



# Global Citizenship Education Policy Issues

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## Overview

In their review of the literature relating to global citizenship education, Shultz and Jorgenson (2008) emphasize the importance of surfacing the embedded and sometimes obscured philosophies which underpin policies and therefore practices labeled global citizenship education. Failure to make these guiding philosophies explicit reduces global citizenship education (falsely) “to a politically neutral, if not banal, concept” (p. 4). Both the literature on global citizenship education (Shultz and Jorgenson, 2008) and key papers presented at a recent international conference<sup>1</sup> outline some of the tensions inherent in this subject area. All levels of discussion relating to policy formation point to the existence of key contradictions in the ways in which global citizenship education (GCE) is articulated in theory and in practice.

In the past decade, Alberta Education and Alberta Advanced Education and Technology have made educating for global citizenship a goal and/or vision of their education strategies through various international and internationalization initiatives. These initiatives, which include study abroad, student exchanges, teacher exchanges, and second language learning programs, aim to build students’ intercultural competency, knowledge and understanding of the international community and sense of global citizenship. The policy documents do not, however, define or clarify what is meant by ‘global citizenship’. In looking at the context and objectives of Advanced Education’s *International Education* plan, which highlights global citizenship in its vision statement, there appears to be a strong focus on student and faculty members’ competitiveness in the global economy. The economic and individualistic motivation behind educational objectives is in tension with more socially just aims of global citizenship. This corresponds to issues and concerns raised by the authors of the policy papers presented at

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<sup>1</sup> This report is based on papers delivered at the *Global Citizenship Education and Post Secondary Institutions: Policies, Practices and Possibilities*. The conference took place October 23-25, 2008 at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

the *Global Citizenship Education and Post Secondary Institutions* conference; they suggest a much more comprehensive and inclusive approach to GCE needs to be taken by education policy makers in order to articulate what is meant by educating for global citizenship and how it ought to be realized in Alberta's post-secondary institutions.

This report on the policy issues highlighted at *Global Citizenship Education and Post Secondary Institutions: Policies, Practices and Possibilities* conference will focus on contradictions among sometimes competing discourses which circumscribe GCE, the identification of key actors within the policy arena, and recommendations for moving forward in the development of GCE policy within post-secondary contexts.

### **The importance of attending to policy development**

Public policies “provide both guidance for government officials and accountability links to citizens,” according to Pall (2001, p. 1). During a recent conference at the University of Alberta, the focus of several papers was the connection between education policy and the type of or lack of global citizenship education curriculum development (the focus of all but one paper was education at the post-secondary level). These papers signal a call for action on, and attention to, how educational policy defines and imagines the realization of global citizenship education in Alberta's post-secondary institutions. Pal (2001) also reminds her readers that once an issue has been raised in the public consciousness, inaction on that issue constitutes a type of policy statement as well. Those who attended and presented at *Global Citizenship Education and Post Secondary Institutions: Policies, Practices and Possibilities* conference articulated the importance of the issue of global citizenship education within post-secondary contexts. In addition they were singularly united on the importance of attending to the development of a relevant and coherent public educational policy regarding the implementation of curriculum at post-secondary levels that addresses the complexity of issues relating to our responsibilities within a globalized context. Policy makers, educators, students and Canadians at-large are called upon to work to determine what constitutes global

citizenship education and how to ensure that post-secondary students graduate with the requisite aptitudes and abilities to take on their role as citizens of Canada and the world.

However urgent the call for attention to the development and refinement of educational policy, it is equally important that those who have input into policy clarify, and make transparent, their ideological orientations. Since any public policy is intended to be a “guide to action” (Pal, 2001, p. 5) it is critical for the policy to be explicit about the underlying values and priorities that it privileges and will ultimately give action to. This document presents a summary of some of the values and priorities, which thread their way through current debates regarding the need for and nature of a potential policy regarding global citizenship education.

### **Contradictory discourses**

At all levels of policy-making as well as in educational settings, contradictions exist in the articulation of conceptualizations, philosophies, purposes and objectives of education in general and more specifically relating to GCE. Educational policy, according to Couture et al. (2008), is in many instances closely tied to student assessment issues, that is, what constitutes ingenuity, citizenship, leadership, competitiveness and so forth. How these assessment parameters are defined and understood will impact the content of global citizenship education curricula. There will be implications for long term student outcomes based on how assessment criteria are defined and understood.

Second, according to Kerr and Bedard (2008), the availability of resources has a direct impact on curriculum development. Educational policy that emphasizes GCE will need to consider the funding issues relating to study abroad programs, the dissemination of research and visiting lecturer programs. During conference sessions, which addressed policy issues relating to GCE, there were discussions about the presence of competing issues imbedded in funding policies that impact the aforementioned aspects of what might be considered GCE. For example, presenters and delegates highlighted the presence of tensions between sometimes competing interests such as a desire to provide

undergraduates and faculty opportunities to showcase their research or experience life outside the Western academy and the environmental impact of accelerated global travel. The question remains as to how university requirements for travel to disseminate research puts pressure on the environment – and how these competing interests have implications for how we understand global citizenship. In addition to having an impact on the environment, an accelerated emphasis on study abroad, the global dissemination of research and so forth, privileges a certain student demographic (unless funding structures are changed and resources allocated to level this playing field).

A third set of competing interests relates to the problem of neutrality. Pal (2001) notes that all policy is guided by principles or ideology, which belies a particular orientation. And since policy is intended to guide action, it follows that in the choosing of one course of action, another is eschewed. According to Shultz (2008), this gives rise to the need to clarify, in policy, the problematics and falseness of any claims to neutrality. Policies are not neutral, therefore curricula arising of educational policies are not neutral either (Shultz, 2008). Shultz goes on to discuss how policies reflect powerful structural forces including institutional norms that legitimize certain practices. Policy must clarify who and what is being privileged through policy and the curriculum that emerges out of or is shaped by policy. Throughout the conference there was a call for policy to be explicit about who is being privileged and what interests are being served through educational policies. Ultimately, all policy privileges should be explicit and not masked by the language of neutrality (Abdi, 2008; Kerr and Bedard, 2008; Shultz, 2008; Weber, 2008; Zuber, 2008).

A fourth set of competing interests relates to problematic policies that give rise to curricula and programs which seek to attract the best and the brightest (Weber, 2008) from other countries. This begs the question, ‘how does GCE policy in particular (and educational policy in general) explicitly address issues of mutuality’? Again, referencing Pal (2001) and Shultz (2008), not addressing mutuality does not render the policy neutral but rather speaks to the place of mutuality within a policy framework which will impact the actions (in this case curricula) arising out of the policy.

Finally, there are competing interests related to policy and the funding of specific curricula (Théberge, 2008). As was stated earlier in this paper, policy and funding are inter-connected: that is, what is prioritized through policy gets funded (Weber, 2008). Current tensions between internationalization and GCE have resulted in increased funding for internationalizing of curricula and GCE being less well resourced. Indeed the tendency is to conflate the two when the literature clearly delineates the differences between them (Shultz & Jorgenson, 2008). Educational policies which emphasize the development of competitive citizenry/university graduates intensifies the privilege of an educated elite rather than redressing inequities both ‘at home’ and ‘abroad’. Policies which are congruent with a focus on internationalization and which emphasize study abroad and student exchanges (programs which are accessible to few and whose effect upon injustice and inequity are questionable or marginal) are incongruent with the ethics and values which underpin global citizenship education (Abdi, 2008; Shultz, 2008; Zuber, 2008). Indeed, according to Zuber (2008), GCE can take place within local contexts, which alleviates pressures on the environment and on limited resources, but again requires that policy makers and educators clarify the purpose for and direction of GCE. If educational policy privileges the development of a competitive workforce over the inculcation of knowledge, skills and attributes (in post-secondary students) associated with social justice, then that will impact where global citizenship is learned and how it is taught.

According to conference presentations the following questions require attention in the development of educational policies:

1. Where does GCE fit in an educational system that has a focus on outcomes-based education and standardized testing?
2. Does this include curriculum and assessment strategies that are centered on social justice and agency?
3. What is the context in which we teach students about citizenship?
  - a. Should the focus of GCE be local or global or both?

Addressing these issues at a policy level will intensify a focus on GCE; and a concerted and focused effort on developing clear and purpose driven policies that support GCE will minimize the sometimes ad hoc nature of funding.

### **Policy Actors**

Policy processes are dynamic and incorporate a broad range of people who are involved in various levels of formation and implementation. Envisioned as a vertical slice, Gaventa (2002) illustrates a range of levels where policy actors (people who hold opinions and interests) are implicated in the policy process. In GCE policy, this includes local, national and international government officials, NGOs, pressure groups, academics, researchers, teachers, students, etc. Actors hold a lot of power in terms of policy formation and implementation, providing important information to the policy process including knowledge and experience of global citizenship, political processes and knowledge of the state and how to engage. Important to note is that actors are embedded in the institutional and political cultures in which they live and consequently bring in their agendas and interests into the policy process (Gaventa, 2002).

Policy actors with the most leverage in policy formation often have power and come from a privileged location (Abdi, 2008; Zuber, 2008). Dominant policy actors include governments and their representatives as well as organizations that are sponsored by government and corporations. A key component of this powerful policy position is the dominant neoliberal paradigm that supports both the actors and the policies that they formulate. Two important dimensions of neoliberalism are ideology and policy. As an ideology, neoliberalism stems from classical liberalism, which is based upon the belief that the market will control the flow of goods and services. Neoliberal ideology, however, advocates the privatization of public institutions. In the 1980s, this ideology formed the policy agendas of the United States and Britain, which served to highlight the individual, promote freedom of choice, secure the market, advocate laissez-faire and pose minimal government intervention in these affairs (Larner, 2000). Premised on these values, neoliberal ideology promotes individualism, mobility and competition, which perpetuates

the privilege of few and the continuous marginalization of many (Abdi, 2008; Shultz, 2008). Therefore, privileged policy actors, who are more often than not supported by neoliberal economic policy, perpetuate policy akin to neoliberalism that benefits themselves – the privileged minority.

One of Canada's leading non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations and GCE policy actors is the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), which provides services such as public policy, research and international programs to member universities. In the past few years, AUCC has undertaken several studies to collect information concerning the nature and scope of internationalization at Canadian universities. The studies reveal that developing global citizenship in students is an important dimension of Canadian universities' efforts to incorporate an international dimension into teaching and learning. In looking at the responses from an AUCC (2007) survey entitled, "Canadian universities and international student mobility," where universities were asked to indicate their main reasons for promoting study abroad, the top reason indicated for promoting study abroad was "to develop responsible and engaged global citizens" (AUCC, 2007, p. 2). The survey does not, however, indicate what is meant by global citizenship. While student mobility vis-à-vis study abroad may be a "cornerstone" of Canadian universities' internationalization strategies, as the document suggests, and assists in the development of global citizenship, there are important distinctions between internationalization and GCE that need to be attended to. The studies indicate that global citizenship is indeed an important component of study abroad programs, but the importance of developing global citizenship also needs to be examined separately from internationalization. To avoid conflating the two, policy actors need to make clear distinctions between global citizenship and internationalization and make this explicit in international education policy (Théberge, 2008).

While AUCC attempts to be inclusive in policy formation by including voices of member universities, there is a need for policy to be polycentric (Abdi, 2008) and responsive to the multiple views of students, faculty, administration and community from various locations. The voices of students and community members, who are most directly



impacted by policy implementation, are often not included in policy formation. As Zuber (2008) notes, it is privileged people and those with post-secondary degrees that are deemed qualified to speak of issues and realities that don't directly affect them. By engaging voices from multiple locations (geographically, institutionally, politically and socially), GCE policy will reflect the needs of the people who are directly affected by it.

Extending from the contradictory nature of who is included and excluded from GCE policy formation, it was noted by several presenters that it is crucial for effective GCE policy to involve those outside of dominant discourses and paradigms. Abdi (2008) suggests that in order for GCE policy to be congruent with the philosophy and practice of global citizenship, indigenous peoples and knowledges need to be engaged in policy formation. In light of colonialism and continued imperial practices and ideologies, which have led to the majority of humanity becoming subjects rather than citizens (Abdi, 2008), GCE policy actors must address issues of exclusion and be conscious of the (un)intended impacts of global citizenship education (Shultz, 2008).

### **Policy Spaces**

Several policy spaces exist in policy processes. According to Grindle & Thomas (1991), policy spaces are those moments where new opportunities arise and relationships are rearranged between actors. Policy spaces are opened in various places and times and hold the possibility of shifting the direction of policy (Grindle & Thomas, 1991). In Canada, the spaces within which post-secondary GCE policy has been formulated have tended to be highly centralized within administration and government. Specifically in Alberta, policy concerning global citizenship education in post-secondary institutions has been centred in Alberta Advanced Education. In their report, "International Education: An Action Plan for the Future - Linking Alberta to the World" (2005), which articulates the Government's commitment to internationalization, Alberta Advanced Education outlines a vision for Albertans to be prepared as global citizens. The framework to attain this vision, however, is limited to the International Education Branch working collaboratively with the post-secondary education system.

The presenters at the conference collectively argued that this space is not large enough to encompass the multiple views of those impacted by GCE policy. According to Zuber (2008), GCE is not about intensifying the privilege of the educated elite, but about educating the elite to ‘move over’ and make space for those that don’t have access to policy spaces, educational spaces, and economic spaces. In terms of the education system, Couture et al. (2008) suggest that policy needs to be engaged with and enacted at all levels, including the community. In a polycentric conceptualization of policy, which Abdi (2008) advocates, all social spaces constitute potential spaces for policy development.

Government agencies such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) have a prominent role in policy development and creating spaces for implementing GCE policy. According to Weber & Shultz (forthcoming), the origins of GCE in Canada can be seen through the partnerships between CIDA and international development organizations, which began to set up development education centres in the 1970s. Since then, policy spaces have been constrained as a result of neoliberal agendas. For instance, many of CIDA’s global education initiatives are evaluated on a results based management strategy, compelling teachers to quantify GCE and be accountable to CIDA’s standards in order to secure funding (Weber & Shultz). As a result of these policy constraints, GCE policy has the potential to align more with business models and economic agendas than social justice.

### **Policy implementation and GCE in higher education**

As indicated previously, GCE policy is commonly linked to internationalization. Théberge (2008) puts forth a working definition of internationalization from Knight (1994) stating that it is “a process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research, and service functions of the institution” (p. 7). Indicators of internationalization can range from developing global perspectives and becoming world citizens to attracting high caliber staff and students from international origins (Stone,

2007, p. 410-411). Consequently, as seen in AUCC's studies and Alberta Advanced Education's (2005) *International Education* plan, GCE policy often intersects with internationalization policy, which similarly addresses issues of a global scale and importance in post-secondary institutions. Despite their frequent use together in policy documents and evidence that they are used interchangeably, internationalization and global citizenship are distinct concepts with different objectives. According to Théberge (2008), the key rationales for internationalization are innovation and productivity, economic development and diplomacy. Weber (2008) asserts that this economic motivation of internationalization distinguishes it from GCE, which is directed towards social justice. Extending from the crossroads and confusion between internationalization and GCE, policy must be problematized and questioned in regards to its motivation for developing social justice and citizenship or economic advantage (Abdi, 2008). Resulting from this inquiry, strategic and clear priorities of GCE policy must be set (Théberge, 2008).

According to Weber (2008), GCE policy at Canadian post-secondary institutions has been used as a way to make universities the destination choice for the best and brightest of the world. Yet, the focus of GCE policy is often oriented towards economic growth instead of social justice (Weber, 2008). At the University of Alberta, the President's Dare to Deliver (2007) document exemplifies the tension between economic and social justice objectives embedded in GCE policy:

Alberta needs and deserves the benefits that a globally recognized institution brings to its citizenry, who move globally, and its industry, which engage globally. A great research and teaching institution offers leaders of tomorrow an opportunity to study at a level competitive with the world's finest universities. Such an institution will attract the best and brightest students and scholars to Alberta and retain them here in Alberta (p. 4).

Even though this vision opens a wide range of possible approaches of designing GCE policy at the University of Alberta, which may include actively engaging students as global citizens, the vision can also be viewed as an economic strategy to attract and retain international students and scholars to benefit the institution.

In the opinion of Shultz (2008) and Zuber (2008), an avenue of GCE that needs to be transformed is travel abroad programming that takes students overseas to ‘help’ others in developing countries. These types of travel abroad programs, which often extend from internationalization policies, can exoticise the “other” (Shultz, 2008). Zuber (2008) calls this kind of GCE ‘play’ and that which perpetuates power dichotomies and problematic binaries. However, GCE policy in post-secondary institutions, as indicated in the AUCC policy documents and the University of Alberta’s *Dare to Discover* document, is tied to internationalization strategies of fostering mobility of students and international dimensions into the students’ learning experience. Shultz argues that GCE policy must be detached from internationalization policy and ought to include a critical reflection on the intention and impacts of such educational programs.

### **Constraints and enablers**

Behind the dynamics of GCE policy processes is a policy background that includes a range of values, norms and understandings of global citizenship. This background, which influences both policy actors and the spaces in which policy is formulated, constrains and enables certain policy agendas. In recent years, the ideology of globalization has heavily influenced the process and context of GCE policy. As Brodie (2004) argues, current globalization entails processes, most importantly globality and globalism, that are multi-leveled and multi-directional. The structures and processes of globality, connected to technological advancements, reveal a shifting and breaking down of barriers of time, space, and nation, leading to a linking and enactment of a global community where there are at least possibilities of inclusive, transnational public policy spaces (p. 325). Processes of globalism reflect a political positioning that promotes a transnational worldview of governance, and institutional structures (Brodie, 2004). Of concern to GCE policy is the current neoliberal globalism ideology that gives primacy to economic relations, the freeing of a global market, deregulation and the erosion of the public sector.

The effects of neoliberal globalism on GCE policy have resulted in education institutions being restrictive of particular practices. For instance, in Alberta’s high schools, there has

been an increasing focus on student testing and achievement based on the results of these tests. According to Couture et al. (2008), secondary educational experience has consequently become more concerned with students gaining entry into University rather than engaging them in crucial learning experiences such as global citizenship. As long as structures and practices are in place, such as the requirement of jurisdictions to publish accountability pillar reports, formal education institutions will continue to perpetuate a competitive, market oriented system that excludes global citizenship education (Couture et al., 2008).

In spite of the fact that policy development is dominated by neoliberal paradigms, globalization has enabled the inclusion of new and unorthodox voices and perspectives into GCE policy. In recent years, internationalization strategies of Canadian universities have responded to globalization by attracting both international scholars and students (Théberge, 2008), creating the basis of a global community. Including the voices of these scholars and students in GCE policy holds promise of engaging and fostering multiple perspectives. A further step in this direction, as indicated by Abdi (2008), is to give primary focus to indigenous knowledge and reflecting on the implication for GCE policy relating to indigenous education.

However and wherever policy is created and implemented, its longevity and relevance relies on the support from various stakeholders. The manner in which GCE is supported monetarily constrains or enables certain kinds of policies being implemented. According to Théberge (2008), GCE policy in post-secondary institutions is challenged by a lack of a coordinated federal government GCE strategy, which impacts the nature of funding for the creation and implementation of GCE policy. In order to secure funding and long-lasting support for GCE policies, Théberge states that support of senior administrators and Faculty deans needs to be cultivated. As well, coordination among provincial/territorial and federal governments and nongovernmental stakeholders needs to be improved.

## **Recommendations**

As evidenced in her research and experience, Weber (2008) indicates that increasing numbers of students are seeking out programs and courses related to global citizenship. Based on this trend, she suggests that it is up to the universities to reclaim and redesign higher education institutions as positive places for global citizenship. The policy to affect this change, however, should reflect the need for and create a framework for the development of ethical spaces within post-secondary curricula and learning environments (Shultz, 2008). Shultz (2008) argues that GCE policy must go beyond a university curriculum to challenge norms and neo-liberal economic domination. She suggests that expanding GCE policy to engage students in the work of justice through various formal, informal and non-formal education, will result in more imaginative and meaningful curricula (Shultz, 2008).

The input into global citizenship education policy and curriculum must also be inclusive of multiple perspectives. The dominant and privileged policy makers and theoretical discourses must move over (Zuber 2008) and create space for other marginalized voices. As a starting place, Zuber (2008) suggests that policy makers need to begin listening to and engaging young people, who are already immersed in GCE work. In terms of curriculum, these energized students should be involved in its development, not only as recipients of its implementation.

In conclusion, good GCE policy, as suggested by several of the presenters, must lead to bigger questions. GCE cannot be used as an excuse to ‘play’ (Zuber, 2008), or as a neutral space that perpetuates inequitable practices. GCE policy involves critical re-examination of the contradictory discourses surrounding globalization, citizenship and education and problematizing the current policies that perpetuate inequality. Despite the contested nature of what global citizenship actually entails, GCE policy cannot be engaged with as an abstraction. To this extent, policy makers need to be in contact with what is going on in the world, both locally and globally. When policy makers fail to deal with tangible issues, such as Darfur, there is a radical disconnect with what is happening

in the world and the policy discussions (Zuber, 2008). In order to address the extensity of GCE, policy needs to be developed in a global context that links to local realities and solutions as well as being inclusive of voices and actors outside of the dominant group and paradigm. Failure to do so, Shultz (2008) argues, will result in a lack of social justice, widening gaps between rich and poor, North and South. Therefore, the following recommendations for developing global citizenship policy in post-secondary institutions are proposed:

- 1) Education policy makers should spend some time clarifying the definition of global citizenship and make it distinct from international education and internationalization.
- 2) Education policy makers should reflect carefully on the ideological and cultural beliefs that influence policy formation and attend to the close relationships between equity, social responsibility and global citizenship education.
- 3) Education policy makers ought to develop a more inclusive dialogue about global citizenship education by inviting more people into the policy deliberation process. In particular, it is recommend that policy actors include members of government, the academy, and civil society (individual and collective/organizational) who could contribute to an expanded policy reflecting the importance of global citizenship education which includes education for social justice and equity. Members of the non-governmental development sector, faculty at universities engaged in global citizenship education, students who work in the area of global citizenship, members of the community, and so forth, should be solicited for their input into global citizenship education policy.

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