

## **Towards a *critical* global citizenship?: a comparative analysis of GC education discourses in Scotland and Alberta**

Dr Dalene M Swanson, Senior Lecture, University of Stirling  
School of Education Lead on Internationalization  
Room B32, Pathfoot Building  
School of Education, University of Stirling  
Stirling, Scotland  
FK9 4LA  
+ 44 (0) 1786 467616  
[dalene.swanson@stir.ac.uk](mailto:dalene.swanson@stir.ac.uk)

Dr Karen Pashby, Postdoctoral Fellow, Centre for Global Citizenship Education and Research, University of Alberta  
5-104, Education North  
Edmonton, AB, Canada  
T6G 2G5  
1-647-206-9480  
[pashby@ualberta.ca](mailto:pashby@ualberta.ca)

# **Towards a *critical* global citizenship?: a comparative analysis of GC education discourses in Scotland and Alberta**

## *Abstract*

Global citizenship has increasingly become common parlance in education curricula internationally. Yet, it can be argued that in many instances, especially in official curriculum documents, Global Citizenship Education (GCE) tends to ignore critical engagement with ethics and complexity that inform global inequities worldwide, and often fails to achieve the self-reflective political consciousness called forth by a critical GCE. In this paper, we compare conceptualizations of GCE in the Alberta Social Studies curriculum, Canada, and in the Scottish national curriculum, *Curriculum for Excellence*. We consider the extent to which these documents and attending discourses open up critical discursive spaces for complex, ethical understandings and calls to action related to global injustices and political responsibilities, or foreclose important opportunities.

**Key words:** critical, Global Citizenship Education (GCE), Scottish *Curriculum for Excellence*, Alberta Social Studies, global justice, ethics

## **Introduction: Global Citizenship Education in context**

Global citizenship has increasingly become common parlance in schooling curricular contexts on an international scale. The prevalence of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is reflected in Ban Ki-Moon's 'Global First' initiative, and in its inclusion in the Post-2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals. Research has demonstrated a growing attention to and contradictions surrounding the idea of educating for global citizenship (e.g., Marshall, 2009; Abdi, Shultz & Pillay, 2015; Swanson, 2011). Certainly, the field defies tidy definition despite being a priority

for international development and education. UNESCO (2015) suggests that “Global citizenship education aims to be transformative, building the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that learners need to be able to contribute to a more inclusive, just and peaceful world” (p. 15). GCE, in this articulation, is associated with ideals of diversity and “often its deployment is intended to evoke the full ambit of intersectionalities of the global justices” (Swanson, 2011, p. 1). Yet, what is set as a standard for progressiveness and a signifier for an ‘open society’, often hides the more critical, contested and uncomfortable interrogations that come with more critical, deep democratic understandings of the term.

Recent research in this area identifies a dual agenda inherent in broad calls for GCE (Marshall, 2009). Students should develop skills and dispositions for participating in the global economy, while GCE also promotes the development of citizens who contribute to a more socially-just world. These two agendas are often conflated, while they are arguably ideologically-divergent, contradictory and map correspondingly onto neoliberalism and liberal humanism (Agbaria, 2011; Marshall, 2009; Richardson, 2008). Many critics point out that the neoliberal tenets of GCE serve to perpetuate and entrench injustice by positioning inclusion in the market as an argument for overcoming marginalization, while normalizing entrepreneurial characteristics and failing to address economic exploitation and political oppression (Kachur, 2008). Liberal humanist global social justice versions of GCE are also inadequate in addressing the perpetuation of Eurocentric individualism through “humanitarian neoliberalism gone global” (Kachur, 2008, p. 187). It can be argued that the latter tends to focus on inclusions in a politically-neutral manner, ignoring the effects of power and lacking robust interrogation of systemic reasons for exclusions and inequalities (Andreotti, 2006; Abdi, Shultz & Pillay, 2015). Also, at a deeper level of engagement, there is a paradox in the ethical imperative of GCE that

global citizenship cannot merely be celebrated uncritically, that it needs to address political oppression and injustice alongside the complicities within its own discourses and performances in the social domain (Swanson, 2011, p. 123). Consequently, what are often very well-intended initiatives to encourage students to become global citizens, often end up being quite reductive. A focus on changes in individuals' dispositions leaves unaddressed the relational complexities of global and local interdependencies, including deep engagements with difference and conflict (Andreotti et. al., 2010; Pashby, 2011; Swanson, 2012, 2015).

### **Context: Scotland and Alberta**

Our interest in comparing possibilities and constraints of a critical approach to GCE in curricula in Alberta and Scotland is borne from our existing research into global citizenship from the purview of these two respective locales in which we also reside. We noted with interest that a number of thematic resonances had been revealed through discursive analyses of curricular documents in these two locations, and felt that a comparative analysis may uncover some underlying trends as well as possible situated differences. As these are both predominantly English-speaking regions of Western democracies within the commonwealth, one ancient, the other 'new world'; one European, the other North American; we were interested in whether resonances between them may hint at some effects of globalization in educational policies in English-speaking regional contexts. Temporally, both curricular documents on GCE have been developed in the last decade.

In Canada, education programming and curriculum development are the purview of provinces and there is no federal ministry of education. In Alberta, global citizenship is explicitly included in the Social Studies Program of Studies (AE, 2005a) from Kindergarten to end of

secondary school (grade 12), and it is also alluded to in the citizenship education policy, *The Heart of the Matter* (2005b). Alberta was a lead province in the inclusion of global citizenship (2005 – 2007), and its approach is deeply tied to Canada’s national context of multiculturalism. It thus serves as an important example of the possibilities and constraints of global citizenship in the context of the neoliberal-liberal social justice conflation (Pashby, 2013).

In Scotland, the *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) has been promoted as being “one of the most ambitious programmes of educational change ever undertaken in Scotland” (Scottish Government, 2008, p. 8). There has been an attempt to orient it in the main toward a more process-driven curriculum defined by a more flexible and open-ended learning structure (Stenhouse, 1975). Nevertheless, it carries a ‘futurist agenda’ (Moir, 2015), framed mostly in terms of the economic rationalities of neoliberalism and with a pronounced nationalist bent. Scotland’s curricular intention has been to imbricate global citizenship throughout the curriculum (Biesta, 2008), so that it presents as a cross-curricular and whole school approach.

In this paper, we compare conceptualizations of educating for global citizenship in the Alberta social studies curriculum and in the Scottish national curriculum, *Curriculum for Excellence*. We consider the extent to which these documents open up critical spaces for a complex, ethical understanding and calls to action related to global injustices and political responsibilities, or whether they foreclose important opportunities. Underpinning our approach is the intention of going beyond a technical evaluation of global citizenship implementation in schools toward a critical understanding of the ideological motivations at play within the discursive manoeuvrings deployed in educational curricular documents. These ideological movements speak to the effects of power (Foucault, 1982) that either render global citizenship potentially ineffective and politically blind, or may realize it as socially and politically revealing,

ethically capacitating and capable of fostering critical consciousness. Alternatively, there may be a conflation of both positions.

We argue that the Alberta curriculum does open up spaces to engage in tensions and ethical relations to complexity and difference. However, the stronger overall national framing falls back on soft versions of liberalism that represents a conflation of economic and social justice rationales for GCE (Pashby, 2013). Likewise, in the Scottish educational context, global citizenship has been taken up as a recuperative discourse that stands for progressivism, but in effect does not disturb the status quo of existing relations as defined by the state and in her interests. Its emphasis tends to be one of ‘responsibilism’, where the element of activism is written out. In both these locales, Scotland and Alberta, the particular framings of global citizenship hold in place the ontological and epistemic supremacy and privilege of the West, which GCE discourses do little to undo (Swanson, 2015).

### **Theoretical framework: Critical global citizenship education in post-modernist context**

The turn of the twenty-first century has corresponded with a “cosmopolitan turn” in the social and political sciences, including education, identified in the abundance of “normative and truthfully prescriptive theories of world citizenship, global justice and cosmopolitan democracy”. These theories seek to recognize mutual interdependence on a world scale and mobilize a desire to overcome “national presuppositions and prejudices” (Strand, 2010, p. 229/230).

Education is of critical concern within this cosmopolitan turn (Pashby, 2013), heralded by the advent of the ‘knowledge society’. The shift away from an industrial to a post-industrial and ‘knowledge-based economy’ (Gilbert, 2007) structures the educational terrain in terms of an economic exchange relation (Swanson, 2010), which holds many contradicting impulses. Rather than critically engaging learners, much ‘knowledge society’ discourse works in tandem with

neoliberal practices that serve, instead, to commodify learning and learners. Andreotti (2010) articulates two theoretical perspectives underlying the debates. One of them focuses on cognitive adaptation and sees schooling as about providing skills that contribute to economic progressivism imitated through modern development (Swanson, 2010). The other focuses on interrogating how modernity is complicit with a ranking and sorting of people and knowledges through colon(ial)ization. As Swanson (2013, p. 334) similarly notes, “the marginalization of local and indigenous knowledge is reproduced in favour of global universal(ized/izing) forms as a normative condition of development and international education, rhetoricalized under the banner of ‘upliftment’, ‘progress’ and ‘modernization’.” Interrogating these normative conditions would become a democratic purpose of a reconceptualization of knowledge and learning. GCE is caught up in these two theoretical debates that present in discourses on educational ‘reform’, curriculum renewal and modern development.

Committing to an interrogation of often unquestioned modern premises of encouraging global learning, recent scholarship on global citizenship has taken up the concern that despite intentions to the contrary, GCE often ignores the critical concerns of ethics and complexity that define how global inequities persist in today’s world (Pashby, 2013, 2015; Swanson, 2011, 2012). The move to educate global citizens is often set as a standard for progressiveness and is a signifier for an open society, yet it also tends to hide the more complex, contested and uncomfortable interrogations that come with a more critical, deep democratic understanding of the term (Swanson, 2010, 2015). In this more ‘soft’ appropriation (Andreotti, 2006), the *work* such a term might do in contributing to raise critical consciousness and engage the agency of activism and resistance to global injustice and oppression is often ignored. This ignore-ance, one could argue, reflects a politics of convenience (Swanson, 2016) and if left uncontested can

contribute to the 'common sense' of modernity and its attachment to and complicity with colonialism (Mignolo, 2000). The global citizen is thus implicated in a "politics of benevolence" that "normalizes the conditions of the privilege that allow some to be in the position to help or 'make a difference'" (Jefferess, 2008, p. 28). The global citizen, in these terms, is created through the consumptive difference with a needing-to-be-saved Other, so that "this consumptive difference is produced and reinforced through the subjectivity of the global citizen, thereby naturalizing the uneven relations and rationalizing the need for the existence of the global citizen" (Swanson, 2011, p. 125). Yet, young people live the realities of these tensions and, it is argued, rather than leave these conundrums and political absences from GCE discourses unattended, many seek a humanizing education that engages with them critically (Taylor, 2011).

### **Methodological approach**

The comparative analysis we deploy is not intended to reach into the situated spaces of classrooms in Alberta and Scotland and generalize on actual global citizenship practices. Rather, we consider our analysis of curriculum documents as a lens through which to view how dominant discourses may regulate the messages framing educational curricula and intended practices. Official curricula do not equate with classroom practice, as there is always slippage between intended curriculum, received curriculum and curriculum as enacted (Ornstein and Hunkins, 2013). The official curriculum does, however, provide insights as to the dominant norms and values within societies as they are "one avenue through which the ideological elements of schooling for citizenship can be discerned" (Kennelly & Llewellyn, 2011, p. 900). They also provide insight into the metaphorical 'mind' of institutional policy strategists and provincial/state educational organs that hold effective sway over 'national priorities' and the



values undergirding education systems. In our discussions, we provide some examples through close readings of the two sets of documents using a critical discursive analytical framework (Rogers, 2011; Fairclough, 2003) based on our synthesis of key concomitant politico-ideological concerns. This framework seeks to deconstruct the critical messages inherent to and behind the discourses, the ways in which they distribute messages of power, and the assumptions the discourses construe. The analyses attempt to trace some of the discursive ideological effects of message distributions.

A critical discourse analysis was conducted whereby the documents were read with a purpose of identifying metanarratives through the language, metaphors, and linked ideas by which the concept of global citizenship was expressed (MacLure 2003, Knight Abowitz & Harnish 2006). While it is not possible in this paper to provide extensive description of systematic comparative analysis, we have chosen to offer examples displaying key comparative themes. We considered the extent to which key examples from the texts reinforced a cognitive adaptation / skills approach or opened up spaces for greater political engagement, noting also the limitations on a critical approach structured through the embedding of national(istic) and neoliberal interests dominating the discourse.

### **Global Citizenship Education: Alberta Curriculum**

The main inclusion of global citizenship in the Alberta curriculum is in Social Studies. Students take Social Studies every year and are required to complete a diploma examination in the subject to graduate. For comparison, a framing document related to citizenship education and on the social studies program of studies is examined, not the specific grade-based curricula (see Pashby,

2013; Clausen & Lamisko, 2005).

### **Alberta findings:**

#### **Citizenship as individualism, ‘skills’, and interpersonal relations**

In 2005, Alberta Education published the policy document *The Heart of the Matter: Character and Citizenship Education in Alberta Schools*. The document expresses the expansion model of global citizenship: “As understandings of citizenship expand to address issues such as human rights, language, nationalism, globalization, equality, multiculturalism and pluralism, citizenship education is becoming more centred on the concept of inclusion and respect for diversity” (AE, 2005b, p. 5). This attention to the importance of inclusion and diversity is tied to addressing issues of the twenty-first century. However, reading on, there is an important conflation of citizenship with character (Pashby et. al., 2014) when the document elaborates on “essential skills” such as “thinking before acting”, “maintaining friendships”, “dealing with feelings”, “accepting consequences” and handling “peer pressure” as “a foundation for responsible, global citizens” (AE, 2005b, p. 43). This skills approach tends to reduce the idea promoting equity and diversity to prejudice reduction, following rules, and ‘getting along’, rather than to critical perspectives tied to broader, more complex epistemological frameworks of social justice.

#### **Global citizenship as an extension of national citizenship**

The Alberta Program of Studies for Social Studies Kindergarten to Grade 12 (AE, 2005a) presents a global understanding of citizenship as expanding from national citizenship. Its stated learning goals are to: a) “understand the principles underlying a democratic society”, b) “demonstrate a critical understanding of individual and collective rights”, c) “understand the commitment required to ensure the vitality and sustainability of their

changing communities at the local, provincial, national and global levels”, d) “validate and accept differences that contribute to the pluralistic nature of Canada”, and e) “respect the dignity and support the equality of all human beings” (AE, 2005a, p. 3). A critical discourse is evident here that appears to focus on systemic understandings beyond interpersonal skills. Mentioning “changing communities” and tying this to equity and diversity, locally and globally, opens up spaces for moving beyond reductive instrumentalist views. However, other than a notion of change as latent to an extension model of communities (local through to global), there is no attention to tensions and conflicts inherent to “differences” that contribute to the nature of Canada.

### **Global citizenship as a critical space for examining national citizenship**

The Alberta program of studies organizes general learning objectives around two core concepts: Citizenship and Identity--and six conceptual strands--Time, Continuity and Change; The Land: Places and People; Global Connections; Power, Authority and Decision Making; Culture and Community; and Economics and Resources. Important highlights of the Program of Studies include the grade six curriculum, where students study the origins of democracy by comparing Ancient Athens with the Iroquois confederacy, an aboriginal political organization existing before European colonization (AE, 2005a, p. 11). Comparing two of the key strands—Global Connections and Culture and Community—reveals some possibilities and foreclosures of a critical GCE.

The Global Connections strand is reflective of a critical framework of GCE:

Critically examining multiple perspectives and connections among local, national and global issues develops students' understanding of citizenship and identity and the interdependent or conflicting nature of individuals, communities, societies and nations. Exploring this interdependence broadens students' global consciousness and empathy with world conditions. Students will also acquire a better comprehension of tensions pertaining to economic relationships, sustainability and universal human rights. (AE SS 2005a, p. 7)

This strand's description includes many concepts not evident in other sections. While inclusion of diverse perspectives is found throughout the document, in a global view, it is tied to ideas of complexity and conflict and is more than 'respecting others'. There are hints of more transformative understandings of citizenship that go beyond mere interpersonal relations. Further, this section recognizes "tensions" around economics and human rights, and "conflict" in extending citizenship from the local to national to global. Elsewhere in the document where citizenship is not specifically framed as a global relation, the world conflict is described as something to be overcome through basic principles of democracy and interpersonal and social studies skills<sup>1</sup>. It is therefore possible to read a critical GCE framework in this curricular strand. Here, the terms 'interconnections' and 'multiplicity' are more strongly tied to a notion of complicity, a concept not hinted at elsewhere. Therefore, global citizenship, as articulated and elaborated through the "Global Connections" strand, appears to open a more critical and pluralistic view of diversity than is described when tied to local or national citizenship responsibility.

---

<sup>1</sup> The word 'conflict' is usually tied to 'resolution'. In the "skills and processes" section, students "engage in problem solving and conflict resolution", and in the "Social Participation as Democratic Practice Section", students "demonstrate skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and consensus building" (AE, 2005a, p. 2/7) (Pashby, 2013).

Similarly to the “Global Connections” strand, “Culture and Community” describes the Canadian context as complex and changing. However, there is no mention of tensions and/or conflicts or needing to develop consciousness, through a process of ‘difficult knowledge’ (Britzman, 2000) of the conditions of others:

Exploring culture and community allows students to examine shared values and their own sense of belonging, beliefs, traditions and languages. This promotes students’ development of citizenship and identity and understanding of multiple perspectives, issues and change. (AE, 2005a, p. 7)

In this framing, Culture and Community can be seen as inherently more individualistic than Global Connections, and there is an evident lack of critical language. A normative, neutral vision of individual self-esteem and belonging is presented. It is associated with the existence of multiple perspectives rather than, as in the Global Connections strand, tied to tensions and the need to develop empathy for different conditions. While multiple perspectives are associated with “issues” and “change”, they hint at some tensions involved in understanding a pluralistic society. However, the answer is to examine how they and others express their communities in a neutral manner. A critical examination might include recognizing that different individuals and communities are positioned differently as to when and how they can express themselves.

### **Summing up key themes and contradictions**

Despite the possibility for critical GCE, the inclusion of global citizenship in the Program of Studies is mostly limited to an extension of local or national community and is the main conceptual space for addressing conflicts between communities despite a strong attention throughout the document on respect for diversity. Students can construct meaning and

understanding, but there are not direct links to deconstructing hegemonic and normative views. In this sense, critical thinking and knowledge construction are based on assumed progression of knowledge about oneself and not a dynamic and complicated process.

There is a strong cognitive adaptation or skills discourse in the curriculum that delimits potential for epistemological pluralism. Students adapt to the idea of new complexities and to an individual sense of becoming enlightened that leads to social cohesion and inclusion into the status quo. Arguably, a critical GCE would not take the status quo for granted, but rather would seek to build epistemologically pluralistic versions of education for thinking otherwise (Pashby, 2013).

The analysis found that attention to GCE in wider framing of citizenship education in the curriculum does open up spaces to engage in tensions and ethical relations to complexity and difference. However, there is a foreclosure of a critical possibility through a lack of interrogation of deep inequities and instead a glossing over of conflicts. This foreclosure results in a fall-back to instrumentalist approaches to global citizenship where citizenship responsibility becomes social reproduction and not political transformation.

### **Global Citizenship Education: Scottish Curriculum**

*Education Scotland*, the Scottish ministry of education, has in the last decade sought to lead the development of a revised national curriculum for Scotland. *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) has been implemented with a ‘new vision’ for Scottish education, heralded by Education Scotland as forward-thinking and progressive in its scope and curricular mandates (Education Scotland, What is Curriculum for Excellence?).

### **Scotland findings:**

## **Global citizenship as ‘skills’, interpersonal relations, and school management systems**

In the Scottish curriculum, unlike some others internationally, global citizenship is not compartmentalised within one subject area. In CfE curriculum documents, global citizenship is conceived as a key thematic that needs ‘embedding’ across the curriculum. This implies not only its integration within school subject areas, but also its transdisciplinary integration across school curriculum areas that span Early Years to final school year. It therefore acts as a broad umbrella term, serving to hold all the distinct aspects of curriculum together. It is justified under modernist progressivity, which the term global citizenship has come to signify in the social domain. This is evidenced through ‘whole school’ and ‘integrated’ discourse in policy parlance as allied to instrumentalist leadership and management discourses, and advocated through overtures to a ‘life skills’ and common-sense ‘relevance’ discourse. But, it is also a convenient ‘pot’ into which anything related to ‘whole school’ activities and integrations can be mixed in. These sentiments are intimated in the language<sup>2</sup> advertising an online video under the heading of ‘a whole school approach to global citizenship’.

Here, an approach to school operations, school governance, stakeholder and community interests, and forms of school monitoring and evaluation under the discourses of ‘whole school approach’ and ‘school improvement’ mechanisms<sup>3</sup> are directly aligned with global citizenship unproblematically, suggesting that through these policies, governance approaches and institutional mechanisms, the ideals of global citizenship can be met within the ambit of each school’s management system and administrative processes. The discourse is weighted towards

---

<sup>2</sup> This can be found on the specific Education Scotland webpage: ‘about global citizenship’. It states: “A coherent and holistic whole school approach to global citizenship is essential if we are to equip learners with the skills, knowledge, confidence and attitudes to thrive in our fast-changing globalised world.” (Education Scotland, a whole school approach to global citizenship).

<sup>3</sup> This is also advertised in the online video.

management systems of schooling, and is thin on pedagogical, political and critical intellectual fronts. Rather than any grappling with the complexities and ethical conundrums that a deeper engagement with global citizenship might necessitate, global citizenship education simply and straightforwardly can “equip learners with the skills, knowledge, confidence and attitudes to thrive in our fast-changing globalised world.” (Education Scotland, a whole school approach to global citizenship).

The cognitive adaptive orientation or ‘skills’ discourse, a reductionist and instrumentalist discourse that takes the place of a broader conception of Education, is deemed sufficient for the engendering of global citizenship sensibilities in youth, and there is no impediment to its direct alignment with an economic rationality wherein the skills discourse is most dominantly applied. Through global citizenship, learners can be ‘equipped’, reinforcing conceptions of knowledge as ‘content’ and ‘product’ that learners can be ‘equipped’ with. The use of ‘equip’ hints, therefore, at transmission and instrumentalist conceptions of education, rather than a process driven one (Kelly, 1999), counter-logical to expected processes of a deeper, critical global citizenship education as intrinsically transformative and process-oriented. Again, understandings of what is understood by ‘knowledge’ in relation to a conception of global citizenship is never defined or granted deeper interrogation, other than one can be ‘equipped’ with it, along with ‘skills’.

While ‘attitudes’ have a long history with global citizenship education, heralding a character education orientation as with the Alberta curriculum, more worrisome is the untroubled inclusion of a concept of ‘confidence’, an individualistic psycho-social orientation, which is granted no further justification for its inclusion into global citizenship. This accords with the Alberta curriculum too. Arguably, deeper political engagement with global citizenship would seek to develop a moral intellectual sensibility and consciousness in learning communities about their



own relative privilege within the West, and of their necessary implicatedness through that privilege in complex interconnected systems of global injustice. As similarly argued in the Alberta context, this might be a humbling, self-effacing realisation and a ‘difficult knowledge’ experience (Britzman, 2000), where pupils realise their complicity in systems of structural global injustice, inequity and oppression. Development of ‘confidence’ as a straightforward and achievable promise of GCE is therefore not obvious. Global citizenship thus becomes a place where dispirit intentions and objectives of the Scottish curriculum can be held together, a catch-all phrase for a wide range of curricular purposes, with little by way of how these are to be achieved. There is a general lack in explanation of how confidence-building may be contradictory with other stated intentions or how these criteria may be ill-matched. Another stated purpose of global citizenship is hinted in the phrase to ‘thrive in our fast-changing globalised world’, one which ties global citizenship unproblematically to the modernist project and where economic rationalities of competitive advantage and progressivism, invested in globalisation discourses, are validated. Global citizenship therefore is made to sit comfortably within the economic functionalism of globalisation and modernism, and there is no discord with a justice-oriented approach.

There are layers of instrumentality built into the discourses applied to global citizenship throughout the curriculum descriptions. As discussed previously, ‘school improvement’ mandates draw on global citizenship discourses, rendering them instrumental, managerialist and at the service of Education ministries dictates and control over school authorities. The language of ‘school improvement’ is the lexicon of educational leadership and management studies. Global citizenship becomes an opportunity to meet school improvement criteria set by local

school authorities in homage to Education Scotland's school management mandates, opening it up to becoming a technocratic exercise.

### **Global citizenship as an extension of nationalist citizenship**

The language of global citizenship incorporates several other discourses unproblematically and without any sense of potential ideological tensions or political contradictions. It therefore redefines global citizenship in terms of three wider educational discourses with which it becomes associated: education for citizenship, international education, and sustainable development education. This approach serves the interests of what can be viewed as a neatly organised document, without being accountable in providing access to any pedagogical reasons behind curricular decision-making. There is also no indication of how citizenship discourses, international education, and sustainable development education might raise separate political incompatibilities and ideological tensions, but are spoken of as serving "common outcomes and principles" (Education Scotland, About global citizenship), thus smoothing over conundrums and discordances and rendering the discourses politically neutral, commensurate and harmonious. This fails to accord with a critically conscious and politically engaging global citizenship invested in, amongst other things, ethical conundrums, vulnerabilities, uneven relations of power, contradictions. Nor does it speak of ambiguities, contestations, complexities, complicities and pluralities.

Importantly, international education reveals the nationalistic focus intended by the broad thematic of global citizenship. This is a global citizenship in which Scotland as nation state is central. Its primary advocacy is to serve the interests of the Scottish nation state. "For Scotland to flourish, we need to become global citizens", is the mantra. Just as with the Alberta curriculum discourse that extends the ambitions of a Canadian nation state, global citizenship in Scottish

policy language is not tied to responsibilities to the wider world and to global injustice, but to the “ambitions” and maintained privilege of the nation state. It is not intended to focus on Western complicity in global states of inequality and the role the nation state plays in ecological devastation elsewhere on the planet, but to maintain an uneven status quo where the interests and advantages Scotland may hold are not disturbed. It is a selective global citizenship that suits the interests of the state as the supreme entity to which the purposes of the curriculum are tied. The stated purpose of international education in CfE is, after all, one where “the focus should be on Scotland” and “Scotland’s place in the world” (Education Scotland, About global citizenship). It is nationally-focussed rhetoric that carries a patriotic, self-referencing and self-regarding message, not one inviting critique of the state, the negative role Scotland might have played in ongoing forms of global colonization or its oppressive history in relation to the slave trade. This focus on Scotland under a banner of ‘international education’ is where we challenge “our ambitions against the achievement of other countries and aiming to have a confident sense of self”. This is the voice of the state speaking, and the purposes of international education study serve the state’s competitive ambitions, rendering the learner a subject of these national ambitions and an instrument through which such ambitions are to be achieved. Further, the ‘confident sense of self’ aligns with the national ambitions of a ‘confident nation.’ One of the four capacities through which global citizenship is to be threaded across the curriculum is ‘confident individuals’. The confident, self-regarding state is a collection of confident individuals. The nationalistic determinism in CfE’s version of global citizenship is also evident in ‘responsible citizenship’, another one of the four capacities. ‘Responsible citizenship’ emphasizes citizenship as being about responsibility: responsibility to one-self, echoed in the descriptor of ‘confident individuals’ as needing to possess the capability of self-management (in

order not to be a burden on the neoliberal state) and ‘effective contributors’ (needing to be ‘self-reliant’), responsibility to others, and responsible to / for the state. The subjectification of the ‘global’ citizen as a responsible citizen of the state is individualistic, self-reliant, and compliant with its stated duties and needs, including the needs of the market – as a neoliberal subject, a *homo economicus*.

This coopting of the Scottish citizen subject is also evident in the rhetorical devices deployed in the online video of CfE, which reflects ideological manoeuvring. In it, the speaking voice (of a young person) tells us that “young people want to be ready; they want to build a better future”. Here, the curriculum recruits the pupil voice, speaking as if it were the pupil promoting global citizenship. The curriculum ‘knows’ what pupils (homogenously) feel, believe and say. Then it shifts into the voice of the nation state when speaking of Scotland’s ‘ambitions’ in presenting the ‘importance’ of international education. The shift in voice and the ideological maneuvering reflect a politics of convenience (Swanson, 2016) inherent in the language of CfE in promoting global citizenship across the curriculum.

### **Global citizenship as a critical space for examining national citizenship**

In the online version (Education Scotland, About global citizenship), the video offers some entrees to a more critical GCE, within some element of contradiction and limitation. As the 3.37 minute video opens, various phrases appear on the screen in consonance with images. These are ‘climate change’, ‘flooding’, ‘global justice’, and ‘sustainable development’, offering a range of global challenges that may be addressed through critical GCE perspectives. The narrating voice tells us that “this century will bring many challenges and opportunities”, presenting an image that accords with the words ‘conflict’ and ‘unrest’ when the word ‘challenges’ is enunciated, and a new image with words ‘renewable energy’ and ‘low carbon future’ when ‘opportunities’ is

spoken. Global citizenship is dichotomised thus into social and environmental categories, with opposing sentiments of ‘challenges’ and ‘opportunities’ correspondingly. The narration continues about the pupils: “That is why they are learning about justice, democracy, and human rights”, with an image of a person standing over a ballot box, thus reducing justice, democracy, and human rights actions to the civic duty to vote. This would accord with a *thin* or *shallow* view of democracy (Gandin & Apple, 2002; Furman & Shields, 2005), a less robust engagement of democracy that would otherwise promise greater critical GCE. Continuing with, “they are learning to live sustainably, and they are learning about Scotland and its place in the wider world. They are learning to be global citizens”, the image presented in the last statement is of networks of lines across the globe emanating from Scotland, reinforcing the centrality of the Scottish nation to a conception of global citizenship. Further, these three categorizations compartmentalize global citizenship into three “contexts of learning” to fit the presented structure of CfE. Global citizenship can be bent to fit categories that suit the interests of a national curriculum. After 37 seconds of the 3.37 video clip, the narration moves directly into a discussion on a ‘whole school approach’ and the ‘School Improvement Plan’, utilising populist global citizenship discourses to install a particular instrumentalist ideological view of school management systems and administration that would expect individuals to govern themselves via these management structures. An image of the school with a network of lines crossing classrooms and spaces of the school parallels the similar image of the networked globe. By mapping this image onto the image of a school, this reduces global citizenship to the instrument of CfE and its mandates of strategic school management systems.

### **Summing up key themes and contradictions**

In the Scottish educational context, global citizenship has been taken up as a recuperative discourse that stands for progressivism, but in effect does not disturb the status quo of existing relations as defined by the state and in her interests. Its emphasis tends to be one of responsabilism, where the element of activism is written out. While there have been some critiques, none go far enough to explicate the more sinister anti-democratic thread that is held by the deployment of global citizenship within the Scottish curriculum in so far as it is coopted into the instrumentalisms of cognitive adaptive / skills discourses, school management systems, economic rationalities, and discourses of nationalistic determinism. In both these locales, Scotland and Alberta, the particular framings of global citizenship hold in place the ontological and epistemic supremacy and privilege of the West, which GCE discourses do little to undo (Swanson, 2015).

### **Discussion – analysis and comparison**

In analysing the Albertan and Scottish texts, one thematic approach has been to consider how global citizenship education is taken-up in a cognitive adaptation or skills acquisition approach to the knowledge society as an instrumental curricular concept based on transmitting what are perceived as new and better skills. These conceptions of knowledge and learning underwrite a commodified education that commits to the economic rationalities forwarded by the nation state and its interests. Through global citizenship, learners can be ‘equipped’, reinforcing conceptions of knowledge as ‘content’ and ‘product’. This language aligns with two of the three archetypal curriculum planning models that Kelly (1999)<sup>4</sup> defines as underscoring particular, distinct conceptions of curriculum and knowledge and hence pedagogical processes. We argue that when global citizenship is tied to a transmission and instrumentalist conceptions of education, rather

---

<sup>4</sup> Kelly’s (1999) three models can be understood as: 1) curriculum as content and education as transmission; 2) curriculum as product and education as instrumental; and 3) curriculum as process and education as development.

than a process driven one, and when skills and attitudes are reduced to ‘getting along’ and interpersonal relations, ‘responsible citizenship’, as articulated in both the Alberta and Scottish curricula, then it becomes predominantly an instrument of social reproduction and the ambitions of the nation state.

In reference to critiques of global citizenship as taken up in the neoliberal project, Hartung (2015) provides a description of responsible citizenship in terms of a notion of ‘responsibilisation’. She notes:

This critical literature suggests a notion of responsibility closely tied to neoliberal processes by which young people are positioned to govern themselves and others, a process often referred to as ‘responsibilisation’. ... It is through such regulatory processes that the ‘modern subject’ is produced and reproduced; an increasing emphasis on self-determination and active citizenship is used to ensure realms outside the state (i.e. the social, private, market and civil society) “function to the benefit of the nation as a whole” (Rose, 1996: 44). (Hartung, 2005, p. 5)

The responsibilities of global citizenship are not those of political contestation against state injustices, but rather ones that reinforce the authority and unquestioned righteousness of a paternalistic state. Their social reproductive function celebrates patriotism and an uncritical adulation of statehood. Rather than opening up pluralistic epistemological alternatives and multiple perspectives, there is a singular logic that functions to support the economic rationalities of the state and its ambitions. The subjectification of the global citizen as one responsible to the state is also one which is individualistic, self-reliant, and compliant with the state’s duties and

ambitions, including its global economic competitiveness, of which the nationalistic global citizen is an instrument.

## **Conclusion**

This paper analyzed conceptualizations of educating for global citizenship in the Alberta Social Studies curriculum and in the Scottish national curriculum. We considered the extent to which these documents opened up critical spaces for a complex, ethical understanding and calls to action related to global injustices and political responsibilities or whether they foreclose important opportunities. The intention was to go beyond a technical critique of global citizenship implementation in schools toward a critical understanding of the ideological motivations at play within the discursive manoeuvrings deployed in educational curricular documents. These ideological movements, as effects of power and the political, either render global citizenship potentially ineffective and politically blind, or may realize it as socially and politically revealing, ethically capacitating and capable of fostering critical consciousness, or may be a contradictory amalgamation of both positions.

Arguably, while each curriculum spoke to possibilities for criticality and a transformative educational experience, neither one sought to disrupt the status quo, nor did either offer sustained opportunities for deeply political engagement with inequalities, conflict, injustice and oppression. In both senses, neither were strongly or consistently transformational, an expectation of a critical GCE. While critical openings were evident in both curricula to a greater or lesser extent and with situated national cultural emphasis, some critical openings were either foreclosed or muted by a strong normative idea of an expanding citizenship responsibility from local to global via the nation state that fails to account for complexities and complicities. Further, where global citizenship language made overtures to the more critical and politically engaging, the



language was quickly coopted by cognitive adaption / skills discourses, and in the case of Scotland's CfE, school management discourses, as well as economic rationalities formulated by nationalistic determinism and an unfettered promotion of the interests of the state.

A main difference was that global citizenship was predominantly framed in the Albertan Social Studies curriculum, while in the Scottish instance, global citizenship was applied across the curriculum as a cohesive element set to connect the disjoint threads and competing intentions of the curriculum. It therefore becomes nebulousness as a flouting signifier for almost any curricular intention. This accounts for some of the differing emphases between them. In the Albertan context, there is a strong cognitive adaptation discourse in the curriculum that is at least in parallel if not strongly framing epistemological pluralism. The cognitive adaption was also present in CfE, but the epistemological pluralism tended to be somewhat absent in the Scottish context. This may be because Canada has a leading history of national multiculturalism and a number of First Nations (indigenous populations) and a strong liberal humanist idea of diversity as an asset (Pashby, 2013), whereas Scotland arguably sees itself, with a sense of pride, as being at the heart of the Scottish Enlightenment, a key contributor to Western Enlightenment, thus, it could be argued, any motivations to contest a dominant Eurocentricism culturally, linguistically or epistemologically would be muted. Importantly, the liberal humanistic tradition of national multiculturalism also forecloses the critical potential of a global lens. Further, the school improvement and school management discourses play a fairly strong role in the Scottish context enabled by a discourse on integrations, whole school approach, and interdisciplinarity. This orientation aligns with its 'futuristic agenda' (Moir, 2015) as well. In both contexts, students are expected, through responsabilisation discourses, to adapt to the idea of new complexities and to an individual sense of becoming enlightened that leads to social cohesion and inclusion into the

status quo. Here, it is notable that a critical GCE would not take the status quo for granted, but rather would seek to build an epistemologically pluralistic version of education for thinking otherwise.

We found that the centrality of the nation state to discourses on global citizenship, particularly in the Scottish case, defeats the wider political purposes of global citizenship that exceed and disrupt the normative, constraining and celebratory discourses of nationhood and nationalism. In both contexts, economic rationalities of competitive advantage and progressivism, invested in globalisation discourses, are validated. Global citizenship therefore sits comfortably within the economic functionalism of globalisation, and there is no discord with a justice-oriented approach. There is also language smoothing over conundrums and discordances that render the discourses of global citizenship politically neutral, commensurate and harmonious. This fails to accord with a critically conscious and politically engaging global citizenship invested in ethical conundrums, uneven relations of power, contestations, complexities and complicities.

In conclusion, we argue that if GCE curriculum discourses, through discursive ideological maneuvering, are made to pay homage to state interests and the economic instrumentalities of the neoliberal state, their critical possibilities and transformative political potential is undermined in favour of that which takes the place of a 'critical' and progressive educational approach. It could be argued that this may be more harmful in its false promises, and which may - in its according practices - have a deleterious and anti-democratic effect on youth and society at large.

## References:

- AE (Alberta Education). (2005a). *Social studies: Kindergarten to grade 12*. Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: The Crown in Right of Alberta.
- AE (Alberta Education). (2005b). *The heart of the matter: Character and citizenship education in Alberta's schools*. Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: The Crown in Right of Alberta.
- Agbaria, A. K. (2011). The social studies education discourse community on globalization: Exploring the agenda of preparing citizens for the global age. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 15(1), 57–74.
- Andreotti, V. (2006). Soft vs. critical global citizenship education. *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*, 3, 40–51.
- Andreotti, V. (2010). Global education in the 21st century: Two different perspectives on the 'post-' of postmodernism. *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning*, 2(2), 5–22.
- Andreotti, V., & De Souza, L. M. (2008). Global learning in the 'knowledge society'. *ZEP*, 9. Retrieved from [http://www.waxmann.com/index.php?id=zeitschriftendetails&no\\_cache=1&eID=download&id\\_artikel=ART100990&uid=frei](http://www.waxmann.com/index.php?id=zeitschriftendetails&no_cache=1&eID=download&id_artikel=ART100990&uid=frei)
- Andreotti, V., Jefferess, D., Pashby, K., Rowe, C., Tarc, P., & Taylor, L. (2010). Difference and conflict in global citizenship in higher education in Canada. *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning*, 2(3), 5–24.
- Biesta, G.J.J. (2008). What kind of citizen? What kind of democracy? Citizenship Education and the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence. *Scottish Educational Review*, 40(2), 38-52.
- Britzman, D. P. (2000). If the story cannot end: Deferred action, ambivalence and difficult knowledge. In R. I. Simon, S. Rosenberg, & C. Eppert (Eds.), *Between hope and despair: Pedagogy and the remembrance of historical trauma* (pp. 27–56). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Clausen, K. & Lamisko, L. (2005). Teaching for Democracy and the "Global Citizen" in Canadian Social Studies. *International Journal of Learning*, 12(5): 323–331.
- Delanty, G. (2006). Nationalism and cosmopolitanism: The paradox of modernity. In G. Delanty & K. Kumar (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of nations and nationalism* (pp. 357–368). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Education Scotland, (What is Curriculum for Excellence?). Retrieved from: <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningandteaching/thecurriculum/whatiscurriculumforexcellence/index.asp>

- Education Scotland, (a whole school approach to global citizenship). Retrieved from:  
[http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/video/d/video\\_tcm4736346.asp?strReferringChannel=learningandteaching&strReferringPageID=tcm:4-628609-64&class=l4+d139775](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/video/d/video_tcm4736346.asp?strReferringChannel=learningandteaching&strReferringPageID=tcm:4-628609-64&class=l4+d139775)
- Education Scotland, (About global citizenship). Retrieved from:  
<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningandteaching/learningacrossthecurriculum/themesacrosslearning/globalcitizenship/about/index.asp>
- Education Scotland, (International Education). Retrieved from:  
<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningandteaching/learningacrossthecurriculum/themesacrosslearning/globalcitizenship/internationaleducation/index.asp>
- Furman, G. C., & Shields, C. M. (2005). How can educational leaders promote and support social justice and democratic community in schools. In W. A. Firestone & C. Riehl (Eds.), *A New Agenda for Educational Leadership* (pp. 119-137). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Foucault, M. (1982). The Subject and Power. [Trans. L. Sawyer]. *Critical Inquiry*, 8, 777-795.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. Florence, KY: Routledge.
- Gandin, L. A., & Apple, M. W. (2002). Thin versus thick democracy in education: porto alegre and the creation of alternatives to neo-liberalism. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 12(2), 99 - 116.
- Gilbert, J. (2007). Catching the knowledge wave: Redefining knowledge for the post-industrial age. *Education Canada* 47(3),1-8.
- Government of Alberta Department of Education. (2013, May 6). Ministerial Order #001/2013.  
<https://education.alberta.ca/media/1626588/ministerial-order-on-student-learning.pdf>
- Hartung, C. (2015). Global citizenship incorporated: competing responsabilisations in the education of global citizens. *Discourse: Studies in the Politics of Education*.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2015.1104849>
- Kachur, J. L. (2008). Human rights imperialism: Third way education as the new cultural imperialism. In A. Abdi & L. Shultz (Eds.), *Educating for human rights and global citizenship* (pp. 177-192). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Kelly, A. V. (1999) *The Curriculum: Theory and Practice*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (London: Sage).
- Kelly, P. & Harrison, L. (2009). *Working in Jamie's kitchen: salvation, passion and young workers*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Kennelly, J., & Llewellyn, K. R. (2011). Educating for active compliance: Discursive constructions in citizenship education. *Citizenship Studies*, 15(6–7), 897–914.
- Knight Abowitz, K., & Harnish, J. (2006). Contemporary discourses of citizenship. *Review of Educational Research*, 76(4), 653–690.
- MacLure, M. (2003). *Discourse in educational and social research*. Buckingham, England: Open University.
- Marshall, H. (2009). Educating the European citizen in the global age: Engaging with the postnational and identifying a research agenda. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 41(2), 247–267.
- Mignolo, W. D. (2000). The many faces of cosmo-polis: Border thinking and critical cosmopolitanism. *Public Culture*, 12(3), 721–748.
- Moir, J. (2015). *Global Citizenship Education: A Sociological Critique*. Proceedings of the 4<sup>th</sup> Multidisciplinary Academic Conference (ELT), Prague, Czechoslovakia.
- Ornstein, A. C., & Hunkins, Francis. P. (2013). *Curriculum: Foundation, principles and issues*, 3.
- Pashby, K. (2011). Cultivating global citizens: Planting new seeds or pruning the perennials? Looking for the citizen-subject in global citizenship education theory. *Globalisation, Societies, and Education*, 9(3/4), 427–442.
- Pashby, K. (2013). *Related and conflated: A theoretical and discursive framing of multiculturalism and global citizenship education in the Canadian context* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Toronto, Canada. Available online via tspace Autumn 2013.
- Pashby, K., Ingram, L., and Joshee, R. (2014). Discovering, recovering, and covering-up Canada: Tracing historical citizenship discourses in K–12 and adult immigrant citizenship education. *Canadian Journal of Education/ Revue canadienne de l'éducation*, 37:2, 1–26.
- Pashby, K. (2015). Conflations, possibilities, and foreclosures: Global citizenship education in a multicultural context. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 45(4), 345–366.
- Richardson, G. (2008). Conflicting imaginaries: Global citizenship education in Canada as a site of contestation. In M. O'Sullivan & K. Pashby (Eds.), *Citizenship education in the era of globalization: Canadian perspectives* (pp. 53–70). Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense.
- Rogers, R. (2011). *An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education*. London: Routledge.
- Rose, N. (1996). The death of the social: reconfiguring the territory of government. *Economy & Society*, 25, 327–366.

- Scottish Government. (2008). *Building the Curriculum 3: a framework for learning and teaching*. Edinburgh, Scottish Government.
- Strand, T. (2010). The Making of a New Cosmopolitanism, *Studies in Philosophy of Education*, 29: 229-242.
- Swanson, D.M. (2010). Value in Shadows: A contribution to Values Education in our times. In: T. Lovat R. Toomey, N. Clement (Eds.). *International Research Handbook on Values Education and Student Wellbeing*, Amsterdam: Springer, pp. 137 – 152.
- Swanson, D.M. (2011). Parallaxes and paradoxes of Global Citizenship: Critical reflections and possibilities of praxis in/through an international online course. In Lynnette Shultz, Ali A. Abdi and George H. Richardson (Eds.), *Global Citizenship Education in Post Secondary Institutions: Theories, Practices, Policies*, (pp. 120-139). New York: Peter Lang Publishers.
- Swanson, D.M. (2012). The owl spreads its wings: global and international education within the local from critical perspectives. In Y. Hébert & A. Abdi (Eds.), *Critical Perspectives on International Education*, (pp. 333 - 347). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Swanson, D.M. (2015). Ubuntu, indigeneity, and an ethic for decolonizing global citizenship, In A. A. Abdi, L. Shultz, & T. Pillay (Eds.), *Decolonizing Global Citizenship Education*. (pp. 27-38). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Swanson, D.M. (2016). Democracy, Education and a Politics of Indignation. In, P. Carr & P.L. Thomas, J. Gorlewski & B.J. Porflilio. *Democracy and Decency: What does Education have to do with it?* Charlotte, North Carolina: Information Age Publishing.
- Taylor, L. (2011). Beyond paternalism: Global education with preservice teachers as a practice of implication. In V. Andreotti & M. Souza (Eds.), *Postcolonial perspectives on global citizenship education* (pp. 177–199). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Tully, J. (2000). *The challenge of reimagining citizenship and belonging in multicultural and multinational societies*. In C. McKinnon & I. Hampsher-Monk (Eds.), *The demands of citizenship* (pp. 212–234). London, England: Continuum.
- UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). (2015). *Global Citizenship: Topics and Learning Objectives*. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002329/232993e.pdf>.
- WCP. (Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education). (2000, February 15). *Foundation document for the development of the common curriculum framework for social studies kindergarten to grade 12*. Retrieved from <http://www.education.alberta.ca/media/455339/ssfoundation.pdf>