



*Critical Global Citizenship Education*

# **CENTERING GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE**

**INTERNATIONAL ENACTMENTS OF GCED FOR  
SOCIAL JUSTICE AND COMMON GOOD**

Edited by  
Susan Wiksten



# Centering Global Citizenship Education in the Public Sphere

This book brings together key perspectives from scholars in the Global South and Global North to illustrate diverse ways in which the UN's Global Citizenship Education (GCED) agenda can promote social justice and be used as a vehicle for negotiating and learning about diverse and shared objectives in education and the global public sphere.

Recognizing the historical function of education as a prominent public sphere site, this book addresses questions around how forms of global education can serve as public sphere sites in various contexts today and in the future. Specifically, it questions established notions of education and proposes new interpretations of the relationship between practices of education and the public sphere to meet the needs of our contemporary turbulent era and a post-2020 world. By offering conceptual analyses, examples of policy and educational practices which promote global learning, democratic citizenship, common good, and perspective-taking, the text offers new critical understandings of how GCED can contribute to the public responsibilities and roles of education. Chapters consider examples such as nonformal adult education at the Mexico–US border, teachers' responsibilities in Japan and Finland, developments in education policy and practices in Brazil, civic religious teaching in Canada, online learning in the United States and China, and support to the participation of women in higher education in Pakistan.

Given its unique approach, and the range of case studies it brings together, this book is a timely addition to the literature on education in the global public sphere. It will prove to be an invaluable resource for scholars working at the intersections of global education and transnational education policies and for teachers involved in global education.

**Susan Wiksten** is a research consultant affiliated with the Paulo Freire Institute at UCLA, United States and the European Institute of Education and Social Policy, France.

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**Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
NEW YORK AND LONDON

First published 2021  
by Routledge  
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

and by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
A catalog record for this book has been requested.

ISBN: 978-0-367-54517-8 (hbk)  
ISBN: 978-0-367-54525-3 (pbk)  
ISBN: 978-1-003-08955-1 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman  
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

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## Foreword by Carlos Alberto Torres, Series Editor

*Centering Global Citizenship Education in the Public Sphere: International Enactments of GCED for Social Justice and Common Good* is a new contribution to the Routledge Series on Critical Global Citizenship Education.

Centering global citizenship education in the public sphere searches for national and international enactments of global citizenship in programs, experiences, and movements seeking social justice for the common good. Editor Susan Wiksten has done a great contribution bringing together voices both from the Global South and the Global North; voices showing a great degree of convergence rather than dissonance in discussing enactments of global citizenship education for diverse contexts and cultures.

A limitation of most scientific work on global citizenship developed by the work of UNESCO and collaborators is that given the institutional rules in the United Nations system, the main interlocutors for their advocacy are usually governments and occasionally NGOs. Yet, a rich variety of global and local public spheres falls by the wayside of their pedagogical and political endeavors. Enactments of global citizenship education require a systematic rethinking to find solutions to the conundrums that have been confronted over the years in the constitution of this field of study, teaching, praxis, and policy.

If one were to carefully follow Freire's dictum of "reading the word and reading the world", it tells us that it is always important to situate and read any text vis-à-vis its location and historical contexts.<sup>1</sup> In a recent work we have stated that:

We stand on the precipice of a global, planetary cliff, two options laid out before humanity. On one side is the continued expansion of democracy, the further extension of human rights and freedoms and concerted efforts to address the growing threats and reality of global climate change. On the other, the dismantling of democracy in lieu of populist, authoritarian rule, increased attacks on the marginalized, oppressed and exploited populations of the globe and acceleration of the degradation of planet earth toward its imminent doom. The future thus lays out as a battle between two dominant discourses, one that seeks to recapture the heart and imagination of the Enlightenment and the power of science and reason on the

road to a brighter future for the great mass of people, the other an atavistic return to a past where a small global elite dominates the political, economic and cultural worlds, where propaganda, chaos and ideology govern the public sphere and where multinational corporations and the power elite dictate policy at the local, national and global levels.<sup>2</sup>

This book goes to production in an exceptional moment of humanity. We are in the midst of two formidable events which have shaken the world and deeply affected our lives and intellectual horizons.

The first event, that the whole globe is still grappling with, is the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only do we live in an age of extremes but arguably our contemporary world seems to be living between the disenchantment with democracy and the discontent with governments in most societies, with political systems fragmented and polarized, with many segments of the world population living in poverty or even indigency, and a deterioration of the political system and its representation via political parties.

The COVID-19 pandemic, the largest plague in this century, has deepened the uncertainty and fear of citizens facing a killer virus which might become endemic in certain areas. With a few exceptions, most governments in the world system have not been able to establish public policies which are efficient and equitable. Nor has there been an overall policy model that draws on international cooperation and solidarity as a global solution.

At the height of globalization, analysts claimed that the State was fading away in its regulatory power and international presence. Not surprisingly, the pandemic brought the role of the nation-state back in, with science taking center stage in public policy even in a post-truth moment. The nation-state response to COVID-19 was rather self-contained than international and internationally collaborative:

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have indeed witnessed a strong comeback of the nation-state in all realms. States have closed their borders, and citizens turn to their national government for protection, care and guidelines. International institutions have vanished in the global crisis, including the UN and the European Union, and international solidarity has suffered one of its strongest declines in recent history . . . The coronavirus has brought science back to the center, including in countries where populist leaders used to delegitimize it. Epidemiologists, medical doctors and biologists bring us hard facts . . . Social scientists have come up with facts that are as hard and as unquestionable: while the virus itself is a biological agent that may infect each of us, we are deeply unequal when confronted to it.<sup>3</sup>

The second event of magnitude is the crisis of citizenship and civic education in the United States reflected in the attack to the USA Capitol on Wednesday January 6, 2021 by a Trump-incited mob. The goal of the violent insurrection



taking over the Capitol by thugs following Trump's lies and misrepresentations sought to change by brute force the results of the electoral college and keep Trump in power for another four years.

How have we reached this situation and what are the perceived consequences? For a long time there has been a strong polarization in the US adult population around axes seemingly irreconcilable. The divisive rhetoric of President Trump, his administration, and his enablers in the political system, the press, and mass media have worsened the situation.

While the election of legitimate political authority produced a clear winner in the popular vote as well as in the Electoral College, the outcome of the election has been questioned without clear foundations or data, in fact producing what journalists, scholars, and politicians called the Big Lie.

Yet, Trump's lie agitated sectors of the population feeling betrayed and cheated in the 2020 election. Allegations without facts and conspiracies predominate in the perception of radical sectors of the US population undermining not only a new administration but above all the whole democratic political system including the traditional peaceful transition of power. The lie of rigged and stolen elections persisted, despite that its legal arguments were challenged and discarded by more than 50 courts in the nation.

Claims of incitement to insurrection by the losing president have resulted in a historic second impeachment of Trump in the aftermath of the insurrection, an impeachment approved less than a week of his planned departure from the White House. In January 2021, at the time of writing this foreword—the time for the Senate to take up as the jury of impeachment was to be decided, while there were also growing calls for criminal investigations by the Department of Justice.

In the aftermath of the seditious attempt, there were claims that more than 100 federal representatives and eight senators of the losing party may have betrayed their Oath to the US Constitution. What would be their punishment, if any, remained to be seen.

Newspapers were full of emerging initiatives from sectors in the political and civil society to implement section 3 of the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment banning those who supported the insurrectionist to run ever for political office.

Key social media companies like Twitter, Google, Amazon, and Facebook purged messages that incited the insurrection (e.g., QAnon conspiracy theory) or specific messages from political figures like the outgoing president deprived of his bullhorn in Twitter for a permanent suspension of his account.

A growing number of corporations halted donations to politicians who they believe betrayed their Oath to Office or were seditionists. If this situation persists, it will have unprecedented consequences for the Republican Party poised to defend 20 of the 34 Senators up to reelection in 2022.<sup>4</sup> Those congressmen and congresswomen who supported Trump's lies will have to face the voters in 2022.

In the business world, a large number of corporations are disassociating themselves from the Trump corporation, risking this corporation, given the magnitude of its debts, to go bankrupt.

It will be up to the historians to explain the events that led to this moment, but this book begins to offer some answers of how to deal with the transformation of the political culture worldwide, which is affecting the constitution of democratic citizenship and liberal democracy itself. This book addresses the following question: What are possibilities for education to serve as a public sphere site in different contexts today and in the future? The term enactment in the title of the book has been used to signal a wish to leave room for thinking about a broad range of practices, praxis, and enactments that may support enabling varieties of public sphere sites, collaboration, and deliberation.

Heralding the importance of global citizenship education, key concepts are presented in this book including Global Learning, Cosmo-uBuntu theorizing, cognitive justice, deliberative/contestatory dialogue, identity as learning, democratic management of citizenship building, the role of biography in understanding how one becomes a global citizen, the expectations of teachers' role in promoting this concept, as well as the importance of civic religious literacy. Other chapters explore imagining GCE in China and what could be the connection between GCE and digital humanities.

Reason and passion are not alternative epistemes. They can be reconciled in substantive scientific analyses like those presented in this book, now in the hands of the readers for their judgment.

## Notes

1. See Learning the World. Paulo Freire in Conversation with Dr. Carlos A. Torres. Access Network (Canadian Public Television). Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. October 1990, videotape (28 minutes). Published as Paulo Freire on Adult Education: An Interview and Panel Discussion. In A. Konrad (Ed.) (1990). *Everyone's Challenge. Proceedings of the Literacy Conference*. Edmonton: University of Alberta.
2. Carlos Alberto Torres and Richard Van Heertum. *Revitalizing Democracy: UNESCO as a Public Intellectual for the 21st Century. (A View from the U.S.)*. In Robert Arnove, Carlos Alberto Torres and Laurens Misiaszek (Editors) (in press). *Comparative Education: The Dialectics of the Global and the Local*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.
3. [www.isa-sociology.org/en/publications/isa-digital-worlds/global-sociology-and-the-coronavirus](http://www.isa-sociology.org/en/publications/isa-digital-worlds/global-sociology-and-the-coronavirus)
4. [https://ballotpedia.org/United\\_States\\_Senate\\_elections,\\_2022](https://ballotpedia.org/United_States_Senate_elections,_2022)

# Acknowledgments

This book would not exist without the important scholarly, analytical, and collegial contributions of my mentor, colleague, friend, and advisor, the Distinguished Professor of Education, Carlos Alberto Torres. His support to his students and a vast network of colleagues contributes to a continued, rich, critical, and important dialogue on research, core values, and the relevance of comparative and international education and participatory practices in education.

Nor would the dialogue formed by this book exist without the important contributions made by each of the chapter authors. I thank them in particular for their efforts during what has been a difficult year marked by the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Introduction

## Critical Global Citizenship Education as a Form of Global Learning

*Susan Wiksten*

### Public Spheres and Education

Education is a practice that is guided by multiple perspectives and theories. Since the twentieth century, a broad support has been accorded by many education experts to constructivist approaches that have been supported with evidence from cognitive research in psychology (Piaget & Weil, 1951). However, education has never achieved a singular paradigm across the globe; a multitude of theories and traditions guides the work of education professionals today. The fragmented nature of the field of education is necessary as theories of education form within different societies, education serves a variety of purposes, and the societal circumstances are different across the globe. Critical scholars and educators have already for decades alerted us to some of the unsuccessful features of efforts to modernize education; such as different forms of violence in the context of education, the abnegation of minority groups in practices of education, or the reinforcement of asymmetrical power relations based on social positionality (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970; Freire, 1970; Bernstein, 1977; Morrow & Torres, 1995; Stromquist, 2015; Howard & Navarro, 2016).

A renewed call for ethically grounded leadership in education calls the attention of both practitioners and scholars in global citizenship education (GCED) to questions of social justice in education (cf. Zeichner, 2009; Westheimer, 2015; Howard & Navarro, 2016). Social justice in education is about promoting what we understand as fair practices in education. What is fair in a society is associated with the extent to which the interests of different groups in society are represented in education (Crenshaw, 1989; Schement, 2001). A basic political mechanism for promoting representation is the use of deliberative practices. Deliberation, however, does not take place automatically in societies, nor in the context of education, but requires the availability of designated practices, resources, and spaces. In a classic work of political theory, Habermas identified coffee houses in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century London as spheres between civil society and State. Places where critical public discussions were possible. The coffee houses in London were important for a particular kind of governance shift. These public spheres contributed to a situation where, instead of a ruler monitoring the compliance of the people,