# Towards an ethos of global citizenship education: some problems and possibilities

*The question of defining citizenship education has been a regular feature of this Journal. Graham Pike presents a perspective from Canada, which builds on the political context of our previous issue.*

The idea of global citizenship education has been pursued for over half a century. The development education, global education and world studies movements have all made significant contributions, especially in teacher education and curriculum development. In Canada, too, NGOs and teachers' associations have been to the fore in advocating a global perspective in the school curriculum, assisted notably by funding from the Canadian International Development Agency which established global education projects in eight out of ten provinces between 1987 and 1995. It is not the goal of this paper to reiterate arguments for global citizenship education; rather, to stimulate further debate by examining problems that global citizenship education has encountered, and to suggest some ways forward.

## The problematic concept of global citizenship
A fundamental principle of global citizenship models is that an individual's awareness, loyalty and allegiance can and should extend beyond the borders of a nation to encompass the whole of humankind. This is the bedrock upon which other dimensions of global citizenship are built. It is a principle that underlies much of my own, and others', work in global education and upon which associated curriculum and school reforms have been founded. My goal here is to critique this fundament of global citizenship, not in terms of its theoretical merit or even its desirability, but with a view to exposing some difficulties inherent in its implementation within schools. These difficulties will be summarised under six headings.

## 1. Citizenship is tied to nationhood
The idea of citizenship being defined 'by birthplace and bloodline' is as old as the concept of citizenship itself and certainly pre-dates nationhood. Over the past few centuries, citizenship and nationhood have become inextricably linked and the history of citizenship has become a struggle within nations to determine just who should, and should not, claim the right to be called a citizen. This process was born out of an exclusionary mindset and, to varying degrees, remains so today (Kingwell, 2000). In recent years, the impacts of globalisation have begun to challenge the logic of citizenship's fixed association with nationhood in two fundamental ways: firstly, the increasing influence of supra-national bodies has forced citizens to consider 'the inconsequence and impotence of national sovereignties' (Ignatieff, 1984) in determining their own fate; secondly, cross-border migration continues to transform many societies into complex pools of multiple ethnicities and nationalities.

In spite of these trends, the process of schooling remains a powerful force in maintaining the nation's hold on citizenship. Public education is a purveyor of national values and ideals, a perpetuator of the national status quo rather than an agent of social change. The traditional tenets of nationalism abound in schools today, from the deliberate focus on national history, geography and culture in various curricula, to the influence of everyday life in the classroom that fails to recognise the connectedness of individuals to global systems. Current debates on citizenship education are largely conducted on the understanding that citizenship is exclusively related to nationhood. If schools are to promote global citizenship as an ideal, the nationalist grip on schooling has to be loosened.

## 2. Globalisation does not nurture global citizenship
The needs of the global marketplace profoundly influence decisions over funding, curriculum and teacher education, with a view to producing graduates who can compete in the global economy. Entrepreneurial skills are paramount, learning is defined by outcomes that are measurable, a school's worth is judged by the quantifiable performance of its students. Some influences are unashamedly direct, such as the creeping privatisation of public education through corporate involvement in educational decision making and schools' sponsorship deals with transnational corporations (Barlow and Robertson, 1994). The ultimate products of such an educational process are not citizens but consumers. In affluent societies, consumerism has become a means by which we search for answers to a fundamental need, a sense of identity and belonging (O'Sullivan 1999).

Global citizenship, as defined above, seems unlikely to be fuelled by the juggernaut of globalisation, driven by the principles of profit, competition and efficiency. As Osborne (1996) notes, the claims of citizenship – whether national or global in orientation – will largely be ignored while schooling is oriented to the imperatives of the global economy.

## 3. We don't 'think globally'
The maxim 'think globally, act locally' combines in one pithy phrase the twin ideals of global citizenship advocates. Both, however, are problematic. The mechanistic thinking of the rational-industrial world view has hindered our ability to understand the big picture, to think globally. Our 'loss of the cosmological sense', suggests O'Sullivan (1999), is at the root of many global crises, notably our inability to live sustainably. Kingwell (2000) contends that the forces of economic globalisation demand that we remain disconnected, lest we should understand the less wholesome practices of the global

labour market and decide to reduce our consumer spending. Global thinking is not in the interests of the global market.

The mechanistic world view pervades our school systems, perpetuating difficulties in global thinking. The compartmentalisation of knowledge into rigid disciplines, the favouring of analytical over synthetic or relational thinking skills, the dearth of global and holistic perspectives, an obsession with the 'hard' sciences and concurrent suspicion of the 'soft' arts; such priorities within education reflect our collective inability – and, perhaps, our lack of will – to think globally. Until the dominant paradigms of schooling shift towards more holistic visions, thinking globally will remain an ideal.

## 4. We are less inclined to 'act locally'

The current interest in citizenship education in Western democracies would seem to stem, in part at least, from a concern over declining rates of participation in civil society. Voter turnout is falling; disenfranchisement among minority groups is rising; cynicism and apathy among young people are widely reported.

In the absence of any instruments of world government, active participation at a local level is of paramount importance. National citizenship continues, albeit imperfectly, despite citizens' lack of engagement, because the necessary civil and political structures are in place. Global citizenship is virtual; its essence depends upon the collective participation of citizens worldwide to give substance to an otherwise unrealisable ideal. As Hart (1992) has noted, schools' attempts at encouraging active participation among students, and thereby refining the necessary skills of global citizenship, are often more tokenistic than meaningful.

## 5. Post-nationalism is a luxury of the prosperous and secure

Advocates of global citizenship from Western industrialised countries would do well to remind themselves that their nation's stability is built upon a legacy of nationalism. The cosmopolitan ideal is the privilege of those who no longer have to fight for their national identity (Ignatieff, 1993). Even within our well-ordered nation states, regionalist and separatist passions frequently surface to challenge the model of citizenship that we have constructed. Racial conflict and violence are, in a different way, reminders that the benefits of national citizenship are not equally shared and still have to be fought for by some of our fellow citizens.

Tussles between nationalism and globalism occur in many education systems: Tye's (1999) survey of global education in fifty-two countries points to the persistence of nationalism as a major barrier to the spread of global education. Merryfield's (forthcoming) solution is to argue for a reconceptualisation of global education with a view to examining the assumptions underlying the earlier, Eurocentric and Cold War frameworks and illuminating the world views of the poor, oppressed and marginalised. Only when we have examined 'the pedagogy of imperialism', she contends, will global education become truly global. Such challenges highlight the elitism that can easily suffuse the rhetoric of global citizenship education: for millions of people worldwide who struggle for survival and the satisfaction of basic human rights, global citizenship is not even on the agenda.

## 6. Citizenship is an anthropocentric ideal

Throughout its history, the ideal of citizenship has had little to say about the conduct of humans in relation to other species, nor about the natural world in general. This anthropocentrism was heightened during the period of modernisation as nature came to be regarded as a stock of abundant resources to be used to create goods for human consumption. Citizenship was about the right to enjoy the fruits of industrial societies, not about individuals' responsibilities towards the planet. Our 'collective ecological blindness' (Wackernagel and Rees, 1996) has resulted in unsustainable patterns of living.

Citizenship education has traditionally reflected this anthropocentric stance; the dimension of environmental citizenship remains largely unexplored. Global education, too, has been critiqued from a biocentric perspective (Selby, 2000), based on the argument that interpretations of concepts such as interdependence are still infused with mechanistic rather than holistic thinking. Thus, nations and cultures – though regarded as dependent on each other – are not viewed as part of the entire biotic community. We have the opportunity to open up the citizenship debate, to argue that the rights and responsibilities of citizens should be conceptualised within the context of the interdependent relationship of humans and their environments.

## Some possible dimensions of an ethos of global citizenship in education

Notwithstanding the problems outlined above, the ideal of global citizenship education is worth further exploration. In an era of human history in which global interdependence is one of the defining characteristics, it is time for our understanding of citizenship – and citizenship education – to expand as an ideal that more closely befits the world we have created. More pragmatically, in an era in which the major engines of economic power, transnational corporations, have extended their allegiance and their influence beyond the borders of a single nation, it is surely time for global consumers to re-examine the responsibilities and privileges of living in a global community.

The arguments presented here do not call for an end to national citizenship, nor for the institution of world governance. Rather, they challenge educators to acknowledge the ever-changing patterns of relationships among human communities, and between humans and their environments, and to help students explore the implications of such trends in terms of their rights and responsibilities, their allegiances and loyalties, and their opportunities for meaningful participation. Citizenship may continue to be granted by the nation state for a long time to come, but that should not negate the exciting possibilities for the development of an *ethos of global citizenship* in our schools. Despite globalisation, it is the nation that will continue to provide citizens with their primary sense

of belonging. The challenge, however, is to imbue the concept of citizenship with an ethos that is global in its scope. While the state will confer the constitutional rights and duties of citizenship, education can play a critical role in expanding young citizens' understanding of the responsibilities, and potential pleasures, of living in a global community.

The following six dimensions would seem to be critical to the development of that ethos. They are offered as starting points for the discussion and evaluation of models of global citizenship education.

## 1. An expansion of loyalty
- an acceptance and valuing of multiple identities and loyalties, including family, community, region, bio-region, country, continent, species and planet
- an understanding that co-existent loyalties may conflict and a determination to use informed judgement in the resolution of such conflicts
- an understanding that loyalties may shift over time, that identity 'is no museum piece … but rather the endlessly astonishing synthesis of the contradictions of everyday life' (Galeano, cited in Murphy 1999: 147).

## 2. A critical appraisal of both nationalism and globalism
- a predisposition to critically assess the claims and conduct of national governments and transnational agencies from the perspectives of justice, equity and human rights
- an understanding that global interdependence does not necessarily result in equitable benefits to all parties
- an understanding that individual consumer decisions have multiple impacts in the global marketplace

## 3. The development of global thinking
- development of the skills of synthetic and relational thinking, to aid the process of seeing connections and relationships between various phenomena
- development of futures thinking skills, to provide insights into the interrelationship of past, present and future
- a deep understanding of the concept of sustainability and of its implications for present lifestyles and behaviour

## 4. Understanding citizenship as 'doing', not just 'being' or 'knowing'
- an understanding that action and participation are the essence of citizenship
- an understanding of the multiple roles that each citizen plays in the global community
- refinement of the skills and attitudes required to engage in constructive social change at local, regional, national and transnational levels

## 5. Acceptance of the moral responsibilities of global citizenship
- an understanding of the consequences of imperialism and of the present struggles for national identity taking place around the world

- an understanding of the effects of the attitudes and lifestyles of the affluent minority on the choices and freedoms of the poor, the dispossessed and the disadvantaged around the world
- a commitment to a continuous assessment of personal values and behaviour with a view to increasing actions that serve the needs of others

## 6. Understanding citizens' roles in determining the future of the planet
- an understanding of the interdependence of all life forms and of the importance of bio-diversity to the health of the planet
- an understanding that the functioning of the planet is increasingly dependent upon human wisdom and decision making
- development of the 'knowing, caring and practical competence ... of ecological literacy' (Orr 1992).

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