Globalisation and citizenship education

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Additional Information:


Metadata Record: https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/615

Publisher: © Taylor and Francis

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ABSTRACT This article discusses the notion of globalisation by reference to several of its proponents and critics. Issues of citizenship education in an era of global electronic communications are examined and the author argues that citizenship education that has a global dimension will necessarily be concerned with economic, social and political inequalities between citizens both within and between nation states. Global divisions involve fundamental inequalities of resources, rights to residence and much else. Since globalisation invokes differing responses from citizens around the world and within nation states it is likely that global citizenship education will have varied effects.

Introduction

Globalisation and citizenship are terms that have become part of public as well as academic discourse. Neither is new and both are ‘contested’ concepts because they involve inter alia arguments about politics, identity, rights, status differentiation, equality and inequality. The notion of citizenship goes back at least to ancient Greece. The Athenian city-state males who populate Aristotle’s The Politics are distinctive citizens who share a privileged status. They are differentiated from others within and outside the state by the qualities and characteristics required by their status and by the rights and conditions without which it would not be possible for them to perform the role of citizen (Hindess, 1998). The notion of globalisation also involves ideas about the status and rights of citizens but on a global rather than city or nation state basis. The notion of a ‘fearful spectre’ of global capitalism sweeping all national politics and culture before it is at least as old as Marxism. Whereas, for Ulrich Beck (2000) globalisation is a current ‘scare-word’ said to point not to an end of politics but to its escape from the categories of the national state, and even from schema defining what is ‘political’ and ‘non-political’ action.
During the latter part of the twentieth century, and at the beginning of the twenty-first, citizens are urged to ‘think globally and to act locally’ and the young are said to be willing and able so to do. The notion of ‘global citizenship education’ is thought to be made more possible through the power of the Internet and other electronic media. Educationists are expected and required to teach children about citizenship, its meaning for action locally and its global implications. The idea of ‘global citizenship’ is codified in school curriculum requirements often with little or no reference to the problematical character either of the concept of ‘globalisation’ or of ‘citizenship’. Nevertheless, this article argues that for the purposes of school-based teaching, the notion of global citizenship education appears workable as long as it recognises and acknowledges the limits of action of individual citizens confined as they are within the legal and political structures of the nation state and, in the case of members states such as the United Kingdom, the European Union (EU). Such recognition is worthwhile education in itself and is in contrast with the rather sweeping and sometimes overly optimistic, sometimes overly pessimistic, ideas that characterise many accounts of globalisation and its effects. For example, a highly optimistic note was sounded at the EU Lisbon summit 2000 – dubbed the ‘dot com’ summit – where it was suggested that a ‘sea change’ in economic policies of the EU, grasping the opportunity to modernise using the global power of the Internet, might lead to the creation of 20 million jobs in EU member states. On a rather less optimistic note, the World Water Forum meeting in the Netherlands during the same month, reminded observers that a third of the citizens of the world are without a clean water supply. Modern lessons in global citizenship will show that, as in the ancient world, there is differentiation today in people’s access to goods and services, and differentiated rights, powers and privileges.

Globalisation in Question

Proponents of the idea of globalisation see evidence of it almost everywhere – written on advertising hoardings, soft drinks cans, and on the walls and roofs of hotels and fast-food restaurants around the world. Even before the recent agreement on China joining the World Trade Organisation (WTO) there were said to be twenty-eight McDonald’s hamburger restaurants in Beijing alone. In Tian’anmen Square, citizens and tourists queuing outside Mao’s mausoleum are marshalled by other citizens wearing white baseball caps bearing the logo VOLVO. The ancient buildings in the Forbidden City bear discrete plaques acknowledging the help of American Express with the cost of their maintenance. On the other side of the globe, in Latin America, rainforests are destroyed with the use of logging equipment designed and built in North America and owned by companies registered there. Oil is extracted from countries across Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere by corporations with globally recognised names. Of course, anti-globalisation,
anti-capitalist campaigners organise against many of these corporations, pointing to the damage they inflict on the environment and the exploitative effects on peoples around the world. Sports equipment sold for tens of dollars in the West is manufactured in less prosperous counties often by the nimble fingers of children who receive a few cents for their labour. And, of course, more comfortably-off European workers are affected too as their employers strive to cut costs.

Ulrich Beck’s account of a scene at Berlin’s Tegel Airport is often cited as an illustration of globalisation and of the savings to be made by corporations operating globally. During the evening, airport announcements heard in Berlin are made from California because the time-difference allows an American worker to be paid a day-time rate whereas a German worker would have to be paid more for late-working. Of course, Beck’s intention is not to condone the practice but, rather, involves a celebration of the capacities of global telecommunication. However, the cost of airport announcements is minuscule by comparison with other costs involved in turning round an airliner – cleaning the passenger cabin, restocking the galley, refuelling the aircraft and carrying out routine maintenance checks. The international airliner, that most ‘global’ of entities (leaving aside orbiting spacecraft) has its conditions of production and maintenance firmly rooted in nation states. And air travel between nation states can only occur with prior agreement between those states whose airspace is to be over-flown.

Notwithstanding Beck’s enthusiasm for the notion of globalisation, he suggests that ‘the concept and discourse of globalisation are so fuzzy. To pin them down is like trying to nail a blancmange to the wall’ (Beck, 2000, p. 20). In common with other writers, Beck makes reference to Karl Marx and Frederick Engels’s Manifesto of the Communist Party, to demonstrate that globalisation is not a new phenomenon.

In 1848 Marx and Engels saw capitalist relations of production spreading across the ‘whole surface of the globe’ revolutionising or destroying all ‘old-established national industries’. The globalisation of capitalist relations of production and the development of new modes of consumption involved what Marx and Engels saw as a revolution in social relations so that ‘in place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible’ (reprinted in Marx & Engels, 1968).

In fact, during the nineteenth century the nation state increased in importance and ‘global relations’ during the twentieth century were characterised by wars between nations. The ending of each of these wars led to agreements, often weighted against the losers, and to the signing of treaties. Increasingly, economic agreements and treaties came to dominate the relations between nation states. Today, what is commonly referred to as
the ‘global economy’ is best seen as international because, as Hirst & Thompson (1996) argue, economic flows across national boundaries are largely dependent on conditions made possible by treaties among and between nation states. Within larger entities such as the European Union, the nation state remains crucially important. Intergovernmental conferences involving ongoing negotiations over treaties and agreements affect a wide range of economic and social relations. The consequences for individual citizens and for the politics of each nation state are manifest. A current example is the issue of the United Kingdom’s decision whether or not to join the European single currency. Of course, EU membership has had highly significant consequences for domestic politics not only in the UK but also for other EU member states.

Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson’s Globalisation in Question (1996) provides detailed and convincing argument for regarding supposed ‘globalisation’ as a matter of international relations. Whilst not seeing globalisation as a blancmange difficult to nail down, they do accept that there are so many versions of the globalisation thesis that it would take a lifetime’s work to review them all. If there are those who would use the term ‘globalisation’ to characterise the international economy then ‘so be it’. However, they argue that the present highly internationalised economy is not unprecedented and that, in some respects, ‘the current international economy is less open and integrated than the regime that prevailed from 1870 to 1914’. They also point out that intercontinental communication via telegraph cables laid on the seabed became possible during the second half of the nineteenth century. In many ways, this involved a more important shift than the move to computer technology during the latter part of the twentieth century (also see Gray, 2002).

Of course, today’s systems make possible faster and qualitatively different modes of international communication both for individuals and for companies. Nevertheless, Hirst & Thompson argue that genuinely transnational companies appear to be relatively rare and that ‘most companies are nationally based and trade multinationally on the strength of a major national location of production and sales, and there seems to be no major tendency towards the growth of truly international companies. Capital mobility is not producing a massive shift of investment and employment from the advanced to the developing countries. Rather, foreign direct investment is highly concentrated among the advanced industrial economies and the Third World remains marginal in both investment and trade, a small minority of newly industrialising countries apart’. As even some of the:

extreme advocates of globalisation recognise, the world economy is far from being genuinely ‘global’. Rather, trade, investment and financial flows are concentrated in the Triad of Europe, Japan and North America and this dominance seems set to continue. These major economic powers, the G3, thus have the capacity, especially if they coordinate policy, to exert powerful governance pressures over financial
Global markets are thus by no means beyond regulation and control, even though the current scope and objectives of economic governance are limited by the divergent interests of the great powers and the economic doctrines prevalent among their elites. (Hirst & Thompson, 1996)

The prospect for the future is the further development of a newly regionalised international economy, dominated essentially by the G3, involving negotiation between the major players and other lesser parties.

Richard Falk (1993, 1999) is content with the term ‘globalisation’ but usefully distinguishes between what he calls ‘globalisation from above’ and ‘globalisation from below’. Globalisation from above involves those market-oriented tendencies that are dominated by transnational corporations and international banks operating in collaboration with leading nation states – typically the G7. Globalisation from below involves those social forces, movements, voluntary, non-government organisation that seek to promote ‘global civil society’; a community beyond the territorial state committed to human rights, economic fairness, social justice and environmental sustainability. It is tempting to regard ‘education’ as best placed on this side of the equation but it must be borne in mind that international bankers and the managers of transnational corporations are also the beneficiaries of ‘education’.

The meeting of the World Trade Organisation in Seattle in December 1999 saw the emergence (on the streets and on television screens around the globe) of a particular manifestation of these forces as a movement of resistance to globalisation from above. Subsequent meetings of the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the G7 have attracted large and often violent protests by those opposed to organisations which they regard as agents of global capitalism operating a world economy in an anti-democratic fashion. Falk argues that the forces of globalisation from above are much stronger than the forces challenging them. The latter are relatively weak and disorganised. Some anti-capitalist/anti-globalisation protesters resort to smashing McDonald’s plate-glass windows and attacking the facades of banks and other manifestations of international capitalism. Others engage in a moral critique of capitalism and organise worldwide boycotts of the products of international corporations. Yet others, often but not always from a religious standpoint, propound ideas of ‘One World Governance’.

The new millennium and easy access to Internet website design software lead to as proliferation of quasi-religious ‘one world’ and other kinds of anti-globalisation movements. The capacity to organise demonstrations using Internet chat-rooms and email also alerted local police forces. A routine has been quickly established so that at the venue of the next meeting of the WTO, IMF, G7, G8 etc., a ring of steel fencing is erected, water cannon are summoned and television cameras put in place to transmit images of violent protest around the globe. Such images are not without effects or
consequences. They provide a kind of education in themselves, and probably do significant damage to the anti-globalisation/anti-capitalism movement. A recent survey by *YouGov* for the *New Statesman* suggests that a significant majority of 16-25 year olds in Britain ‘approve of global capitalism’ (Kellner, 2002). Away from the media glare that surrounds the meetings of the ‘world leaders’, but still attracting the attention of the protesters, other forces of ‘globalisation from above’ seek means by which to enhance and sustain their image. In the Spring of 2002 the New York Waldorf-Astoria provided the venue for a seminar designed to assist corporations to develop an image of responsible ‘corporate citizenship’ – conference fee US$1800, workshops US$550 extra each, cost of travel and accommodation extra. No doubt such corporate expense account events are helpful in corporate citizenship image-making (see McIntosh et al, 1998) whilst their opponents are seen around the globe as a violent street vandals.

**Local Action and Global Citizenship Education**

Citizens are frequently urged to ‘think globally and act locally’ – ordinary individual citizens have little choice in the matter. Beck, following Zygmunt Bauman (1998, and see Smith, 1999) argues that local citizens of nation states are caught up in the processes of globalisation *whether or not* they act consciously. The neologism ‘glocalisation’ is adopted to reflect the idea that globalisation and localisation ‘may be two sides of the same coin’ involving a process of ‘world-wide restratification’ which establishes a new socio-cultural hierarchy on a worldwide scale. Globalisation and localisation are not only two aspects of the same thing, ‘they are at once the driving forces and expressions of a new polarisation and stratification of the world population into globalised rich and localised poor’ (Beck, 2000, p. 55, emphasis is the original).

An often politically inactive local citizenry is made global by processes beyond and outside of their control irrespective of their supposed need to think globally. This applies both to the impoverished victims of globalisation and to better-off citizens largely resident in the prosperous West:

> One thing which has thus far escaped globalisation is our collective ability to act globally. Since our mutual dependence is already by and large global, our moral responsibility for each other is real as never before. Given, however, the economic bias of globalisation … taking responsibility becomes yet more difficult. Our sensitivity is assaulted by sights which are bound to trigger our moral impulse to help – yet it is far from obvious what we could do to bring relief and succour to the sufferers. (Bauman, 2001, p. 52)

‘Virtually nowhere in the rich world does expenditure on overseas aid and development rise above 1% of tax returns’ and as ‘the wealth of the world continues to grow spectacularly, so does the volume and depth of human misery’ (Bauman, 2001, p. 53). There is a strong sense of increasing
helplessness of citizens in the face of global forces although the differing circumstances of different citizens has to be acknowledged (cf. Davies, 2001; Kenway et al, 2001).

Bauman spells out the dynamic effects of the process of glocalisation. In the USA ten years ago ‘the income of company directors was 42 times higher than that of the blue-collar workers; it is now 419 times higher; 95% of the surplus of $1,100bn generated between 1979 and 1999 has been appropriated and consumed by 5% of Americans’ (p. 53). And:

_what happens inside every single society occurs as well in the global sphere – though on a much magnified scale. While the world-wide consumption of goods and services was in 1997 twice as large as in 1975 and has multiplied since 1950 by a factor of six, a billion people, according to a recent UN report, ‘cannot satisfy even their elementary needs’. Among 4.5 billion residents of ‘developing’ countries, three in every five are deprived of access to basic infrastructure: a third have no access to drinkable water, a quarter have no accommodation worthy of its name and a fifth have no use of sanitary and medical services. One in five children spends less than five years in any form of schooling: a similar proportion is permanently undernourished. (Bauman, 2001, p. 53)_

In contrast, Bauman adds that ‘three of the richest men in the world have private assets greater than the combined national product of the 48 poorest countries; the fortunes of the 15 richest people exceed the total product of the whole of sub-Saharan Africa’ and according to the UN Development Agency, ‘less than 4% of the personal wealth of the 225 richest people would suffice to offer all the poor of the world access to elementary medical and educational amenities as well as adequate nutrition. Even such a relatively minor redistribution of basic necessities is unlikely to occur; not in the foreseeable future at any rate’ (Bauman, 2001, p. 53).

Notwithstanding the overwhelmingly pessimistic character of his argument Bauman lends support to those who see a way forward in the socialisation of children. Citing Richard Rorty, he argues that ‘we should raise our children to find it intolerable that we who sit behind desks and punch keyboards are paid ten times as much as the people who get their hands dirty cleaning our toilets and 100 times as much as those who fabricate our keyboards in the third world’ (Bauman, 2001, p. 56). Indeed we should, but will ‘our children’ insist on paying more for their keyboards and sports equipment? And in the unlikely event that some of them would like so to do, Beck and Bauman’s own arguments rightly imply that there is little or no prospect of purposeful action that might lead to global change. The ‘immorality’ of global inequality is graphically detailed by both Beck and by Bauman but the price of keyboards, or any other good of course, is not set by right-thinking youngsters.
There is a degree of ‘taken-for-grantedness’ about the idea of young people’s global citizenship expressed, for example, in a *Times Educational Supplement* editorial which suggested that ‘perhaps the younger generation know instinctively what it is to be a global citizen, because that is what they are’ (*Times Educational Supplement*, 1999). Many school-aged children do demonstrate an enthusiastic sense of the global which can be explained without needing to resort to the notion of ‘instinct’. It appears to be fed by easy access to electronic modes of transmission of information and images via global television and the worldwide web. By early 2002 about 45% of British homes were said to be connected to the Internet. Global sports coverage, war reporting, global Internet games and global business news all feed a sense of closeness of everything on earth. Children appear to have taken to global television and commuter-based communications just as readily as data-hungry business people. By contrast, local television is usually lacklustre and local news presentation often uninteresting. Local politics can often appear *more remote* than national politics and international events. Indeed, it is the decline of local and national politics that has prompted renewed interest in citizenship education. Politics today is, for most people, debated on the television and it seems less than certain that citizenship education will bring about a revitalisation of local political activity amongst the young.

In England, during the 1990s, driven largely by a fear of political disengagement amongst the ‘new generation’, the question of citizenship education was explored (*inter alios*) by a House of Commons Speaker’s Commission on Citizenship (1990), the National Curriculum Council (1990), the Children’s Society (1991), the Commission on Social Justice (1994) and the Citizenship Foundation (1995). The Crick Report (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998) set out detailed recommendations on the teaching of citizenship in schools which have been adopted by the Labour government (DfEE & QCA, 1999). Citizenship education became part of the English primary school National Curriculum in September 2000. It is introduced across the curriculum in secondary schools from September 2002 and will include a ‘global dimension’ (QCA, 2000).

There is no shortage of material available to help foster the development of children’s awareness of global citizenship. Key concepts to be explored in understanding global citizenship are said to include the idea of ‘sustainable development’, ‘social justice’ and the notion of interdependence that has been ‘enhanced by globalisation’, understanding conflict and conflict resolution, human rights and responsibilities. Global citizenship is said to be concerned with specific issues and underlying values and attitudes, encouraging young people to question and explore their own and other’s values within their community and in different parts of the world. Learning materials are available which provide opportunities for pupils to become active and informed citizens not only in their own school and local community but also in making choices which might have an impact on people in other parts of the world. Young people are encouraged to see
themselves growing up in an increasingly global context and there is emphasis on the global dimension to the food they eat, the clothes they wear, other pupils from different parts of the world in their schools and community (Brownlie, 2001; Oxfam, 2000; DFID, DfEE, QCA, DEA and The Central Bureau, 2000; passim).

The citizenship curriculum requires pupils to develop knowledge and understanding, skills of enquiry and communication and become involved in participation and responsible action at a level appropriate to age and conceptual development. These requirements are to be met in a variety of ways across the curriculum and will become embedded in teaching methodology and the school ethos. Skills, knowledge and understanding can be developed across the secondary curriculum in many subject areas as well as in allocated PSHE and Citizenship sessions. In English, pupils might compare the reporting of a world issue in different newspapers, and on the Internet, and critically assess the reports for bias and varying points of view. In mathematics, concepts such as 'mean, mode and median' can be used to investigate average wages around the world. In geography pupils can explore world trade, the idea of 'fair trade' and explore the impact of global relations on the lives of individuals along a trade route. Helen Walkington (1999) demonstrates how geography and global citizenship education have complementary aims, and provides detailed accounts of classroom strategies used by teachers who have successfully taught global citizenship through geography. Walkington argues that enquiry-based, participatory approaches to citizenship can help pupils acquire appropriate useful knowledge, skills and understandings.

School pupils appear to be well disposed to discussion surrounding the question of the environment (see for example, Gilbert, 1996). Global citizenship education can give particular emphasis to United Nations Agenda 21, an environmental plan of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally by organisations of the UN and national governments. Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and the Statement of principles for the Sustainable Management of Forests were adopted by 178 governments at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil in 1992. A UN Commission on Sustainable Development was created later in the same year to monitor and report on the implementation of the agreements at the local, national, regional and international levels. Pupils can be encouraged to find out about local action in response to a global issue by investigating local plans and priorities for sustainable development – Local Agenda 21. Pupils can be encouraged find out how local priorities are established and monitored, how people are consulted by their local authority, and can learn how ideas about sustainable development affect different aspects of local and national government planning and policy decisions. Geography, science and mathematics teachers are encouraged to come together to help pupils to learn how citizens might contribute to local decisions that will influence their quality of life and the environment. Pupils
are encouraged to appreciate how Agenda 21 is addressing problems and preparing for global challenges of the future.

Some secondary schools have already developed their global citizenship curriculum by becoming involved in long-term projects and school-linking, particularly in the EU (see Osler et al, 1995). Many already have a strong element of citizenship within their whole-school ethos, their policies and curriculum. Some schools have ‘Councils’ giving pupils a voice in the organisation of the school and encouraging them to take part in decision-making on anti-bullying and anti-racism policy, for example. Some schools are more active than others in encouraging such ‘participation’ but there are serious concerns about the quality of citizenship teaching and the motivation of some school children. For example, will the overwhelmingly pessimistic accounts of globalisation characterised by the work of Bauman, Beck and others become the dominant discourse, and if so what effects might that have? Can space be made for accounts that do not render citizens powerless in the face of ‘global forces’? It is questionable whether children are likely to be motivated, even by well prepared material, if it does little more than make them aware of their powerlessness; however competent and well-intentioned their teachers may be.

There are questions to be raised about the training of teachers in aspects of ‘global citizenship’ and about the possible effectiveness of school-based citizenship education programmes more generally (see Lister et al, 2001). As with ‘globalisation’, the very notion of ‘citizenship’ is problematical and there may be too few schoolteachers with the necessary skills and competence to teach it at more than a rudimentary level. These are, of course, empirical questions and in due course the outcomes of citizenship education will no doubt be assessed by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) once the programmes are underway. But it is likely that, as with so much else that goes on in school and more especially in ‘fringe’ subject areas covered by PSHE, there will be a degree of difference both in the quality of teaching and of learning (Reynolds, 1999). The global dimension of citizenship will be taught well in some classes in some schools and in a perfunctory manner at low cost in others.

Conclusions

Whilst there is no shortage of excellent material for the teaching of global citizenship, the extent to which worthwhile global citizenship will be well taught in schools remains to be seen. It will be governed and sometimes limited by the capacity of teachers to make effective use of available recourses and to motivate pupils’ interest in thinking and learning. Since many young people often already have an interest in environmental issues, have access to the worldwide web and global television, these are possible starting-points. Global citizenship education will expose inequalities between citizens’ rights and resources both within and between nation states. In the relatively rich West some notion of ‘global citizenship’ will continue to appear possible, in
part, as a consequence of easy access to global communications networks; the UK government hopes to have most households ‘online’ by 2005.

Citizens of poorer countries are less likely to be able to access the Internet but if they do they will find websites offering items they do not have the means of affording. And if they are able to read they will gain access to ideas that they may or may not have the possibility of developing or acting upon. Although electronic media (television and the Internet) can be a force for change, global electronic citizenship is likely to continue to involve differentiated economic, social and political statuses of citizens both within and between nation states. It is impossible to know what the effects might be but after fifty years of television, which has indeed had important effects, global inequality is, as Bauman shows, greater now than it was half a century ago. Nevertheless, educating new ‘citizens of the globe’ by helping to provide them with an understanding of cultural, political, legal and economic structures in different parts of the world is a worthwhile activity for those schoolteachers who have the capacity to engage in such work. An important aspect of such understanding will be that, whilst the idea of global citizenship appears to offer the possibility of bringing the people of the world together, national citizenship has the effect of dividing them between nation states (see Hindess, 1998). Global divisions involve fundamental inequalities of resources, rights to residence and much else.

Correspondence

Jack Demaine, Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University, Loughborough LE11 3TU, United Kingdom (j.demaine@lboro.ac.uk).

References


Jack Demaine


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