COMMENT TO "POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES ON GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION"

Edited by Vanessa de Oliveira Andreotti and Lynn Mario T.M. de Souza

DELVING DEEPER INTO THE THIRD GENERATION OF DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

We have in front of us a chorus of voices orchestrated by the inter-oceanic connection between Finland and Brazil, between Professor Vanessa Andreotti (University of Oulu) and Professor Lynn Mario T. M. de Souza (University of Sao Paulo). This publication is possibly the “coming of age” of an outstanding book that is the fruit of five years' work by both as editors of the online journal “Critical Literacy: Theories and Practices”, in which they have brought together diverse authors to reflect upon Development Education from a critical education perspective. This book and the journal complement one another by virtue of the TOE project (www.throughothereyes.org.uk) as well as Andreotti's recent publication: “Actionable Postcolonial Theory in Education (Postcolonial Studies in Education)”. These joint initiatives enable us to gain a better understanding of the context of this book and Development Education from a postcolonial perspective.

The work is split into three equal parts, which, via more than fifteen authors, will constitute a consideration of the different aspects and potential of Development Education from a postcolonial perspective.

The first part entails the perspective of four authors on the conceptualisation of Global Citizenship Education from a postcolonial perspective. Firstly, K. Pashby (University of Toronto) analyses the concept and influence of our current imperialistic education model, viewing it from a critical perspective; to go beyond this model she proposes the postcolonial focus as a tool for “re-learning” and poses the question of for whom and by whom is this re-learning. The response clearly deals with both the “whoms” as well as the method. In the “conflict of diversity”, Pashby visualises meeting points, shared networks and common thinking that enable the construction of alternative education for all.

Secondly, D. Jefferess (University of British Colombia) studies the DE model by focusing on benevolence and compares the approaches of Nigel Dower and de Kwame A. Appiah, as well as the initial focus of his own University on global citizenship. Jefferess proposes going beyond these approaches to work with a pedagogy of “unsettling cosmopolitanism”, whereby there

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are two definitions of the author’s stance, “I want to define global citizenship as a process of unlearning the structures of attitude and reference of benevolence which informs humanitarian discourses of aid, philanthropy or help.” The correction of the effects of supportive paternalism is noteworthy as it becomes the definition of this new development education, as we can see in a positive light: “The pedagogy of de-situation I present here looks to place the emphasis on the need to alter our material and conceptual positions regarding others that know about us or are grateful for their humanity, in an abstract sense. This de-situation is pretentious insofar as it reaffirms the need for a first-third world subject to act, or behave, in everyone’s interests.”

In the third chapter, Colin Wright (University of Nottingham) continues to delve deeper into the idea of cosmopolitanism. The backbone of both Wright and Jeferess’ approaches question the concept of cosmo-politan as a construction of a common global tradition with a common language and a common and universal philosophy for humanity. The authors understand this perspective and the way it has been implemented as a front for imperialism, whereby in actual fact what is being developed (or imposed) is a particular vision of this imaginary heritage. Therefore, in opposition to this Eurocentric universalism, the author sets forth what he calls “divisive universalism” (a potentially ambiguous term) and opens a debate on how it can be developed; the author believes that the main characteristic is that it is not given or imposed universalism.

The final contribution in this sphere of concepts is by one of the editors, Lynn Mario T.M. de Souza (University of Sao Paulo), who sets out from an indigenous perspective and its conflicts with official policies. Although there is a certain “disorder” perceived in the indigenous proposals, the author insists that proof and a challenge of diversity can be found - the “unification” of many proposals of global citizenship education (GCE) means that many voices belonging to this diversity are suffocated. She emphasises GCE that critically and fully takes into account Levinas’ vision of The Other, as someone radically different from oneself.

The second and most extensive part is the selection of critical studies on different GCE practices. The first study is by T. Zemach-Bersin (University of Yale) as she examines language and content of the U.S. GCE in ‘study abroad’ programmes. The analysis indicates that the vision of global citizenship applied, in this case, to the studies encompasses a materialistic vision of its presence in other countries; an uncommitted vision of the reality it comes from, devoid of a critical vision of all the places it goes to. Therefore, the author calls for a critical, not neutral, new or universal GCE in apolitical terms.

The second study is presented by P. Tarc (University of Western Ontario), who considers a twenty-first century vision of international education and compares it with GCE, a twenty-first century vision. He believes that the first was the object of dreams and good ideas, which, although was “captured” by liberal ideas, with the passing of time in some way was cancelled out between national interests and positioned ideas. He subsequently studies what certain organisations consider as GCE and finds that there is little difference between the previous internationalist education. This presents a challenge given that GCE today can be found in a very different context to the twentieth century notion. With this in mind, the author stresses the importance of considering “the action”.

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2 Page. 40
In the third study N. Cook (Brock University) returns to the idea of benevolence through the “helping imperative” as opposed to “critical literacy”. The aim of his article is to carry out research into the effect of the work of development techniques with this idea of helping; therefore, by means of interviews in voluntary services, he observes the bias found in the results that move in the opposite direction to that which is desired. The direction that transforms, he concludes, will be the critical literacy: “Critical literacy encourages a respect for difference, as opposed to ethnocentric judgements and ‘civilising’ agents.”

The fourth study is by N. Stevenson (University of Nottingham) as he looks into the Make Poverty History, drawing from the perspectives of Franz Fanon, Paulo Freire and Guy Debord. The author sets forth the consideration of what we consider a “good society” and the repercussions of the concept of citizenship. The fifth study is by A. A. Abdi and L. Shultz (University of Alberta) who look at the concept of citizenship in Sub-Saharan Africa. Its interpretation is critical in the sense of being a concept in itself and is distanced from the reality of the continent. To resolve this, they propose a “prospectus” of decolonisation that helps to transform the image of “de-citizenship”. This section finishes with a compelling and significant poem by Shultz: Youth Study Tour to Africa.

The third and last part deals with how to create postcolonial space and how to approach GCE in another way. The first article, by L. Taylor (Bishop’s University), proposes going beyond paternalism. To this end he studied the perceptions of a group of professors in a course on difference and social construction. In the second article, S. Khoo (National University of Ireland) studies the dilemmas and ambiguity of GCE in a globalised postcolonial University like her own; she studies its history and insertion in the capitalist perspective over the last century, leading her to examine whether global citizens can really be educated in a postcolonial world through the University.

The last article features V. Andreotti alongside C. Ahenakew (University of Calgary) and G. Cooper (University of Canterbury-New Zealand) and considers the idea of religion, faith and myth in different cultures and peoples. Although using religious themes, it mainly attempts to express the importance of diversity in constructing citizenship. The authors stress not only the need for social justice, but also to widen it to embody “cognitive justice”, explaining the right to develop independent thought under other social schemes, cultures... The article also features an interesting example of a “medicine wheel” that clearly illustrates the authors’ arguments.

In short, what we have is a comprehensive publication that takes a deeper look at the different situations and dilemmas involved in proposing education for postcolonial citizens in a world that is only postcolonial in theory. In my opinion this focus naturally encompasses the approach started by Paulo Freire in widening the terrain it is established on and strengthening it even further. Thus it would involve developing what is called in Spain third generation Development Education in every way, shape and form. I believe that this perspective more than adequately incorporates the fourth generation (which reflects the complexity) and faces a significant challenge in what is referred to as the fifth generation and its commitment to networks and policy making. My impression is that the philosophical framework is already in place and is particularly thought-provoking. What we are left with is to see how the
pedagogical and didactical tools to “open doors” of postcolonialism are developed and arrive to people ‘under construction’, those that are developing their own paradigms.

CONTENTS

Introduction: (Towards) Global Citizenship Education ‘Otherwise’ Vanessa de Oliveira Andreotti and Lynn Maria T. M. de Souza


2. Unsettling Cosmopolitanism: Global Citizenship and the Cultural Politics of Benevolence David Jefferess

3. Postcolonial Cosmopolitanisms: Towards a Global Citizenship Education Based on ‘Divisive Universalism’ Colin Wright

4. Engaging the Global by Re-situating the Local: (Dis)locating the Literate Global Subject and his View from Nowhere Lynn Mario T. M. de Souza

Part 2: Critiques of GCE Initiatives: Policies, Campaigns, Study Abroad and Volunteering Schemes

5. Entitled to the World: The Rhetoric of U.S. Global Citizenship Education and Study Abroad Talya Zemach-Bersin


7. ‘I’m Here to Help’: Development Workers, the Politics of Benevolence and Critical Literacy Nancy Cook

8. Making Poverty History in the Society of the Spectacle: Civil Society and Educated Politics Nick Stevenson

9. Recolonized Citizenships, Rhetorical Postcolonialities: Sub-Saharan Africa and the Prospects for Decolonized Ontologies and Subjectivities Ali A. Abdi and Lynette Shultz

10. Youth Study Tour to Africa (poem) Lynette Shultz

Part 3: Creating Postcolonial Spaces: Global Citizenship Education ‘Otherwise’

11. Beyond Paternalism: Global Education with Preservice Teachers as a Practice of Implication Lisa Taylor

12. Re-Routing the Postcolonial University: Educating for Citizenship in Managed Times Su-ming Khoo

13. Equivocal Knowing and Elusive Realities: Imagining Global Citizenship Otherwise Vanessa de Oliveira Andreotti, Cash Ahenakew and Garrick Cooper