced us to incessantly examine the importance of global citizenship education, because they present a challenge to core consolidated efforts aimed at promoting a world marked by principles of social justice and equity among interconnected world citizens. (p. 5)

The authors' calls for robust GCE are consistent with both Canadian and transnational goals. In Saskatchewan, for example, provincial curricula focus on developing "engaged citizens" who "contribute to the environmental, social, and economic sustainability of local and global communities" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 22). Ontario, similarly, has devised a strategy to provide students with "increased opportunities to develop global competencies" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 8). Transnationally, GCE advocacy is directly reflected in the United Nations' (2021) sustainable development goals and the OECD's (2018) global competence framework, both of which are referenced throughout the book. It is in this national and international context that Aboagye and Dlamini present what they describe as "an interlocking mosaic of descriptions of different aspects of global citizenship education" (p. 11).

The authors offer a variety of perspectives on how educators – particularly in higher education contexts such as social work, initial teacher education, and experiential education – can better foster their students' global competence while wrestling with "the intricacies of current world events" (p. 6). For example, in the context of teacher education, Beckford's chapter highlights the forthcoming ACDE Accord on Education for a Sustainable Future, contending that "initial teacher education should be ground zero for creating an environmentally literate global citizenship" (p. 94).

This book may be particularly useful to stakeholders

seeking to implement or enhance experiential learning programs with a focus on GCE. Service-learning, for example, is a focal topic in four separate chapters, detailing how both local and global initiatives can better attend to issues of social justice and global citizenship. As chapter author Gray-Beerman emphasizes, GCE is not merely a process of empathy-building, but of social action. Kester's chapter similarly recommends Peace Education as a means of "cultivat[ing] in learners the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviours upon which a culture of peace is predicated" (p. 68). While the authors vary in their approaches to GCE, there is a unifying argument that all of us – students, teachers, institutions, political systems – must take "responsibility for what happens outside of our doors" as members of this interconnected world (p. 23).

Importantly, the authors do acknowledge that there are "limits of this world togetherness" (p. 122), and that GCE does not inevitably lead to social justice and sustainability. One such example is the "recurring dilemma" between global citizenship as social empowerment and global citizenship as economics and labour exploitation (p. 8). For example, while the OECD (2018) does present GCE as a way for students "to live harmoniously in multicultural communities" (p. 4), the organization also sees GCE as centrally about learning "to thrive in a changing labour market" (p. 5). There is a very real risk that globalization seen through this lens will merely bring new forms of colonialism that reify economics and the global north (d'Agnese, 2015). In most cases the authors succeed in navigating these dilemmas, particularly in calling attention to "issues of power, hegemony, [and] colonialism" (p. 9).

Two caveats are worth noting. First, most of the book's examples of global citizenship center on North America, Europe, and the global north (e.g. p. 4, p. 37). This stems from the volume's Canadian lens: While some chapters draw from international contexts, the primary focus is on globalization *as it is experienced and enacted in Canadian higher education*. Relatedly, it strikes me that for a text that readily acknowledges the need to decolonize GCE, there are relatively few references to Indigenous or trans-systemic knowledge systems (Battiste & Henderson, 2021). In taking up GCE, we must ask – as Broom and Bai do in their chapter – "who benefits?" (p. 161). Whose perspectives are given precedence in discussing GCE? If we live in an increasingly connected world, who are we connected to, and to

what ends? While some of the articulated values of a "global community" are shared, they often differ; hence the editors' decision not to state a totalizing view of GCE or how it is manifested across contexts. Thus the book's Canadian focus is at once a strength and a limitation – rooted in a clear context, but perhaps limited in a truly global view of global citizenship education. As Canadian educators move forward with the task of navigating this globalized landscape, we must attend to these gaps. As chapter author Adjei observes, "even when social justice and global citizenship education is encouraged, there is still resistance to certain [topics] ... such as anti-black racism, whiteness and white privileges, and the history of Canada's colonialism and genocidal practices on Indigenous peoples" (p. 228). Readers would do well to consider how these issues are (or are not) taken up in their own contexts, and draw on the insights presented throughout this volume to further trouble our practice together.

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