

Chapter 35

Exploring Humanitarian Law: Tools and Methods for Fostering Global Citizenship

Mary Jane Harkins

Mount Saint Vincent University, Canada

Taunya Pynn Crowe

Cobequid Educational Centre, Canada

Catherine Baillie Abidi

Saint Francis Xavier University, Canada

Renata Verri

Horton High School, Canada

ABSTRACT

Valuing diverse perspectives is a key feature of critical pedagogy and global citizenship. Exploring tools, methods, and partnerships that foster dialogue, critical thinking, and respect for diversity in relation to teaching and learning is the topic of this research. The purpose of this theoretical piece was to explore the curriculum resource, Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL) to determine if this approach (a) promotes youth engagement in critically analyzing humanitarian issues and (b) fosters global citizenship. The benefits and challenges of an interprofessional collaboration to implementing EHL were also considered. This exploration was based on Paulo Freire's reflective inquiry and critical responses to learners' needs. The data was generated through a focus group session with members of an interprofessional team involved in EHL. Four key themes emerged from the discussion: (a) student engagement, (b) fostering global citizenship, (c) teaching tools, and (d) interprofessional teamwork and sustainability.

Exploring Humanitarian Law: Methods for Fostering Global Citizenship

While supporting a teacher in an inner city school I saw the impact of youth learning about humanitarian law and engaging with Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL) first hand. After a couple of weeks in the classroom I started to notice the attendance

and class participation increasing during global history classes. By the end of the EHL modules, two students who had previously struggled with attendance, behaviour, and coursework completion created a video exploring the impacts of war on children. These two students were able to share their video with peers to promote awareness of the impacts of war and were invited to present their work at a teacher conference. According

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to their parents, their children had never before expressed such excitement about school or global issues. —study participant

INTRODUCTION

The impact of war and armed conflict is an unfortunate and ever present reality. Since World War II, over 190 armed conflicts have occurred, and in the last century over 191 million people have died from war-related activity (World Health Organization, 2002). War directly or indirectly affects everyone. In order to challenge the normalization of violence, it is critical that we focus on developing skills in conflict transformation and nonviolence. One avenue for transforming conflict is through education that promotes respect and value for human dignity and life. Humanitarian law education is one such example because international humanitarian law is built upon a universal foundation of respect for humanity. Teaching and learning about humanitarian law and the impact of armed conflict can create spaces for critical dialogue and for valuing diverse perspectives, two essential elements for building peace (Baillie Abidi & Harkins, 2012; Tawil, 2000).

The purpose of this theoretical study is to explore how teaching and learning about humanitarian law using the educational resource *Exploring Humanitarian Law* (EHL) can enrich learning beyond the classroom walls and enhance critical thinking about violence. EHL was created by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Education Development Centre (EDC) to promote respect, humanity, and solidarity as well as to engage youth in dialogue about humanitarian law and action. The tools and methods encompassed in EHL are rooted in a critical pedagogical framework that encourages reflection, dialogue, critical thinking, and above all, respect for others. This chapter will explore moments in teaching to consider how critical pedagogy and collaborative partnerships can foster global citizenship.

BACKGROUND: ENGAGING YOUTH TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Global Citizenship and Teaching Humanitarian Law

Awareness and understanding of the rules of armed conflict, otherwise known as international humanitarian law (IHL), is best known by those who study it; the practitioners and lawmakers who work with it; and the combatants who are expected to uphold it. Nevertheless, awareness, understanding, and respect for IHL are relevant and necessary for all people (Henckaerts & Doswald-Beck, 2005; Sassoli & Bouvier, 1999), especially given the reality of globalization today (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2006; Tawil, 2000). In fact, states are legally bound to disseminate and promote respect for the Geneva Conventions of 1949 (International Committee of the Red Cross, 1949). Education on the rules of war and the promotion of mutual respect are essential learnings for all societies directly or indirectly affected by armed conflict (International Committee of Red Cross, 2006; Tawil, 2000).

IHL education is widely accepted as an important curricula outcome given the increasing global exposure and impact of conflict today (International Committee of Red Cross, 2004 & 2006; Kadam, 2001; Tawil, 2000). In the context of Canadian secondary schools, conflict-related education is largely located in Social Studies curricular outcomes, which focus almost exclusively on past conflicts and place little or no emphasis on humanitarian law. The exclusion of outcomes dedicated to contemporary conflicts is problematic. According to Davies (2007), understanding current conflict contexts within global citizenship education is “the most outstanding need of learners” (p.74). Freire (1973) also stressed the importance of using real-world social issues in learning to enable critical thinking and to create spaces for personal reflection about how we each connect to the issue. The ramifications of limited

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