

Internationalizing Social Studies and History Education:

A 21st Century Imperative

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“Global educators share certain characteristic instructional strategies: they confront stereotypes and exotica and resist simplification of other cultures and global issues; foster the habit of examining multiple perspectives; teach about power, discrimination, and injustice; and provide cross-cultural experiential learning.”

Merry M. Merryfield, (2008)

Introduction

What really are the purposes of schooling and education in our society? What are the roles of other institutions in society within the context of teaching and learning? Are socialization, assimilation and passivity all we desire of our institutions? Are we so uncomfortable and wary of our “way of life” that we can’t even trust ourselves? What good is a society that won’t question itself? These and others are the questions that need to be asked, particularly within social studies and history education. What of higher goals such as transforming and transgression? Is the nature of humanity such that comfort is the ultimate...and given the current state of society, perhaps comfortably numb? Why does it seem that reaction is the method rather than proactive engagement? Why does it take extreme events to lull us awake as to possibilities?

We tell the stories of the white males heroes of history and provide lip service to the other in the form of celebratory months. Many stories are missing. We often deaden social studies and history to the point of meaningless pabulum. Many no longer care about who did what to whom and when... and no wonder, as we are constantly reminded

that there is one “right” answer – and this to a question no one really wants to ask anyway.

We often place everything into neat little categories so as to make sense of a difficult world. And these categories only serve to hinder. Perhaps the most accepted approach regarding social studies and history education is transmitting essential knowledge , skills, and dispositions so as to ensure the status quo. We equate more information with knowledge and learning and place this information in subject disciplines. But do we go through life moving from subject to subject in these easily compartmentalized categories; or do we integrate more holistically? We need schooling and social studies and history education that encourages participation, critical analysis, and action (Kincheloe, 2005).

Social studies and history education need a rethinking... as today the world truly is a smaller place and we really are part of a global neighborhood. People are instantaneously connected to global events through media, technology, trade, and global issues such as conflict, climate, and socio-economics. Borders do not mean the same as they did just a few years ago. A “globalized” world necessitates international connections, thus challenging traditional conceptions of nationalism, exceptionalism, and hegemony. This article investigates internationalizing of social studies and history education and suggests that we need to contextualize the issues and investigation of global connections better through its teaching and learning. The article also suggests there are threats to the public sphere and to emancipatory local to global connections requiring critical approaches to social, political, economic and education issues. Thus,

providing international context and connections in social studies and history education are imperative in the world of the 21st century.

Social studies and history teaching and learning must include education for a global perspective so that students might also become responsible “active” citizens of the world (Tucker & Evans, 1996; Zinn, 2005; Chapin, 2003). A critical component of education in general, and social studies and history education specifically, is to promote an understanding of diversity and the “story” of humanity at home and abroad: “integrating global realities within an existing school curriculum meets the needs of an ever-changing, ethnically diverse, increasingly interdependent, international community” (Tucker & Evans, 1996). World citizenship requires a global / international social studies and history education.

Global / international education efforts for the 21st century must begin with an attempt to understand globalization. Globalization can be defined as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (McLaren, 2006). In turn, critical research in social studies and history education attempts to challenge globalization as unbridled neoliberal hegemony (capitalism’s shock doctrine). Merryfield (2008) states that globalization:

refers to the compression of the world and to the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole. This process is ongoing and all of us, young and old, Westerners and non-Westerners, are inescapably involved in it. The compression of the world is real. People witness it in their daily lives, in the foods they eat, in the TV programs they watch, in the cars they drive, in the

resses and costumes, in the people they choose to govern them, and so on (pp. 37-38).

Clearly, globalization is increasingly influential in many aspects of 21st century life. Therefore understanding it through the internationalizing of social studies and history education is vital. Schools must provide opportunities for children to “develop the appropriate cognitive skills to understand and explain the globalization process and to critically analyze its impact on their lives and the lives of people around them” (Wells, 2008). Above all students need to know how to impact the global system as world citizens and as advocates of a well-grounded position or point of view. This suggests that students must acquire both a new knowledge base and a skill set. Social studies and history education offer an appropriate space for global education (and for the development of this knowledge and skills) – but other disciplines are ripe for integration as well. At its core, global education is really about analyzing the links between cultures and people (Chapin, 2003); it must be better integrated in all classrooms, and thus critically researched as well.

Internationalizing social studies and history education teaching and learning in these ways could provide the opportunity to deepen our understanding and appreciation of others in the world, something essential to our roles and responsibilities as global citizens. Given the global interconnectedness of the world today, the global context must be present. According to Merryfield (2008), students must develop a global perspective that will emphasize cross-cultural experiential learning and stress commonalities in cultures that transcend diversity. Contextualizing American history through a global perspective allows it to become more alive, for example.

Increased globalization presents many challenges for societies and the institution of education has a responsibility for addressing these “globalized” issues. Education in general should play a strong role and is enhanced through internationalizing partnerships and projects. In addition, cultural competence, collaboration skills, and an appreciation of global connections can be facilitated through cross-cultural experiences both locally and globally. Many schools, colleges and universities are recognizing the need for global competence and promoting understanding among cultures (Dan-xia, 2008). In addition, linking multicultural education and global issues is facilitated through meaningful international education projects (Wells, 2008). James suggests that internationalizing education develops a sense of interconnectedness, empathy, and tolerance, which are much needed in today’s world (2005). A way to move forward is to share ideas and engage in collaborative internationalizing of the curriculum by integrating thematic approaches, present to past connections, a cross-cultural approach, and issues / problem based strategies in social studies and history education.

Internationalizing

Schools in the United States must provide opportunities for students to learn about the world: who people are, what they do, and how they live. Students must learn how to get along with all people - within the U.S. and around the world - as responsible citizens of both. Education for civic competence, for responsible national and world citizenship, falls within the domain of social studies and history instruction and learning. We must rethink teaching and learning so as to enable these ideas and integrating music, movies,

art, and literature focusing on global issues or celebrating global culture offers a great opportunity; thus enabling many opportunities for critical qualitative research projects.

Fortunately, increased and improved research on global education / internationalizing is being undertaken at many levels of education. In addition, numerous international education experiences focusing on local to global connections, study trips, technology access, etc. have contributed to this “new found” interest. Our critical qualitative approach suggests that educators at all levels must be engaged in collaborative research, teaching, and service (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Critical qualitative educational research highlights the need to cultivate knowledge, skills, and dispositions for global and civic awareness and responsibility (Loewen, 2007; Ochoa-Becker, 2006; Ross, 2006). Additionally, to be engaged, global citizens, students need exposure to multiple literacies and diverse perspectives (Durham & Kellner, 2005; Giroux, 2006; Silberman-Keller, 2008).

We live in a world made up of many texts; it is essential that students and educators develop multiple literacies that will facilitate the reading of signs, symbols, and images (texts) of that world. We must develop the critical capacity for “new operational and cultural ‘knowledge’ in order to acquire a global perspective that provides access to new forms of work, civic and private practices in their everyday lives” (Lankshear & Knoble, 2003). Our educational approaches could be the place to enable the critical investigation of meaningful knowledge and issues, debates regarding globalization, and relevant problem-based global education (within a context of social studies and history education) that can provide the context for developing the skills engage in active transformation for social justice. “Reading the world and acting with the world” through

context and relevant connections provides the opportunity to apply knowledge and develop skills in critical ways, as Kincheloe (2005) recommends. Responsible global citizenship requires knowledge of “others” in the world, whoever they might be. It also requires the skills to understand and act in the best interest of the majority of the people. The knowledge base should include an understanding of who the other people in the world are, what they do, and where they are. The skill set should include inquiry and critical literacy/thinking skills, leading to activism, knowledge, skills, and dispositions natural within social studies and history education.

Increased globalization and internationalizing not only present many challenges to the economy, society, politics and culture, but also has important implications for education, and the institution of education has the responsibility for addressing these issues. However, there is an increasing concern that educational systems throughout the world are not adequately preparing students for understanding of the world’s cultures, economies and political relationships (Asia Society, 2001). Educators and students should develop the habit of thinking of global ramifications: Is this in the common good? Will this protect the rights of all people (Merryfield & Wilson, 2005)? To create a positive atmosphere, in which students are encouraged to participate in global discourse and engage in global issues in today’s multicultural society, educators need to, first of all, develop multiple perspectives and understand the experiences and points of view of people different from themselves. Meaningful international education projects can help educators achieve that (Wells, 2008). As James (2005) suggested, internationalizing education can develop a sense of interconnectedness, empathy and tolerance, which are much needed in today’s world.

G. Fry (2009) suggests that positive features of globalization has ushered in a new era of cross cultural possibilities – especially with regard to education; and that there is a move from nationalism to internationalism that will compel us to develop collaborative education projects. P. Altbach (2009) reiterates this need and encourages project development with social studies and history education – humane interactions (often in the form of education collaboratives). Friedman has been suggesting these agreements for some years now as stated in *The World is Flat* (2007) and *Hot, Flat and Crowded* (2008).

Linking Internationalizing and Social Justice

Social studies need be about social justice for social efficacy, empowerment, and emancipation. What is the role of schools in promoting social justice? How do the current practices in education and the teaching and learning process impact social justice? The overt goal of our schools is to enhance knowledge, skills, and dispositions development for our children. Unfortunately these goals are more often than not centered around very basic components that decision-makers have perceived as “essential” for being productive citizens in this country, or of the world. These goals therefore seem to be driven by the ultimate goal of preparing our youth for the world of work. Social studies traditionally has not been about questioning or inquiry. Internationalizing for social justice means a social studies and history education that is linked to addressing local and global issues.

Ultimately, we must prepare children for active participation as global citizens; and this means that we have a responsibility to teach for social justice and a more critical teaching and learning. This critical pedagogy is aware and unafraid of childhood desire, often connecting it to children’s efforts to understand the world and themselves:

Childhood desire is a natural phenomenon that is unfortunately often driven and dictated by the dominant culture. The idea is to critically analyze these issues and also provide the critical efficacy children need so as to facilitate this natural desire and wonder for learning about and coping with their world.

What then is meant by teaching for social justice? Social justice education moves beyond traditional essentialist practice by suggesting the inclusion of student and issues centered approaches to teaching and learning. Advocates for social justice education suggest that our schools are often demeaning and disempowering places where children are either bored into submission or where the transmission and socialization techniques destroy any hope for critical thinking and problem solving development. The opportunity for teaching social justice in schools is great but we must discard the traditional transmission model of social studies in favor of a transformational model. Social studies and history education must allow for investigating controversy and issues in history rather than memorizing bland facts. Strategies such as debates, simulations, role-playing, cooperative projects, and what if inquiry investigations facilitate a transformational model. Social studies should be a transformational process for both the individual and society (Loewen, 2005).

Many suggest that social justice be a major focus of social studies and history curriculum and instruction in our schools. The contention is that “traditional” social studies and history education education should be up for debate; for the history of social studies traditionally has been to perpetuate the status quo and often only allows one viewpoint regarding history. With the focus on essential knowledge and skills and the growing accountability movement, social studies and history education often remains

reactionary so as to placate critics. Debate within social studies or history education rarely centers around social justice or issues-oriented curriculum. The debate has been on what content should be taught and how that content should be “covered.” American and World History teaching for example is often chronological moving from war to war and hero to hero with any context or connections to our kids’ lives sorely missing. A curriculum is needed that encourages participation, critical analysis, and action.

Directly tied to teaching for social justice as stated previously is the concept of social efficacy. If one looks at the traditional goals of social studies and history education one can interpret these goals are at least somewhat implying some form of social efficacy. The critique here is that both social studies / history education and efficacy mean much more than we have traditionally applied them in the teaching and learning process. Unfortunately, or fortunately, depending on one’s point of view, the truly meaningful and lifelong connections in social efficacy have been provided outside of the classroom, especially outside of the social studies and history classroom... And this is the real issue. Again, social studies and history should be about allowing kids and teachers opportunities for choice, investigation, creativity, questioning, and debate. These are skills vital for a sense of self-efficacy and for promoting a progressive democracy, thus addressing local and global issues. These ideas suggest the development of responsible global citizenship for the propensity for thinking, valuing, and acting, rather than for the promotion of particular thoughts, actions, or values (James, 2005).

Rethinking

Internationalizing social studies and history education is vital for the world of the 21st century. The onslaught of neoliberalism, corporatization, standardization, testing, and the continuing attack on public education and educators in the guise of educational reform necessitates a local to global context in social studies and history education. Ongoing issues with equity and social justice tied to race, ethnicity, class, orientation, age, and ability linking to schooling, education, teaching and learning must be addressed. The struggle between unbridled capitalism and democracy warrant these investigations in the 21st century, hopefully leading to advocacy and activism and a transformation of social studies and history education.

Empowering and emancipating educators and students requires a redesigning of teaching and learning to demonstrate a truly democratic way of life, to be consistent with the ideals of equity and social justice, to be informed by research that is “educative” (Zeichner, 2009). According to Goodman, Ullrich and Nana (2012), a “triple consciousness’ based on Freire’s critical consciousness is much needed for equity and social justice in a teaching and learning context. We must model critical multicultural, social justice education (culturally responsive pedagogy), work to transform perspectives of all education, society and its stakeholders, and engage in critical emancipatory research leading to advocacy and activism. Hopefully, an internationalized social studies and history education can facilitate this.

We must continually challenge the corporatized, unequal, and essentialist framing of education. Education is both a political and ethical endeavor hoping to facilitate critically active teachers and students anxious to engage in the world. Linking the process to the community and the world provides the context we all need to understand and

advocate for equity and social justice. A critical social studies and history education that investigates these hard issues locally and globally and facilitates international partnerships can only lead to empowering educators and students as change agents.

Fortunately, increased and improved research on internationalizing is being undertaken at many levels of education. These approaches highlight the need to cultivate knowledge, skills, and dispositions for global and civic awareness and responsibility (Loewen, 2007; Ochoa-Becker, 2006; Ross, 2006). Additionally, to be engaged, global citizens, students need exposure to multiple literacies and diverse perspectives (Durham & Kellner, 2005; Giroux, 2006; Silberman-Keller, 2008). Each of these should be ultimate goals within an internationalized social studies and history education.

Conclusions

Current education “reform” approaches, often including globalization, are true threats to a contextualized and internationalized social studies and history education. Rewriting history to deny controversies, ignoring present to past connections in social studies, disallowing multiple perspectives, ignoring local to global connections, and applying neoliberal agenda to social studies and history curriculum and instruction are all issues to challenge. Ideas of exceptionalism, hegemony, empire, nationalism, and blind patriotism, often found in traditional social studies and history education are ripe for critical investigation (Freire, 1990, Gay, 2010).

“Humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of the human narrative or story approaches, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The fundamental

idea of critical inquiry in social studies and history education is that education is life and experience as well. Therefore, education are the construction and reconstruction of the human story or endeavor, hopefully within an equity and social justice framing, for the betterment of society. Accordingly, the responsibility of critical social studies and history education in an international context is to investigate the hard questions, to critically analyze issues and to suggest alternatives, and to render their experiences in meaningful ways so as to challenge issues of power and privilege.

Social studies and history education need not be the archaic and disempowering endeavors that they presently are. Our children and the future of the globe deserve more. Progressives have too often allowed the powers that be to establish and maintain the status quo. Activist educators should be proactive by encouraging critical and empowering approaches in schools with social studies education taking the lead.

A “powerful” social studies and history education that focuses on the suggested approaches by re-establishing the controversy, story, problem solving, and relevance of social studies and history for social efficacy is vital. These classrooms can become empowering and meaningful through the model suggested. Social studies and history can be made a transformative process for individuals and society. The development and transformation of social efficacy for our kids really demands this.

A major rationale for schooling is to prepare students for their future. Schools should therefore allow controversy into their classrooms because students will have to encounter controversy and social issues throughout their lives. Instead of resorting to complete withdrawal or violent rage, students would be encouraged to develop peace-making and conflict resolution strategies. But many students will not have exposure to

controversy and social issues in their classes. Social studies and history education without controversy cannot really be social studies or history education. It is more like social studies/ history light. This is a disservice to students, teachers, and society.

A transformative social justice framework need be the focus of social studies and history education. Only through such a framework can we hope to counter hegemony and other social issues exacerbated by unbridled capitalism and other local / global issues. It is high time to rethink social studies and history education for social justice. A society not open and comfortable enough to allow for critique cannot progress and is a society in decline (Loewen, 2009). Critical teaching and learning for social justice sees the true purpose of education as the democratization of society, the highest good, not the protection of the interests of the establishment and unethical minority which dominates American political, economic, and social culture (Apple and Beane, 1995).

Many critical educators such as Zinn, Takaki, Loewen, Giroux, Merryfield and others have called for a critical and global approach to social studies and history education. This internationalizing can only enhance a cross-cultural and human approach to teaching and learning by allowing models, ideas, and perspectives from “elsewhere”. Such approaches can only facilitate a holistic / global investigation of issues such as conflict, change, human rights and needs, societal and global issues, and hopefully even democracy and human progress.

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Internationalizing Links

Links to Readings

Comparative Education Review

<http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublication?journalCode=compeducrevi>

International Education

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_education

Comparative Education

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparative_education

What is Global Education?

<http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/nscentre/GE/GE-Guidelines/GEgs-chap1.pdf>

Global Education as Good Pedagogy

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/758>

Importance of Global Education

<http://geography.about.com/od/teachgeography/a/Teaching-Global-Education-In-The-Classroom.htm>

Global Education Perspectives

http://www.educ.ualberta.ca/css/Css_38_3/ARburnouf_global_awareness_perspectives.htm

Global Education

<http://www.globaleducation.edu.au/>

Global Education Magazine

<http://www.globaleducationmagazine.com/>

Global Education First

<http://www.globaleducationfirst.org/>

Center for Global Education

<http://globaled.us/>

Global Partnership for Education

<http://www.globalpartnership.org/>

Globalisation

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03050060500150906>

Educational Transfer

http://www.wwords.co.uk/pdf/freetoview.asp?j=rcie&vol=1&issue=1&year=2006&article=2_Beech_RCIE_1_1_web

Reflections on Theory...

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/full/10.1086/589978>

Comparative Education

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03054980903216341>

Organizations

Comparative and International Education Society

<http://www.cies.us/>

World Council for Comparative Education Societies

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Council_for_Comparative_Education_Societies

<http://www.wcces.com/>

Institute of International Education

<http://www.iie.org/en>

NAFSA: Association of International Educators
<http://www.nafsa.org/>

ACEI list of international organizations
<http://acei.org/general-links-resources/international-organizations-education>