RESEARCH ON TEACHING GLOBAL ISSUES

PEDAGOGY FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

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Research on Teaching Global Issues

Pedagogy for Global Citizenship Education

A Volume in Research in Social Education

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For my first teachers and international educators,
W. T. Myers and J. Graves.

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PREFACE

Research on Teaching Global Issues: Pedagogy for Global Citizenship Education addresses the broad question of what is worth learning about the world in schools. This is not a new question nor does this book offer simple answers. The chapters speak with conviction to the relationship between schools, learning, and significant global issues facing the world now and into the future. The diverse responses included in this book share a belief that schooling should engage with the contemporary world by supporting young people to think critically and act on issues such as poverty, hunger, gender equality, peace. These issues are immensely challenging yet young people are increasingly passionate about taking them on.

Although there is a long line of efforts to internationalize schools, we may finally have reached a critical consensus for real change to occur. With an upsurge of scholarship and advocacy, global citizenship is now part of educational conversations in many nations and institutions over the future of schooling. For long-time internationalization supporters, things are definitely looking up. Organizations like UNESCO, Oxfam, and a multitude of nonprofits have developed innovative programs and curricula for schools that focus on engaging with global issues. These resources are widely available to teachers. Some programs, such as Global Nomads (www.gng.org), use technology to connect young people to global issues across the divides of culture, language, distance, and politics. International-themed schools, including charters, private institutions, and special programs like the International Baccalaureate, teach global issues and identify global citi-

zenship as a major educational goal. In higher education, the emergence of global studies programs has led to the academic development of new theory and research.

This book is not a primer on how to internationalize classrooms nor is it focused on arguments over what to teach. Instead, the chapters uncover the challenges and dilemmas that emerge when educators, schools and—above all—young people claim their ability to make an impact on the world. Collectively, the book begins what is hoped to be a long-term conversation on the pedagogy for global citizenship education. There is a clear need for more and better ways that classrooms can connect to the world around them in meaningful ways. However, the similar challenges that national educational policies and politics present to this goal is not lost on the authors. Internationalizing schools has proceeded at a slow crawl during the past decades, with as many steps backward as forward. While efforts supporting global citizenship continue to add up across the world, we need to keep in mind that the challenges teachers and students face are of the utmost importance. The diverse examples in this book illustrate with great insight what we now know and still need to understand about making global issues a more central part of what it means to be truly educated in the 21st century.

CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING THE LANDSCAPE OF TEACHING GLOBAL ISSUES

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On March 15, 2019 students across the world skipped school to attend the Global Climate Strike for the Future organized by the Fridays for Future movement protesting inaction on climate change. Students in over 100 countries participated to demand action on climate change from politicians. The event built on a demonstration that Greta Thunberg initiated the previous year. At the time, she was a 15-year-old activist who skipped school on Fridays to protest outside the Swedish Parliament. Her actions inspired other student-led climate change protests in February 2019. In many countries, the Global Climate Strike was the first nationwide student strike on the issue of climate change. Yet as students marched to demand that leaders take action on climate change, the reaction of school leaders and politicians was mixed. Rather than praise young people's initiative and courage to take social action, some leaders such as the prime ministers of England and Australia took the opportunity to suggest that the strikes were wasted time that would have been better spent staying in school.

Banners at the Global Climate Strike for the Future such as "We're missing lessons to teach you one" and "Why should we go to school if you won't listen to the educated?" bring the shaky relationship between schools and contemporary global issues into stark relief. In contrast to the all-too-predictable message of some school leaders to "stay in school," the banners highlight the consequence of learning real-world issues and skills for practicing democratic citizenship in a globalizing world (Johnson, Boyer, & Brown, 2011). One student activist commented on what she learns about real-world issues in schools: "We are taught a little bit about it at school, but nowhere near enough, and the severity of the situation is not addressed at all" (Yeginsu, 2019). If schools are to foster the development of engaged citizens, then the "nowhere near enough" treatment of global issues in the curriculum cannot remain the status quo.

A Pew Research Center survey in 2018 found that an average of 67% of people across 26 countries believe that climate change is a major threat facing the world, an increase by 11% from 2013 (Pew Research Center, 2019). Climate change is also considered the single top threat in half of these countries. Other issues such as the condition of the global economy and nuclear weapons are also serious threats for over half the people polled. In the same survey, issues such as poverty and health care are two of the issues most likely to drive people to participate in politics outside of voting. These and a range of other issues such as poverty, hunger, gender equality, LGBT rights, and peace and security are some of the most pressing concerns that young people today care about yet may not have opportunities to get involved with in schools.

Despite widespread interest, most people lack deep understanding and knowledge of global issues. Hans Rosling famously revealed that for issues like poverty and wealth, violence, life expectancy, health, education, and the environment, the majority of young people (and adults) have major misconceptions and inaccurate information. Online polling in 12 countries by the Gapminder Foundation, Rosling's nonprofit organization (see www.gapminder.org), shows that only about 7% of respondents understand that global poverty has declined significantly in the past 20 years (Rosling, Rönnlund & Rosling, 2018). It is not hyperbole to suggest that schools have missed the opportunity to leverage the insight and enthusiasm for learning about the world that Rosling and his colleagues (2018) have popularized.

Drawing on research and theory in the field, this book seeks to fill the breach between the need for deep understanding of and social action on contemporary global issues facing the world with the current state of teaching public issues in schools. This is the first full-length volume devoted exclusively to new research on the challenges and practices of teaching global issues. The book is organized in two sections: (1) contexts and policies in which global issues are taught and learned; and (2) case

studies of teaching and learning global issues in schools. The central thesis is that global issues are an essential feature of democracy and social action in a world caught in the thrall of globalization. Schools can no longer afford to ignore teaching about issues impacting across the world if they intend to keep young people engaged in learning and want them to make their own communities—and the greater world—better places for all. Ultimately, the goal is to bring the worlds of youth interest and engagement with global issues in closer alignment with the democratic purposes of schooling in a global age.

WHY GLOBAL ISSUES?

The study of public issues has been a mainstay for preparing youth to participate in democracy as informed and engaged citizens. Indeed, teaching issues in schools is not exactly news. Scholars contend that teaching public issues in schools supports democratic thinking and civic participation (Hess, 2004). Public issues have also long been a part of social studies education through the study of current events. Teaching issues has traditionally targeted a national audience built on traditions of democratic thinking and existing political institutions as pathways of political participation. Significantly for today and into the future, globalization has transformed the ways scholars make sense of topics such as migration, human rights, poverty and wealth, and violence.

Political participation increasingly occurs in transnational social movements about one or more global issues while shifting away from national partisan politics and voting. Although support for democracy is widespread, the publics in both established and emerging democracies are increasingly skeptical of political institutions and more motivated to challenge elites through social movements championing issues such as the environment, gender equality, peace, and human rights (Dalton & Welzel, 2014). This push for "direct" democracy and disaffection with conventional partisan politics emphasizes the centrality of globalization in politics and the emergence of global civil society. As Berger and Nehring (2017) assert, "we have entered a new democratic age that is no longer characterized by the dominance of political parties and interest groups and no longer confined to the territory of the nation-state, but that has a truly global shape" (p. 1). In contrast to the view that people are most concerned with what is happening in their own corner of the world, while still true for many, citizens across the world are driven to confront the most persistent problems.

Although people have long been concerned with issues that cut across national borders, globalization has created conditions for the emergence

of global networks of social movements campaigning on issues of global justice (Della Porta & Tarrow, 2005). With nations becoming more interdependent, the failure to address pressing issues they face but cannot solve alone has dire consequences for all people. The global justice movement (GJM) is a network of social movements—or "movement of movements"—that brings together a number of issues from the environment to human rights. These organizations share a belief in the opposition to economic globalization focused on the policies of the World Bank, World Trade Organization, and International Monetary Fund. Considered a new "global political ideology" (Steger & Wilson, 2012, p. 451), the GJM seeks to democratize economic, or market-driven, globalization. The movement also focuses on protecting human rights in a context of neoliberal policies that have created inequitable development and environmental damage, especially in the Global South.

The United Nations' creation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is another development that has drawn public attention to global issues (see sustainabledevelopment.un.org/). Although not without its critics, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development outlines a framework recognizing the most important issues to improve human life and the environment. This multilateral agreement has a specific timeframe for achieving the 17 SDGs accompanied by 169 actionable targets. One valuable contribution has been to bring discussions of development to the forefront of public discourse, which allows for critical discussion of precisely what development is, should be, and for whom it works. The agreement also underscores the essential role of education for promoting equity, justice and sustainable development throughout the world (Target 4) by advocating for changes by the year 2030 in educational policies, curriculum, and teacher education.

What Does It Mean for an Issue to Be "Global?"

Global issues represent the defining environmental and human development challenges for improving the world into the future. Compared to public issues focused on national concerns, global issues have unique characteristics and challenges. These characteristics include more complex relationships, diverse conceptions of the public, and particular theoretical frameworks. The term "global" highlights that these challenges exist pervasively across the world and that addressing both the root causes and the relevant solutions require the actions of all people. Although global issues share much in common with issues revolving around national public policy, they are also distinct epistemologically and substantively in at least three ways (White & Myers, 2016):

1. **Complex patterns of interdependencies:** Global issues involve complex relationships that include a wider territorial context, diversity of actors, and impact on greater number of people.
2. **Different understandings of the "public":** Global issues require the reconsideration of who the "public" of public issues includes, in terms of non-Western perspectives that raise questions about how problems are framed from different locations.
3. **Distinct theoretical frameworks:** Global issues require distinct theories and frameworks that are emerging in the social sciences.

First, global issues are more complex than matters of national policy in the sense that what happens in one place affects many others. The field of global studies takes a transdisciplinary approach that cuts across traditional academic disciplines to study "the process of becoming global" (O'Byrne & Hensby, 2011, p. 2). Global issues are interrelated, as for example the ways that the poverty issue is affected by issues of climate change, global health, population, global trade, and human rights. Most importantly, underlying a justice perspective on the study of global issues is the analysis of the ways that power structures operate within globalizing economic and political systems to shape inequalities across the world.

Second, unlike national public issues, which are bounded by membership in the nation, global issues address a broader and less determined understanding of who the "public" includes. Generally, the public for global issues includes the entire world and all peoples. However, in practice this scope may be unrealistic in terms of participation. Still, this conceptual shift requires a critical rethinking of whose interests are at stake and how diverse people are affected.

Third, understanding global issues has required the development of new theories and frameworks to organize the field. Scholars have profoundly advanced our theoretical understanding of global studies by developing a range of new conceptual devices—global paradigms, imaginaries, and ideologies—that cut across traditional academic disciplines to develop new forms of interdisciplinary knowledge. Although globalization is often used as a catch-all for worldwide interconnectedness, scholars have identified a range of processes of global change, of which globalization is only one. Other processes of global change include liberalization, polarization, Americanization, McDonaldization, creolization, transnationalization, and balkanization (O'Byrne & Hensby, 2011).

Collectively, global issues share a focus on matters of equity and justice. Like the goals of the Global Climate Strike for the Future, learning about and acting on global issues is concerned with making the world a better place for all. These efforts seek to foster global citizenship based on the development of a political identity that operates on the global stage,

which requires "an active recognition of the dynamics of power, rather than just a casual statement of solidarity or empathy with humankind" (O'Byrne & Hensby, 2011, p. 22). This perspective avoids privileging Western and Eurocentric views to foster an understanding of the ways that power and conflict shape inequality in the world, which requires for example examining globalization from multiple geopolitical perspectives, or "decentering" (Mittelman, 2004, p. 224).

GLOBAL ISSUES AND SCHOOLS

Although recent events show that young people are passionate about climate change and take action outside of schools, they have few opportunities in schools to study global issues in depth. Teaching contemporary global issues in the classroom, particularly when allowed to discuss meaningful controversial topics, supports students to explore what kind of citizen they are and want to be (Myers, McBride, & Anderson, 2015). Yet schools rarely devote instructional time to the systematic and critical study of global issues, such as analyzing trends, studying history causes, or understanding change across time. We know that students have difficulty understanding many aspects of social life, particularly those involving the structural context of people's lives—economic systems, political structures, and other societal institutions. As a result, students frequently misinterpret historical events by focusing on individual actions and intentions rather than larger structural factors (Thornton & Barton, 2010, p. 2485).

One challenge is that teachers are not consistently prepared to teach the complex nature of major global issues, such as globalization, and the disciplinary concepts necessary for deep understanding (Myers & Rivero, 2019; Shaklee & Baily, 2012). Recently, the emergence of innovative programs and frameworks for internationalizing teacher education (Baildon & Alviar-Martin, 2018; Kerkhoff, 2017; Larson & Brown, 2017) provide reason for a more optimistic outlook. Nonetheless, most students will not graduate from high school with an understanding of the most important global issues facing the world.

Despite the recognition that contemporary globalization is the "master concept" of our time for describing historic social change, the term remains a peripheral topic in school curricula (Myers, 2010a; Rapoport, 2009). Although the term "economic globalization" has been increasingly included worldwide in social studies and history textbooks, the depth of this coverage is variable (Buckner & Russell, 2013). Other research has found that coverage of globalization in national standards varies widely. In the United States, a human capital framework for economic globalization predominates although in some other countries a world systems