INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND ISSUE OF ‘SINERGIAS’: A CALL TO MOBILIZE AROUND A CRITICAL APPROACH TO EDUCATING GLOBAL CITIZENS

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For the past two decades, global citizenship education (GCE), or as it is also often called, Education for Global Citizenship (EfGC), has become a focus of work at various levels from schools to school boards to NGO/CSO work to state curriculum to national strategies to regional strategies. Now global citizenship is a key term being used by the United Nations in the context of determining the post-2015 sustainable development goals for education. In the European context, a current mobilization around the term global citizenship can be tied to a direct push for global education that coincided with discussions at turn of the 21st century around how to best prepare young people for the interdependent global world which they are inheriting. The Maastricht Global Education Declaration in 2002 prioritized global education in Europe and focused on greater justice and sustainability. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe passed a resolution in January 2003 calling on member states to: “promote global education to strengthen public awareness of sustainable development, bearing in mind that global education is essential for all citizens to acquire the knowledge and skills to understand, participate in and interact critically with our global society as empowered global citizens” (Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1318, January 30th, 2003; par 20, xii).

The early 2000s also saw the development of a peer review process to encourage nation-states to develop global education strategies: by GENE (Global Education Network Europe). Among other countries, this process has led to the developments of nationals strategies in Finland, an early nation-state to taken on the challenge, and more recently in Portugal. The articles written about these two national contexts in this edition of ‘Sinergias’ point to the significance of the process in terms of establishing, reviewing, and seeking to mainstream national strategies for global education. There are also initiatives in Europe bringing Non-Governmental-Organizations (NGOs) and Civil-Society-Organizations (CSOs) together around the idea of Education for Global Citizenship (EfGC). For example, the work of the Developing Europeans Engagement for the Eradication of Global Poverty (DEEEP) forum has sought to bring together researchers, NGOs and CSOs, and educators towards a new paradigm for development education. In work done in support of DEEEP’s mandate, Fricke and Gathercole (2014) refer to the fact that EfGC includes content of mutual concern from Development Education, from Global Education/Global Learning, from Human Rights Education, and from Education for Sustainable Development (p. 18). Drawing on Greig et al’s work (1987), they identify the overlaps as a) recognizing key concepts are mutually related and interdependent (e.g. development, environment, sustainability, human rights and justice, perspectives consciousness); b) prioritizing a holistic view of the world, populations, and global issues rather than analyzing issues separately and exclusively; and c) cultivating dispositions and skills to participate democratically at local and global issues (p. 19). The articles in this edition of ‘Sinergias’ reflect these common themes.

At the same time as these developments in Europe, GCE has increasingly been a focus of educational policy, research and practice particularly in Canada, NZ, Australia (Evans, Ingram, McDonald & Weber, 2009). Building from work in political science and other social studies disciplines (e.g. Appiah, 2002, 2005; Delanty 2000, 2006), in the field of education in a sense GCE combines two existing fields, Global Education (learning about international/ global issues) and Citizenship Education (learning about civics and political life) (Davies, Evans and Reid, 2005; L. Davies, 2006). However, as it has been used in these largely English-speaking contexts, it has also been a contested term. For example, Osler (2008) prefers the use of the term cosmopolitan citizenship, and Andreotti (2006) ties some of the work being called global citizenship education...
to the reproduction of colonial, unequal relations of power. Questions about its translatability in other languages and contexts remains (Pashby, 2011). The interview with Oscar Jara in this edition speaks to the way Development Education, Global Citizenship Education, and Popular Education are interrelated and particularly they relate dynamically in South American contexts.

At the same time that there is a growing body of research work, national strategies, and CSO/NGO focused work on education for global citizenship, the idea is being included as a key focus in the UN’s Post-2015 sustainable development goals, and global citizenship is increasingly being used as a focus of international efforts towards improving educational quality world-wide. The field of GCE is currently at a key juncture as there is both growing attention to and continued confusion around the importance of educating for global citizenship. Ban Ki-Moon’s inclusion of global citizenship as a key principle of the UN Secretary General’s Global Education First Initiative (GEFI, n.d.) has corresponded with UNESCO proposing the inclusion of global citizenship and sustainability skills as one of the seven post-2015 development targets for education progress. On the one hand, global citizenship education does overlap with and inherit the work done in several related fields, and on the other hand, there is a sense that there is currently an opportunity to mobilize around the more critical, or transformative aspects. This will require an approach that puts ethical relations of difference at the centre.

There is conceptual confusion and ambivalence around what it means to educate for global citizenship which represents both a challenge and a dynamic opportunity. It is important to identify different agendas and imperatives driving global learning in today’s complex and shifting contexts. A dynamic approach interrogates good intentions and puts actions into context, conceptualizing global citizens as those who engage ethically and reflexively with economic, intercultural, environmental, political, and development-based issues and processes (Pashby, 2013).

Based on my own research into Global Citizenship Education (Pashby, 2008, 2011, 2012, 2013) I identify three interrelated premises promoting a mobilization around a critical approach. First, global citizenship is a “discursive field” that pulls together genres and topics regarding globalization, citizenship, and schooling that are contextually related when actors in the public realm construct diagnoses, prognoses, and calls to action (Camicia and Franklin, 2011, p. 313 drawing on Steinberg, 1999). Second, distinctions in what GCE is/should be reflect the current geo-political and ideological landscape (Schattle, 2008; Shultz, 2007). Students are to develop skills and dispositions for participating in the global economy and for contributing to a more socially just world (Agbaria, 2011; Marshall, 2009; Richardson, 2008). Although many justice-oriented approaches focus on action and empathy, many well-intended GCE initiatives are reduced to changes in individuals’ dispositions at the expense both of systemic change and engagement with complexities and conflicts (Marshall, 2009; Pashby, forthcoming). Thus, thirdly, as Schattle (2008) argues, although educational programs for global citizenship do not resolve uncertainty or debate about what global citizenship means, they have opened up important critical spaces.

These are the spaces that need to be mobilized at this key juncture in the field. Much research and practice exists that supports this work. Critical GCE literature interrogates good intentions, takes up a structural critique of the systems in which global issues are rooted, and engages with ideas of complicity (e.g.
Engaging postcolonial critiques of the reproduction of injustice through schooling (e.g. Abdi, 2012; Andreotti & Souza, 2012), a critical approach promotes ethical reflection that interrogates good intentions and recognizes that any action towards global justice must be understood in its context including possible unanticipated implications (Andreotti, 2006). In this edition of ‘Sinergias’, Dalila Coelho promotes the need for a critically reflexive engagement with the debates and challenges inherent to the field of EIGC in the critical book review of the Miguel Argibay, Gema Celorio and Juan Celorio’s book Educación para la Ciudadanía Global. Debates y desafíos (2009).

A critical approach to GCE works explicitly to trouble the possible reproduction of the very unequal distributions of power that an ideal of promoting global citizenships seeks to address. But, it is more than criticizing; it is about opening spaces of signification and meaning. As Andreotti (2011a) articulates, consensual approaches to citizenship education grounded on hierarchical ideas of belonging that privilege the nation-state (i.e. belonging first to the local, then the regional, national, international, and so on) and global governance through benevolent global institutions and an unexamined and uncritical commitment to human rights abound in educational literature. Challenging the normative, ethnocentric, ahistorical, and paternalistic ethos of these approaches, without falling into an uncritical rejection of human rights is very difficult. Part of the difficulty lies in establishing a position of critical engagement (as opposed to critical disengagement and uncritical engagement) with issues where one can both support (in certain contexts) and be critical of something (in other contexts and at the same time). If the choices are only either uncritical engagement or critical disengagement, exploring the historical, political, and culturally-located construction of human rights and its dependence on nation-states can be perceived as an attack on the universal legitimacy of human rights and nation-states. (p. 211)

In Portugal, these critical conversations have been part of the national strategy for development education process. As the articles reflecting on the Portuguese context in this edition demonstrate, criticality as well as directly engaging with questions of systemic power inequalities are at the heart of how educators at all levels of formal education and through informal work in CSOs/NGOs are engaging in the idea of EIGC. In describing the process of the national strategy, Pereira (2013) reflects the commitment evident in Portuguese contexts in this regard: our world is changing rapidly and the citizens, as well as their organisations, have won a little bit of power to influence the path it takes, power that leaves marks and opens perspectives. How they use it – or not – will be a result of their perceptions, values, convictions, life experiences and capacities to reflect about themselves and the choices they have been making. DE provides access to well thought-out information, stimulating discovery and critical thought, dialogue, debate and cooperation, individual and collective lessons learned, collaborative actions. This makes a sound, fundamental contribution to us achieving a viable and equitable world, in a universe that takes care of us, if we take care of ourselves and take care of it. (Pereira, p. 42)

As the Portuguese context demonstrates, there are important and promising steps being made towards a more critical approach to GCE in policy and pedagogy. In another example, as Chair of Global Education at the University of Oulu in Finland, Vanessa Andreotti worked with curriculum developers at the National Board
of Education of Finland to contribute a more critical approach to GCE which was interpreted in the new national core curriculum. Lisa Jääskeläinen, who explains in greater detail the curriculum reform process in her article in this edition, has cited Andreotti’s work directly, recognizing a critical interpretation of global education and development: “It is now essentially admitted that development is uncertain. This being the case, the role of education is to teach learners to question things, build knowledge through interaction, open up a variety of views, deal with uncertainty, and act ethically” (Jääskeläinen, 2011a, p. 9; see also Jääskeläinen, 2013; further elaborated in her article in this edition) that includes several key competencies: intercultural competence, sustainable lifestyle, global citizen’s civic competence, global responsibility and development partnership, and global citizen’s economic competence. It is neither a static nor exhaustive list, and the framework is purposefully unfinished: “Amidst the rapid change of the world, even competence cannot be static definitions. Challenges… seem to be growing constantly” (Jääskeläinen, 2011b, p. 75). A discourse of complexity can allow for economic, moral and ethical approaches to co-exist and even over-lap within a critical frame, and putting ethics at the centre enables an opening of the critical spaces to which Schattle (2008) referred.

In this 2nd issue of ‘Sinergias’, there is a summary and analysis of a recent UNESCO (2014) outcome document from the Technical Consultation on Global Citizenship Education (Seoul, September 2013) and the first UNESCO Forum on Global Citizenship Education (Bangkok, December 2013). The document, Global Citizenship Education: Preparing learners for the challenges of the twenty-first century (UNESCO, 2014), provides some direction in terms of mobilizing a critical approach around, across, and in relation to specific contexts. For example, it notes an obligation to continuously re-examine world-views through a focus on “de-centring”: “a gradual process of expanding the focus of learners from their local realities to include, connect them to, and provide them with a vision of other realities and possibilities” (UNESCO, 2014, p. 20). And as is noticed by Luís Santos in the presentation of this document and highlighted in its analysis in this edition, a critical approach is reinforced in the set of aims for GCE:

- Encourage learners to analyse real-life issues critically and to identify possible solutions creatively and innovatively;
- Support learners to revisit assumptions, world views and power relations in mainstream discourses and consider people/groups that are systematically underrepresented/marginalised;
- Focus on engagement in individual and collective action to bring about desired changes, and
- Involve multiple stakeholders, including those outside the learning environment, in the community and in wider society (UNESCO, 2014, p. 16)

As an introduction to this edition of ‘Sinergias’, I would like to emphasize the second aim above as a call to educators, policy-makers, and researchers and to reinforce the possibility to draw momentum from the body of literature already working towards this aim. The articles in this edition speak to the need for and application of a critical approach from different perspectives: curricular reforms (Jääskeläinen), teacher education (Coelho, Mendes & Gonçalves), teacher evaluation (Salema), university-NGO partnerships (Ortega, Sianes & Cordón), and development partnerships (Leonard).

In her contribution, Jääskeläinen describes in detail the comprehensive approach to global education that has resulted in the mainstreaming of a holistic approach in the new basic education curriculum in Finland. The
process involved articulation, consultation, and implementation and seeks to establish an environment for global education to be the basis of all work in education. The ‘flower framework’ and the emphasis on ethics and identity as well as the overall consultative process provide evidence that a critical approach can be both mobilized and mainstreamed through curriculum development.

Coelho, Mendes and Gonçalves contribute an example of a strongly theoretically grounded approach to promoting critical development education in initial teacher education based on epistemological pluralism. They describe the challenges of prioritizing development education and GCE in an era focused on science and technology and also of making real change in the discourses and behaviours of new teachers so as to move beyond Eurocentric multiculturalism and erroneous assumptions about global Others. For this reason, their prioritization of strong theoretical grounding and emphasis on process over outcomes provides a strong guide for mobilizing a critical approach.

Salema’s contribution demonstrates how the national strategy for development education in Portugal can work as a touchstone for collaborative work with an outcome of a critically reflexive tool for teacher education. The comprehensive approach speaks to the complexity and possibility for mobilizing a critical approach in teacher education and articulates the importance of centring teachers’ self-assessment on four interrelating areas: socio-political-economic-cultural context, pedagogy, ethics, and methodology.

Ortega, Sianes and Cordón contribute a comprehensive look at the role of the university in the context of development education and development cooperation in Spain, particularly in relation to campaigns to end poverty. Given the reduction of the development aid budget and the context of the financial crisis in Spain, coordination between various actors involved in DE is particularly important. They point out significant implications of the current context for the quality of DE interventions and, similarly to Salema’s piece, they focus particularly on the need to focus on methodologies and content of DE in universities and to find spaces for fluid collaboration with NGOs. Their call for each actor in these collaborations to deepen their positions represents another possibility to mobilize around a critical approach.

Leonard’s description of what she learned from doing her doctoral research on ‘South-North’ partnerships in education provides important warnings of the risks of repeating colonial power relations in well intended EfGC. Her contribution calls on researchers of and participants in such ‘South-North’ partnerships to de-centre a Eurocentric, hegemonic frame without claiming a new ‘best-way’. Her reflections point out both the importance of placing “Southern voices” at the centre of research and practice in ‘South-North’ partnerships and the tricky work of doing so without reifying a western idea of voice that simply flips the development story. Her contribution speaks to the need for deeper theoretical frames that catch and engage with these nuances and connects to the UNESCO (2014) aim of “support[ing] learners to revisit assumptions, world views and power relations in mainstream discourses and consider people/groups that are systematically underrepresented/marginalised” (p. 19).

This is a key time to mobilize around diverse critical approaches to global citizenship education. The ideas, challenges, and possibilities that the papers in this issue illustrate speak to the need for continued effort across curriculum, pedagogy, and partnerships at this important juncture in the field of ED/GCE.
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