

Chapter 17

Band–Aid Pedagogy, Celebrity Humanitarianism, and Cosmopolitan Provincialism: A Critical Analysis of Global Citizenship Education

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ABSTRACT

The notion that our identity transcends local and national borders, captured in the now ubiquitous concepts of the “global” or “world” citizen, has had an important influence on educational curricula in recent years. The idea of global citizenship has evolved in part as a result of a growing awareness that trends, events, and political-economic arrangements in one part of the world can profoundly impact lives far away (Tully, 2009). The formal education sector is increasingly recognized as having an important role to play in the alleviation of global crises and injustices by cultivating informed and ethical “global citizens” who understand the asymmetries of economic globalization and who are motivated to redress social and global injustices (Dower, 2003; Schattle, 2008; Tully, 2009). While traditionally geared towards developing a sense of national identity and loyalty, citizenship curricula are increasingly being re-formulated to cultivate citizens who possess multiple identities, and a sense of belonging which embraces global as well as local and national perspectives (Reid & Gill, 2010). Citizenship education, as a discrete area of study, is now a compulsory subject in schools in many countries, and the “global dimension” is seen as an important aspect of this curriculum. Drawing on the Republic of Ireland as a case study, this chapter offers a critical exploration of dominant discursive representations of development and “the global” as they are articulated in citizenship education textbooks designed for use with lower secondary students. The analysis suggests that global citizenship, as it is currently conceived in state-sanctioned curriculum resources, is unlikely to foster the kinds of individual and collective action necessary for a substantively more equitable relationship between the First and Third Worlds to be forged.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-61350-332-4.ch017

INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to critically explore the global dimension as it is articulated in the formal curriculum in the Republic of Ireland, one of the “Northern” countries within which has been an increased statutory commitment and investment in more global versions of citizenship education in recent years.¹ Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) was introduced as a compulsory subject at lower secondary level in schools in 1997; in 2009, a national-level public consultation on a draft syllabus for an optional upper secondary (senior cycle) version of the subject, titled *Politics and Society*, was initiated. In 2010, the syllabus was approved by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), a statutory body with responsibility for advising the Minister for Education on curriculum and assessment and a final decision will soon be made by the Department of Education and Skills as to whether citizenship education will be offered as a senior cycle subject.

Using critical discourse analysis as a methodology for analysis (Fairclough, 2003), and drawing on representative examples from citizenship education textbooks designed for use with lower secondary students, this chapter seeks to examine how knowledge about global and development issues is constructed, and how the developing world is made intelligible to young people in an Irish context. At the heart of the analysis is an examination of the kinds of development intervention and activism that are made possible, or indeed precluded, by the images and discourses they make available (Doty, 1993). Focusing on how development and global issues are represented, and in particular on how specific development “problems” and “solutions” are constructed, I argue that dominant curricular constructions of development and global issues offer limited scope for understanding the complexity of global injustices or informing the practice of solidarity with inhabitants of the majority world, thereby

acting as a barrier to, as opposed to an enabler of, social transformation.

The chapter is organized as follows: Firstly, I provide a brief overview of recent scholarship on the evolution of global citizenship education. This is followed by an account of the methodological, conceptual and theoretical frameworks guiding the study. I then examine dominant representations of development and “the global” as they are articulated in citizenship education texts designed for use in Irish (lower) secondary schools, and present evidence which questions the emancipatory aims and potential of state-sanctioned versions of global citizenship education. Contrary to an ambitious agenda wherein citizenship education is increasingly recognized as having a key role to play in building a deeper understanding of the causes and complexities of poverty and underdevelopment (Irish Aid, 2007), the analysis identifies a number of interrelated discursive representations of development which work collectively *against* the likelihood of state-sanctioned versions of citizenship education from realizing this ambitious goal. I argue that the sanitized version of global citizenship within textbooks is unlikely to foster the kinds of social action necessary for a substantively more equitable relationship between the First and Third Worlds to be forged. I conclude with a consideration of those pedagogical spaces that are opened up through the absences and contradictions identified within the analysis for the production of critically reflexive global citizens and stresses the need for a far more critical interrogation of development and the development industry itself as a significant lens through which to “read” the word.

THE EVOLUTION OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Educating for global citizenship has been in existence, under various labels and guises, for more than a half a century, with references to global

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