

Preparing Social Workers for Global Gaze: Locating Global Citizenship Within Social Work Curricula

Abstract

Institutions of higher education have been particularly vulnerable to the pressures of globalization, resulting in policies and ensuing curricula that look to address the needs of students to be better prepared for living and working in a world in which global awareness, and perhaps even global identity, are requisites for success. Social work education is uniquely positioned to adapt its curricula for successful student outcomes in an increasingly globalized world. The challenges associated with social welfare, which have intensified under globalization, has been a longstanding concern of social work policy and practice. This article suggests strategies for integrating global citizenship education within social work studies, recognizing the affinities that exist between contemporary conceptualizations of global citizenship and social work practice. The article proposes four interrelated components that might be strategically implemented within existing social work curriculum, in consideration of the contextual ethos of the respective school of social work.

Keywords: globalization, global citizenship, social work curriculum, higher education

Introduction

Globalization has sparked a renewed interest in exploring contemporary approaches to social work, where practitioners are called upon to work with individuals, families, and communities impacted by a phenomenon that "disrupts the social and economic arrangements of society and is erosive of existing arrangements of welfare" (Pugh & Gould, 2000, p. 125). Held (2010, p. 29) summarizes globalization as "the widening, intensifying, speeding up and growing impact of worldwide interconnectedness". Osler and Starkey (2003) characterize it as a process that leaves not one person so isolated—regardless of where they may reside—that their life is not in some way influenced by events taking place in another distant part of the world. As the impact of globalization has rendered the planet a more deeply interrelated place, where, in the words of Held (2010, p. 36), "the fates of nations are significantly entwined", the notion of global citizenship has surfaced as one response to navigating an increasingly interdependent world.

It is well noted in the literature that globalization has impacted higher education policy and curricula worldwide. Over the past few decades colleges and universities around the world have been increasingly focussed on new internationalization agendas and activities, largely driven by the forces of globalization (Fanghanel & Cousin, 2012; Hanson, 2010; Khoo, 2011; Maringe, 2012). Post-secondary educational institutions are re-examining their policies and practices in response to globalization with respect to workplace skills required by graduates (Sperandio, Grudzinski-Hall, & Stewart-Gambino, 2010), the internationalizing of education (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013a), and the introduction of world citizenship education (So, Lee, Park, & Kang, 2014). Strategies and ensuing curricula are being explored that address the

needs of students to be better prepared for living and working in a world in which global awareness, and perhaps even global identity, are requisites for success.

Arnot (2009) sees modern educational reform—with its new agenda variously referred to as global education, global citizenship education or cosmopolitanism—as encouraging the acquisition of *global gaze*. According to Hendershot and Sperandio (2009), globalization has made it necessary for the international community to adopt practices of universal moral imperatives and to rethink the practice of global citizenship. Ong (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2005, p.74) contends that the forces of globalization have created a new kind of citizen, unfettered by geopolitical boundaries and national loyalties, who are being transformed into flexible citizens by developing multiple transnational allegiances.

Social work education is uniquely situated to adapt its curricula to accommodate the needs of its students in preparing for the effects of globalization, particularly in view of the discipline's scope of practice as defined by its three principal levels of engagement; micro, mezzo, and macro. The challenges associated with social welfare, which have intensified under globalization in both local and global environments, has been a longstanding concern of social work policy and practice. The Canadian Association of Social Workers' (2005, p. 3) Code of Ethics states that the social work profession has "a particular interest in the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and/or living in poverty". In order for social workers to "understand the forces of globalization [and] to represent themselves in an informed fashion in international circles" (Hare, 2004, p. 408), social work students would be well served by a curriculum that promotes global awareness and introduces students to the notion of global citizenship.

Although the inclusion of international perspectives in social work education has had a relatively lengthy history, social work research literature acknowledges that greater attention is needed concerning the impact of globalization. Hawkins and Knox (2014, p. 248) suggest "a pressing need is to integrate social work education, globalization, and human rights into a framework of human rights leadership that will guide practice in the 21st century". My contention is that locating global awareness and global citizenship identification within social work studies would position social workers to enhance their practice on both a local and international scale. As intercultural diversity and connectivity become increasingly commonplace on the transnational stage, social workers are being called upon to address issues of social justice and human rights in both the local and international arenas. Social work practitioners ostensibly working in local communities are witnessing the intersection of more salient global sociological challenges, requiring approaches that consider an international perspective. Khan and Dominelli (2000) have observed that globalization has contributed to the internationalization of social issues, and social workers are increasingly required to address challenges that transcend national boundaries. Issues such as international human trafficking, child pornography and sexual exploitation, drug trafficking, international child adoption, and increased family tensions and mental health challenges presented by refugees who have suffered trauma in their country of origin (Khan & Dominelli, 2000; Lyons, 2006) are accelerating many aspects of social work practice from the global to the local. Social Work education, therefore, would be well served by including elements of global citizenship education that are aligned with the principles and practices of the profession.

This article begins by exploring conceptualizations of global citizenship in order to locate it within the context of social work education. Two distinct approaches to global citizenship

education with relevancy to social work are presented before introducing components and strategies for integrating global citizenship within existing social work curricula.

Contemporary Conceptualizations of Global Citizenship

Global citizenship has been frequently associated with an understanding and appreciation for cultural diversity (Clifford & Montgomery, 2014; Hendershot & Sperandio, 2009; Karlberg, 2008; Nussbaum, 1997; Snider, Reysen, & Katzarska-Miller, 2013). Knowledge of other cultures, and in many respects, participation in multicultural exchanges, are seen as crucial to one's identification and active engagement as a global citizen. Hendershot and Sperandio (2009) surveyed students from their university's Global Citizenship Program for perceptions of what it means to be a global citizen. Themes such as open-mindedness and accepting of other cultures, as well as being tolerant and non-judgmental, were prominent amongst the student responses. Nussbaum (1997, p. 68) believes that, "Awareness of cultural difference is essential in order to promote the respect for another that is the essential underpinning for dialogue". A respectful attitude means to presume that value exists in all cultural contexts for finding meaning and identity in that culture (Haydon, 2006).

Global citizenship has also been identified as the recognition of global interconnectedness and shared bonds among human beings, and with the environment (Ikeda, 2010; Khoo, 2011; Noddings, 2005; Obelleiro, 2012; Pallas, 2012; Sperandio, Grudzinski-Hall, & Stewart-Gambino, 2010). Schattle's (2008, p. 39) study of 157 individuals who self-identify as global citizens indicates that responsible global citizenship "emphasize[s] both moral accountability and solidarity toward all life on the planet". In advocating for a "new humanism", Bokova (2010, p. 5) stresses that "an accomplished human being is one who recognizes coexistence and equality with all others, however far away, and who strives to find a way to live

with them”. In this regard, accomplished human beings share a common trait with global citizens, who in Noddings’ (2005, p. 11) view, “consider the effects of life in one locality on the lives and well-being of distant others”. Nussbaum (1997) contends that an essential criterion for the cultivation of one’s humanity is to appreciate that “human beings [are] bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern”.

Additionally, global citizenship has been linked to an increased awareness and belief in social justice and respect for human rights (Burgess, Reimer-Kirkham, & Astle, 2014; Gibson, Rimmington, & Landwehr-Brown, 2008; Martin, Smolen, Oswald, & Milam, 2012; Osler & Starkey, 2003; Pallas, 2012). Gibson et al. (2008, p. 17) note that global citizenship entails responsibilities that “require an attitude of respect for the rights of others and actions that are just for all”, while Karlberg (2008) comments that global citizenship can play a significant role in creating a more peaceful and just society. Chickering and Braskamp’s (2009) study of 245 undergraduate study abroad students reports that a number of students showed significant developmental gains in their perspective on social justice.

Other research has reported on pro-social global citizenship practices such as altruism, empathy, and caring for the welfare of others outside one's cultural group (Brunnell, 2013; Ikeda, 2010; Noddings, 2005; Nussbaum, 1997; Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013a), in addition to taking responsibility for one's actions and the impact these behaviours might have on global concerns (Gibson et al., 2008; Obelleiro, 2012; Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013b; Snider et al., 2013). Bourke, Bamber, and Lyons (2012) report on a meta-analysis study demonstrating that the strongest predictors of engaging in citizenship activities were one’s levels of conscientiousness, empathy, and helpfulness. Brunell (2013) writes about global citizenship education fostering a sense of moral responsibility for global problems and the persons who suffer from these

challenges. Most importantly though, is the development of a sense of empowerment to engage in activities to improve the lives of others most affected by global problems. Ikeda (2010, p. 112) reflects on an essential element of global citizenship being, “The compassion to maintain an imaginative empathy that reaches beyond one’s immediate surroundings and extends to those suffering in distant places”. Likewise, Nussbaum’s (2002) writes,

The moral imagination can often become lazy, according sympathy to the near and the familiar, but refusing it to people who look different. Enlisting students’ sympathy for distant lives is thus a way of training, so to speak, the muscles of the imagination.

Lastly, the literature notes that knowledge and awareness of self in relation to others, as well as critical self-reflection, are important characteristics of global citizenship (Clifford & Montgomery, 2014; Hendershot & Sperandio, 2009; Nussbaum, 1997). Nussbaum (2007, p. 38), for example, comments on "the capacity for Socratic self-criticism and critical thought about one's own traditions", as a crucial element for engaged citizenship in a pluralistic, democratic and globalized world. Lilley, Barker, and Harris (2015) conducted interviews with 26 higher education experts located in Australia and the European Union for the purpose of exploring how universities address ethical thinking and global citizenship. By analyzing themes from the interviews, the authors developed a profile of a “global citizen mindset”, which included transformative thinking, imagining other perspectives, reflexivity in questioning assumptions, thinking as the ‘other’, and engaging in critical and ethical thinking.

In summarizing conceptualizations of global citizenship, it is most typically understood as an orientation toward an appreciation for the worldwide interconnection of human beings, a respect for cultural diversity and human rights, a commitment to global social justice, a

sensitivity to the suffering of people around the world, an ability to see the world as others see it, and a felt duty to take responsibility for one's own actions and on behalf of others.

Education for Global Citizenship

Engaging students in global citizenship education is premised on the understanding that when students are educated to be informed, responsible and competent, they will then possess the requisite knowledge and skill capabilities for actively participating in an interdependent and multicultural world (Lorenzini, 2013). Bourke, Bamber, and Lyons (2012) make a useful distinction for conceptualizing global citizenship education by comparing education *about* global citizenship with education *for* global citizenship. When examining educational practices about global citizenship, we see that it typically entails a methodology that exclusively provides students with an understanding of global issues, cultures and institutions. This approach is primarily aimed at affording students a sense of identification, connection, and potential solidarity with others around the world. By contrast, education for global citizenship is intended to "ensure students are ready to take on the role of adult global citizens and associated responsibilities" (Bourke et al., 2012, p. 163). This process encompasses a more robust pedagogy that involves students integrating applicable skills, values and attitudes germane to engaging as global citizens; an important distinction when exploring the introduction of curricula that targets the acquisition of practical knowledge and experience.

Oxfam's Learn-Think-Act Process for Global Citizenship Education

Oxfam International has developed a fairly comprehensive curriculum for global citizenship education. Although targeted for the early years to late adolescence, their framework provides useful insights for higher education curricula. Oxfam (Oxfam, n.d.) recommends an educational process called *Learn-Think-Act*, which ostensibly sees learners initially exploring

topics related to social justice, diversity, and sustainable development by considering the issues from different points of view. Students are then asked to critically examine what can be done about the issue, relating possible solutions to values, worldviews, power, and action. The third component in this process involves contemplating and taking action on the issue as an active global citizen, both individually and collectively. This last component, i.e., reflecting upon and responding to an issue under study is critical to the process of education for global citizenship as it facilitates identification and subsequent involvement as a global citizen. Regardless of the arena, the process of social change requires commitment and action.

Oxfam (2006) further identifies three key elements of education for responsible global citizenship—knowledge and understanding, skills, and values and attitudes. Oxfam's progressive and holistic program is well aligned with a cosmopolitanism orientation for active global citizenship engagement. It emphasizes using education to furnish students with attitudes and abilities resonant with many of the attributes of cosmopolitanism and global citizenship identified previously, such as understanding the interrelatedness of human beings with each other and to their natural environment, and critical thinking and awareness of global issues. Additionally, at various points in the curriculum there is an emphasis on developing awareness and appreciation of diversity and multiculturalism, social justice and human rights, empathy and compassion, sustainable development, and responsible action. These issues have a high affinity with social work's values and practices, as evidenced by the following excerpt from the International Federation of Social Workers' (ISFW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work's (IASSW) joint definition of global social work; "Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work...

social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing” (International Federation of Social Workers, 2015, para. 2).

Soka Education’s Approach to Global Citizenship

The Soka Education school system, originating in Japan, includes educational institutions from primary level to higher education in eight countries. Although its two universities (located in Tokyo and Los Angeles) do not deliver social work programs, Soka education’s model provides useful insights for integrating a global citizenship approach within social work education. Both social work and Soka education are concerned with the promotion of wellbeing and advocacy for social justice. Merry and de Ruyter (2011) argue that education needs to stress the development of essential character attributes such as empathy and dialogue across cultural difference, and the attitude required to challenge injustice. As with social work, Soka education's philosophical underpinnings and practices are keenly affiliated with the welfare of both the individual and society as a whole (Kumagai, 2000), and its paramount aim is the development of people of character, who are committed to the ideals of peace and the sanctity of life (Goulah, 2012).

Japanese educator and founder of Soka education, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871-1944) placed great emphasis on the importance of education for human development. He believed that a key purpose of education was to cultivate global-minded individuals who could be empathetically engaged with the world, while at the same time maintain their roots at the local community level (Gebert & George, 2000). Daisaku Ikeda, founder of the Soka Education School System, has carried on the Makiguchian tradition with his establishment of an educational system that emphasizes the importance of global citizenship through its philosophy and pedagogical practices. Embedded in the mission statement of the Soka schools is the

following declaration; "Our system places the highest importance of [sic] fostering global citizens, men and women who are committed to the cause of peace and will assume positive roles in the international community" (Soka University, 2014, para. 7).

Ikeda (2010, p. 112) elucidates the three pillars of global citizenship as;

- The wisdom to perceive the interconnectedness of all life and living;
- The courage not to fear or deny difference, but to respect and strive to understand people of different cultures and to grow from encounters with them;
- The compassion to maintain an imaginative empathy that reaches beyond one's immediate surroundings and extends to those suffering in distant places.

Through its core values regarding the purpose of education and its beliefs about the interconnectedness of life, Soka education can be regarded as a useful model for the education of globally responsible students. Soka University's emphasis on cultural exchange, secondary language learning, and study abroad, would be worth examining when introducing educational programming for social work based on a global citizenship approach to practice. For example, Soka sees the study abroad platform as an important gateway to learning practical communication skills and cross-cultural understanding through exposure to indigenous cultures and values in the students' country of study. Students who encounter experiential learning through study abroad discover firsthand how to survive in a global context (Soka University, 1997-2013, para. 3). Recent studies report that study abroad programs in higher education are likely to encourage participants' self-reflection and perspective shifts (Tarrant, Rubin, & Stoner, 2014; L. Stoner, Perry, Wadsworth, Stoner, & Tarrant, 2014; K. Stoner, Tarrant, Perry, Stoner, Wearing, & Lyons, 2014). K. Stoner et al. (2014) comment that the combination of international

experiences and critical reflection provides a significant platform for nurturing global citizenship.

Integrating Global Citizenship Within Social Work Education

In this section I articulate four aspects of global citizenship education that could enhance social work studies; 1) Endorsement of prosocial values and behaviours, 2) Local and global practical knowledge acquisition and experience, 3) Awareness and understanding of global issues, and 4) Applied self-reflection in a globalized world. These four areas of curriculum enrichment are not mutually exclusive, and in fact, there are necessary intersections between any or all of them. In proposing these components, I have borrowed from Krumer-Nevo, Weiss-Gai and Monnickendam's (2009) tripartite strategy for integrating a new or revised framework within existing curricula. Implementing global citizenship education within social work curricula could be implemented using the following strategies; 1) integration of substantive study about global citizenship within existing social work courses, 2) introduction of specific courses on global citizenship relative to social work practice, and 3) development of a unique concentration within the social work program that specializes in global citizenship. These three strategies could be implemented either separately or together, relative to the context of the respective social work school.

Endorsement of Prosocial Values and Behaviours

Reysen and Katzarska-Miller (2013b) suggest there is a predictive relationship between global citizenship identity and endorsement of prosocial values and behaviour (e.g., empathy, valuing diversity, social justice and helping others). Most social work schools currently introduce coursework that involves theory and practice in empathy, valuing diversity, advocating for social justice, and helping others. It would be important, however, to introduce (or fortify) coursework

that focuses on other equally important prosocial values, such as the promotion and advocacy of environmental sustainability. Environmental sustainability is worthy of a great deal more attention than most social work curricula current devote to this topic.

A curriculum that strengthens social work students' internalization of prosocial values and behaviours, such as those values identified above, is one that is in a better position to prepare students for identification and engagement as global citizens, and as effective practitioners in a globalized society.

Local and Global Practical Knowledge Acquisition and Experience

According to Ife (2001), because globalization impacts the entirety of human experience, all social work practice is to be considered international in its scope, and the task of social workers is to link the global with the local. Hawkins and Knox (2014) assert that all social workers are obligated to engage in global citizenship, also noting that a key aspect of this approach is to help students to connect the local and the global.

Social work education is well known for its abundant use of local field placements to provide students with hands-on experience that aims to connect theory with practice. Typically, but not necessarily, these placements are located in the student's wider community, and usually situated in one of the many non-profit organizations that comprise the continuum of human service agencies. The focus is on the student gaining invaluable local practical knowledge and experience in the course of developing their competencies and skillset for working as social work practitioners.

A global citizenship enhanced curriculum would see students expand their practical knowledge acquisition and experience in two ways. The first scenario would provide opportunities for students to engage in field studies with community-based organizations that

work with local populations impacted by globalization and global issues, such as poverty, homelessness, illiteracy, and transnational migration. A second approach would see students engage in field placement work with any number of international agencies (e.g., Oxfam, Greenpeace, World Vision) that locate offices within travelling distance for the student. Students working in these community-based and international-based agencies would have opportunities to be equipped with knowledge and skills to more fully understand how global issues can impact on local environments (and vice versa), and to work with individuals, families, and communities where global and local issues intersect.

Study abroad experiences are seen as crucial vehicles for helping students acquire practical knowledge and experience. Sperandio et al. (2010, p. 16) argue that, "students' global engagement must begin with leaving the protective walls of the university". Learning to be active global citizens requires students to not only utilize the traditional third-party educational resources available to them, such as textbooks, the Internet, and the arts and literature, but to actively engage with and experience other cultures. It is suggested that fieldwork involving a study abroad component be mandatory within a social work curriculum that aims at infusing global citizenship education. Notwithstanding the level of complexity (inter alia financial arrangements) that may be involved in accessing study abroad field placements, efforts could be made to secure these arrangements for senior level students. Aside from gaining valuable knowledge and experience that is often far removed from the student's own traditions and culture, this platform is an excellent opportunity to test the degree of internalization of one's learned prosocial values, as well as to experience how global and local social issues interconnect.

Awareness of Global Issues

Reysen and Katzarska-Miller 's (2013b) findings suggest that global awareness is an antecedent to global citizenship identity. Therefore, exposing students to the study of the complex global challenges facing humanity would enhance students' identification and potential engagement as global citizens. Such issues as poverty, human rights, access to education, and gender equality are typically included in most social work curricula, however, for the most part these issues are compartmentalized and seen through the lens of the student's local environment. Examining the vast array of global issues affecting the world's population, and helping students understand how global and local issues interrelate, would yield a more globally-minded practitioner. For example, most social work students understand poverty as a condition of marginalization that largely affects the unemployed or underemployed. This is a superficial and limited view of poverty and does not necessarily help students adequately understand the overarching global aspects of poverty-related issues, such as food security, oppression, nutrition, and other health related issues.

Applied Self-Reflection in a Globalized World

Social work education encourages students to critically examine their own beliefs and attitudes, cultural and family traditions, and views of social justice, in order to address the concerns of others in a professional and objective manner. Applied self-reflection, however, goes further by asking students not just to think about their place in a globalized world, but to also explore actions they might take to address global social issues, as per Oxfam's global citizenship education strategy. Hansen's (2014, p. 11) notion of *educational cosmopolitanism* sees reflective learning as a function of all experiences encountered in life and, "implies being open reflectively to new persons, ideas, values, and practices". Exposure to critical global issues and global

citizenship values and behaviour, from both theory-driven coursework and experiential learning, would stimulate students to "think deeply about their actions, develop an awareness of why their actions are important, and discover other ways to become active and responsible global citizens" (Martin, Smolen, Oswald, & Milam, 201, p. 163).

Conclusion

In this article I present some ideas for introducing global citizenship into social work education. Global citizenship can be viewed as an acknowledgement of universal values, such as, respect for cultural diversity, human rights and social justice, interconnectedness of life, empathy for others, and a felt responsibility to act. Global citizenship identification is contemplative and action-oriented.

Focusing on social change and the promotion of social justice, human rights, respect for diversity, and self-determination, the academic discipline of social work is well positioned to integrate global citizenship into its curricula. This article accentuates endorsement of prosocial values and behaviours, practical knowledge acquisition and experience, global issues awareness and understanding, and applied self-reflection in a globalized world as particularly meaningful aspects of global citizenship education that should be integrated within social work curricula. It is recognized that these components are very much interrelated, and can be strategically implemented into existing curriculum, in consideration of the contextual ethos of the respective school of social work.

Locating global citizenship within social work education promotes education *for* global citizenship, rather than *about* global citizenship. This distinction recognizes the dynamic role of social work in addressing challenges at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of society. Social workers identifying as global citizens may be more capably equipped in our globalized world to

address life challenges and take meaningful action to enhance wellbeing within the wider scope of society.

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