

Global Citizenship

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Abstract

This article draws attention to the keyword “global citizenship” through an analysis of the ambiguity of expectations of teachers from the Ontario curriculum documents. Particular reference is drawn to the citizenship education framework, an addition to the 2013 revision of Ontario Curriculum: Social Studies, Grades 1 to 6; History, and Geography, Grades 7 and 8. Teachers are seemingly charged with teaching students to be global citizens, with little indication as to what it means to be a global citizen. The vague expectation in the framework is an example of the history of the discrepancy in interpreting global citizenship as the phrase “global citizenship” is made up of an adjective and a noun which individually indicate particular attributions that do not make sense when used together. Using the OED definition as a starting point, this article defines “citizen” and “citizenship, in the context of globalization and examines the historical shifts in the allocation of rights and responsibilities, attributes of the terms, and how they came to be recognized globally, and eventually in schools.

Keywords: global, globalization, citizenship, curriculum, Ontario

Evelina Osiadacz graduated from the Master of Education Program at Brock University, with a specific focus on global citizenship and the discrepancy of the framework in Ontario curriculum documents. After researching the different ways in which teachers in Ontario approach global citizenship in their classrooms, Evelina intends to continue her research while living abroad to understand how global citizenship is interpreted, and to draw comparisons between methods in Ontario.

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The *Ontario Curriculum: Social Studies, Grades 1 to 6; History, and Geography, Grades 7 and 8, 2013* revision includes a citizenship education framework that directs teachers to provide students with opportunities “to learn about what it means to be a responsible, active citizen in the community of the classroom and the diverse communities to which they belong within and outside of the school,” (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 9). Similar frameworks have been implemented by other provincial Ministries of Education, but as I work in Ontario, I will use our provincial guidelines paradigmatically. By exercising responsibilities both locally and globally, the aim of the framework is to encourage students to assume roles as informed global citizens. In practice, however, global citizenship education means anything from attending a “Me to We” day to a sleepover in the gym without dinner to recognize global poverty and hunger. The term “global citizenship,” however, is not more clearly defined in the guidelines although there is a vague assertion that global citizenship should be included in the curriculum teachers are expected to teach. There are no clear guidelines, however, explaining how teachers are supposed to assess whether or not the curriculum expectations on global citizenship have been met. What a global citizen is and what the implications of assuming the responsibilities of a global citizenship are remains unclear.

The phrase “global citizenship” is made up of an adjective and a noun: “global” and “citizenship” are combined to indicate membership in a community made up of all the people in the world. As the term “citizenship” originated in the local and the particular and specified both rights and responsibilities, the idea that citizenship could be global presents immediate problems. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED, 2011) defines “citizen” as an inhabitant of a city or town, possessing civic rights and privileges. An early use of citizen is in *The Wycliffite Bible* (early version, c.1384) in Acts 21:39 where Paul associates himself with being a citizen from Tarsus, an ancient city in southern Turkey. Further uses indicate a similar pattern of a person or groups of people relating themselves as associated or obligated to specific places — William Caxton’s *Chronicles of England* (1480), Edward Earl of Clarendon’s *The History of the Rebellion III* (1704). The examples indicate a membership under the rule of a governing body, the point being that one does not assume the role of a citizen, but is somehow accepted into the privilege.

Once membership is identified, there are obligations that follow as the OED defines “citizenship” as the status of being a citizen, as well as the engagement in the duties and responsibilities of a member of society. John Howe’s *Blessedness of Righteousness* (1668) depicts a discussion regarding judgment day and how an apostle mentions that trade, business, and daily negotiations are responsibilities of their citizenships which will not matter when the Saviour comes. The religious context poses a debate on its own for believers and non-believers, but the central point is that the apostle confirms the understanding that citizenship duties are local. The expansion of a larger societal context is seen about a century later in 1783 in Thomas Paine’s *Thoughts on the Peace and the Probable Advantages Thereof to the United States of America* as Paine explains that citizenship is a national character and a distinction of a larger society shortly after the result of the American Revolution. There is a shift in addressing an individual as part of a local distinction, to identifying a person with a sense of rights and responsibilities to a larger domain, such as a country. Notable is Paine’s use of the word ‘citizenship’ as the description of belonging to a nation is spoken from a person of authority being one of the Founding Fathers of the United States.

If “citizenship” defines people living in space under the provision of a governed body with responsibilities, the question of belonging and the allocation of rights arises as world history depicts disparities in the allocation and access to rights. For example, pivotal historical events

exemplify citizenship as a discourse that is contingent on the cause and effect of events. Colonial domination stripped Indigenous people in the Americas and Australia of their cultures and rights to their own land (Darity, 2008). The transatlantic slave trade was one of the largest forced migrations in history, and the dispossessed people of the African diaspora were denied rights in the places where they were forced to be slaves (Moore, 2008). The Nazi removal of citizenship from the Jews and other groups began in Germany and spread to other European countries, depriving them of their rights, freedoms, and lives (Levine & Hogg, 2010). While these descriptions do not do these events and the people affected justice, the point is to identify that the deprivation of rights associated with being citizens of a place have had consequences for the globe, as well as the debate of who belongs and where. The result of mass migrations and the notion that rights and responsibilities can move beyond local distinctions initiates a movement in citizenship to adopt a global identification.

In the early twentieth century, as politics and economics became increasingly global rather than local affairs, educational discussions soon followed suit. “Globalization” is first recorded in 1930 in Boyd and Mackenzie’s *Towards New Education* in a discussion regarding a new vision of Western education indicating the integration of skills and ideas to global contexts. In their view, students are expected to gain competencies that allow them to be knowledgeable beyond their school and national communities. Globalization contributes to the understanding of a potential belonging to a broader category of belonging and responsibility. Movements towards human rights initiate the emergence of “global citizenship” since global issues-- such as access to clean water or climate change--are recognized as responsibilities of every inhabitant on the planet. The *Encyclopedia in Diversity in Education* identifies the emergence of global citizenship in the last decade of the 20th century, particularly in schools, as a response to the recognition of the need for humans to learn to live together (Banks, 2012). The shift into schools is a collective effort to changing societal understandings of human rights. The *Encyclopedia of Race and Racism* examines the acceptance of global communities when analyzing the rise of anti-American democracy after World War II and the Cold War (Kuhlenberg, 2013). The belief that certain races were unfit to participate in society highlighted the hypocrisy in American campaigns for defending democratic societies, thus initiating the extending of rights to different groups of individuals.

Considering the movement from local to global as pivotal in describing the status of citizens, “citizenship” emerges as a multi-dimensional concept that encompasses national identity, political and civic participation, and cultural belongings (Kymileka, 1998). The *Salem Press Encyclopedia* acknowledges that global citizenship has multiple connotations, but it is most often used in relation to global advocacy (Bullard, 2017). Thus, adherence to global advocacy is the target of school practices in Ontario that seemingly respond to the call to be global citizens. Classrooms may focus on in-class discussions about rights of children, whereas others may venture to another country as a charitable trip to experience the inequality of water distribution (UNICEF n.d; WE Charity, 2017). There are no scales to determine which practice is most relevant to being a global citizen. Questions such as: “who determines global responsibilities?” and “how are global rights maintained?” do, however, repeatedly emerge. The ambiguity of “global” and “citizenship” together reveal that the term is too vague to be useful. Ontario educators remain charged with the responsibility to inspire global citizens under a framework that seemingly is not supported or applicable globally.

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