



WORLD CITIZENSHIP AS AN HISTORICAL IMPERATIVE: SHOULD GLOBAL EDUCATION BE A COMPULSORY ELEMENT IN TEACHER TRAINING?

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of globalization is transforming the society. Society itself is becoming a global phenomenon, and its citizens world citizens. The process that took homo sapiens up the civilizational ladder, from clans of hunter-gatherers to tribal societies, to city-states and nation-states, is now culminating in a global society. Globalization is an historical imperative. Growing interdependence is forging the planet's population into reluctant solidarity, painfully realizing that the Earth is one land and mankind its citizens. Empowering world citizens, through corresponding values and skills, as responsible members of the global society is, primarily, an educational quest. Global education is at the core of social progress. And global education cannot become the norm unless teachers are up to the task; therefore it should be an inseparable and pivotal aspect of teacher training. Despite many promising experiments and projects, we are a long way from having global education accorded its rightful role.

INTRODUCTION

There is hardly a doubt in the mind of any unbiased observer that the social transitions of the past one century or so are, by all accounts, unique in human history. When viewed from a global perspective, something extraordinary has been going on with what we call society. Casually speaking of 'globalization', we refer loosely to the global market of world economics and politics including the growing influence of supranational corporations, the intensifying interdependence of multinational organizations and the building pressure of international challenges. However, the fundamental transformation involved in the process often escapes our attention: the perception of the human race of itself is irrevocably changed towards a genuinely universal one. We are living through a crisis of perspective (cf. Aurobindo 1971; Capra 1983; Fromm 1976; Teilhard de Chardin 1965). More aptly, what we are experiencing is a *shift of paradigm* in social order: it is possible that what we call 'society' is, itself, becoming global! If that is the case, then what we call 'citizens', too, would become *world citizens* (cf. Rotblat 1997), with corresponding identity, rights and responsibilities.

EVOLUTIONARY IMPERATIVE

A Brief History of Civilization

While globalization appears to be the most influential trend in today's world, it is by no means a new phenomenon: it is, in fact, the *apex of an evolutionary civilizational continuum* dating back millennia (cf. Barnes 1963; Bell, 1996; Bertalanffy 1969). How is that? To answer that we need a fresh look at the way we perceive history.



Homo sapiens started out somewhere in Eastern Africa about 200'000 years ago. All along this period we have not changed genetically all that much: if you could take a new-born baby from a hundred millennia ago, and bring it back to our times in a time-machine, there would be little to stop that baby from growing into a normal person, going to school, studying at a university and becoming a fully functional member of a modern society; this, of course, applies also vice versa. Yet, we know for a fact that the society has changed hugely in the past hundred millennia: a few tens of thousands of years ago, humans mainly lived in survivalist groups of hunter-gatherers, comprising of some dozens of individuals; yet, today, almost the entire human population of the planet has organized itself into nation-states of millions, tens of millions and hundreds of millions of inhabitants. And, genetic changes cannot account for this tremendous transformation in our typical social behaviour.

What can have caused this change? What can have induced humans, who were capable of peaceful coexistence only in small groups of a few dozen people, to eventually settle down with millions of others most of whom one will never know personally? After all, and despite the discouraging news-feed of daily horrors of war and cruelty, the vast majority of the world=s some 200 nation-states are not in open conflict with their neighbours nor are they in a state of civil war. In brief, the same genetic species that was capable of stable and peaceful life among just a few dozens is now capable of the same in the scale of hundreds of millions. This runs counter to the customary interpretation of history as a relentless and hopeless chain of conflict and bloodshed. But the empirical evidence is overwhelming: if the change is not caused by genetic evolution, it must be the outcome of *learning*, i.e. *education*. This means that that baby from hundred millennia before had the same *potential*; it had the capacity of the modern humans to be part of something bigger, but it didn=t have the *opportunity* to learn it.

We have *learned* to live more-or-less peacefully with each other, albeit slowly and the hard way; we have *learned* to regard ourselves as members of an ever growing circle of human family. Stage-by-stage we have attempted, practised with and attained an ever broadening conception of social life and organization, culture and civilization. The progressive stages of society reached, so far, have been: *family/clan, tribe, city-state, nation-state*. There is no logical reason why the process would suddenly stop here; the nation state is no more a natural limit to human solidarity than was the city-state or the tribal society. The only limit is (as has always been) our ability to picture a different and more unified future (cf. Laszlo 1989). At any previous stage, the next stage would have seemed utopian; yet, unfailingly, it was achieved and established C usually through a painful learning process due to our natural reluctance to change.

Viewed in this perspective, globalization is just an inevitable milestone in *civilizational evolution* throughout human history, which appears to be a process of learning towards coherent social unity (cf. Harman 1988). Fundamentally, then, globalization is perhaps the culmination of an *ongoing exercise in altruism*, learning increasingly selfless social behaviour from >self-love= and various degrees of >exclusive love= towards >inclusive or universal love= (by Alove@, we mean here solidarity and a sense of belonging among the members of the human family).

Interdependence & the Force of Unity

The historical logic of globalization is, in fact, very simple. Whatever the historical specifics of each case may be, the flow of social constructions follows, roughly, a uniform pattern: (1) all human groups develop from *relative independence* towards *increasing interdependence*; (2) interdependence eventually leads to *inseparability* or *unification/unity*; (3) unity, in turn, leads to *oneness* or *being genuinely one society and one people!*

In other words, relatively isolated human groups eventually encounter other groups, and the result may be either conflict or partnership or anything in between, but in the end they settle into some form of interdependence and coexistence. Once this stage has been achieved, even if reluctantly, generations of coexistence solidified the various human elements into inseparable mutual dependence, where one=s existence is dependent upon the other=s, unifying these elements into one population. This achievement, then, frees the population from the burden of conflict and strains of protectionism and allows it to thrive culturally on the strengths of its unity



with the richness of its diversity, and thus, after passing of some generations, the population is fused into genuine oneness: being one people, one society, with its own civilization, history and identity.

This process has taken homo sapiens up the civilizational ladder, from survivalist clans of hunter-gatherers to more broadly-based tribal societies, further on to the emergence of city-states and nation-states. And that process is now *culminating in the emergence of a global society* C ultimately, a global civilization. Utopian as that may seem, it is only the logical conclusion of this same process C it is neither improbable nor ultimately a matter of choice. In fact it is an *historical imperative!* This is an evidence that interdependence is just *a manifestation of the force of unity*. No other known species has exhibited the ability to transform its collective behaviour to such an extend along the dictates of this force of unity.

At this point, it is interesting to briefly note that, all along this *learning and educational process*, world religions have had a decisive and twofold influence. On the one hand religion has provided for the *edification of the minds and hearts of people and the progress of civilization* C the very prerequisite of that educational process; indeed, the archeological findings in Göbekli Tepe of Turkey and the conclusions made on their basis in recent years, suggest that it was the human urge to worship that sparked civilization and culture, not vice versa, as usually assumed C *A*first came the temple, then came the city@ (Schmidt 2000). On the other hand, religion has been the cause of *such strife, hatred and perversity that tops all causes of social injustice and instability* C the very antithesis of the teachings of most religions. Neither of these effects are present among other species; they are uniquely human traits. What can be the reason for such a divergent effect of the phenomenon of religion? One explanation, perhaps, is that we mean by *A*religion@ two very different, albeit related, phenomena: (1) the original regenerative impulse brought by the life and teachings of the Founder Teachers of major religions, which, when in their full vigour, give new energy to both the lives of individuals and the development of culture; (2) the subsequent dilution of those teachings with compromising interpretations and vested interests of religious leadership, the juxtapositions and destructive conflicts caused by the narrow interests and politicization of religious institutions and clergy. At the threshold of a global era, *it is becoming increasingly essential to learn to draw on the former and to abandon the latter*, because as it is, the majority of the religious communities of the world have failed to *utilize the unifying energies of their faiths to support a sustainable and inclusive process of globalization* (cf. Küng & Kuschel 1993).

Yet, global challenges and growing interdependence in the world are painfully *forging the planet=s population into a reluctant solidarity*, despite persisting worldwide confusion. While this is not welcomed by all, it is being realized by a growing number of people and is being accepted at least as a *>necessary evil=* by most. Thereby, a realization is slowly dawning: that *this, our Earth, is really one country, and mankind, as a whole, its citizens*. It is thus that the phenomenon of globalization is transforming the society: what we call *A*society@ is, itself, becoming global, and what we call *A*citizens@ are becoming *world citizens* (cf. Commission on Global Governance 1995).

THE POWER OF EDUCATION: CHALLENGING TEACHER TRAINING

Empowering World Citizens

If citizens of global society are world citizens, they need *ethical values and civic skills* contributing to a sustainable and inclusive global future. They need to be empowered C as responsible members of a global society C to contribute to positive transformations within that society. The underlying principle of any society, not the least a global one, is that of *Unity in Diversity*: the idea that society finds cohesion and strengths through unity, based on shared fundamental goals and core values, yet applied in the diversity characteristic to the cultural and mental spectrum of human experience. The principle of Unity in Diversity also implies that every human being *develops and expresses his or her talents and capacities in service to others*,



to humanity at large C only within such a context diverse cultures and mentalities can promote global solidarity, otherwise they will be a hindrance to both progress and peace. Thus, the empowerment of world citizens implies *nurturing a widespread culture of service*.

Human identity is not limited to simplistic loyalties to a limited social group C humans are capable of maintaining a comprehensive and hierarchical sense of belonging which can include a vast spectrum while forming a coherent whole. The real challenge, however, is *the absence of a shared ethical frame of reference* C pure pluralism fails to provide any tools for fusing diverse human elements into a unified sense of community. Some *globally sustainable values, models of life and modes of action* need to be incorporated within the multicultural reality (cf. Küng 1991; Puolimatka 1989).

At the core of the empowerment of the individual lies *the empowerment of the community* C say, a rural village or an urban neighbourhood (cf. Etzioni 1995). A culture of service cannot thrive in a collective vacuum; bottom-up grassroots civic participation is the context wherein the individual members of the community can *function as active participants, not only as receivers of social and community benefits*. Good governance is required in order to release the human social potential in an inclusive and sustainable fashion; when a community=s collective will is expressed through a process of democratic consultation and its results implemented through shared commitment and concerted action, a sense of collective responsibility is awakened, invoking a desire to seeing consultative decisions through. Local ownership is the key to any successful development scheme.

No amount of good governance, however, can produce lasting effects if the population itself C especially its younger segment C lacks *the knowledge, volition and skills to take charge of its own affairs and act responsibly*. As mentioned earlier, world citizens need the ethical values and civic skills to contribute, within their own villages and neighbourhoods, to positive transformations in the society and a global civilizational process. A *sense of global responsibility* and an accompanying *culture of service* are basic requirements of *world citizenship*. And this is, primarily, *an educational quest* C a task that must sit at the core of educational progress!

Teacher Training at a Crossroads

A well-educated and enlightened population has proven to be one of the most effective means to maintain a stable society and to promote sustainable civilization. Hence the educational system of any country has been at the core of successful nation-building. In addition, schools have the potential to act as *identity builders*: they can expand the foundation of children=s social loyalties and build up the aforementioned *A sense of global responsibility@* and *A culture of service@* C essentially become global peace-builders. How is that?

The foundation of most conflicts is *prejudice*; the foundation of prejudice, in turn, is *ignorance* (or mis-education). Ignorance can be overcome as knowledge dawns through concerted action and collaboration with others; one of the most effective ways to rise above prejudice is to *work in unison towards a common goal*; where successful, such education has proven a means for creating *an active and responsible civil society and institutions*, involving formerly antagonistic groups in joint efforts of social reconstruction and rehabilitation.

Schools provide a contained and manageable social context C a miniature society, if you like C in which such progressive experiments can safely be conducted. Far from being mere extensions of the established *status quo*, schools should be the social laboratories in which ideas such as *A unity in diversity@*, *A sense of global responsibility@*, *A culture of service@* and other essential aspects of world citizenship are nurtured, tried out, experimented with and spread. After all, it is the task of schools to education future responsible citizens C world citizens, in this case (cf. Toffler 1974).

For the sake of simplicity, let us label such education as *Global Education*. Based on all the preceding arguments, it is essential that global education is brought to the very core of the compulsory education of all children worldwide. The UN=s (1948) Declaration of Human



Rights, in fact, stipulates this very point ('26 / par. 2): *Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.*@

How many curricula are there, one may justifiably ask, that take this as their fundamental ethos? And even if the curricula would sufficiently support such thinking, it is obvious that such educational progress cannot become the norm nor be realized *unless teachers are up to the task* C a concern that is not new, but has been around for a while (cf. UNESCO 1965). It, therefore, follows: *Global education should be an inseparable and pivotal aspect of all teacher training!* (Cf. Coombs 1985; Kangaslahti 1984.)

The fact remains that the overwhelming majority of the world=s teachers are incapable of dealing with even the daily challenges and strains of a multicultural classroom, let alone to aspire for such idealistic goals (cf. Clayton 2003). This is not due to their lack of ethical rectitude or desire to do good; it is simply due to the lack of skills, training (which, of course, would benefit from a broader ethical and intellectual foundation as well). Such things simply are not included or are only marginally touched upon in most of teacher training C teachers, themselves, are not educated to be world citizens (cf. Brameld 1972).

For instance, what is a teacher to do with the situation where children from several religious backgrounds with possibly conflicting views on various social and moral issues are present in the classroom. This example shows the need in orientation in both *teacher training* and *the schools social role*. Here, the goal of both the teacher and the whole school should be to demonstrate that all world religions have served to give meaning to human life, have cultivated the good, reproved the wrong, and held up a vision of potentialities as yet unrealized (as discussed earlier in this paper). Demonstrating this is a very difficult task, but not necessarily impossible, if it is done *systematically and patiently over a long period of time*. First, teachers should be knowledgeable about various religious world-views as well as familiar with the local community which the school serves, in order to be able to bridge gaps between various thoughts and build upon the unifying aspects between religions. Second, the school should be committed to becoming a *proactive social influence*, not just a place for children to spend their days in. Neither of these is possible, unless the school serves a sufficiently small community of the maximum of a few thousand people in a limited physical area, say a village or an urban neighbourhood.

This was just one example, but an apt one, because the schools of the world face a real challenge in religion: Can they become *genuine fora of the emergence of global ethos* C can teachers become promoters of ethical dialogue between various faith communities, taking the *step beyond mere religious tolerance towards religious reconciliation*? We do not know. But this example shows how intricately *developments in teacher education* and *shifts in the role of the school in the local community* are interwoven.

To summarize: While it is important for curricula to reflect the requirements of *global education*, the kind of educational progress that is essential the needs of humanity will not become the norm unless *teachers become trained and dedicated agents of global education* and unless *schools become experienced and committed centres for community transformation*.

Case: An Attempted Step Forward

While many of the government agencies Finland, including the Ministry of Education and its National Board of Education, seem to be gradually awakening to the need for *global education*, the academic world appears to lag behind (see: Ministry of Education 2007a & 2007b). In the name of fairness, there *is* one programme, a full Master of Education in teacher training, founded on the idea of global education at the University of Oulu; it is the result of a couple of



decades of work, almost single-handedly, by Professor Rauni Räsänen (now retired), which only underlines the scarcity of academics dedicated to this matter.

On my own part, in an attempt to address the aforementioned concerns, I toiled for over ten years to include *global education* as something teacher trainees at the University of Lapland would have to study before they are considered competent teachers. Finally, after sitting as an expert on some of the relevant national task-forces of the Ministry of Education, and bringing back the insights produced there, we have been able to make a new minor subject available, since 2010, to students at the Faculty of Education of the University of Lapland: 25 credits (ECTS) in global education studies! Only one course of 3 credits is compulsory & the rest are optional.

As an academic discipline, global education aims at *harnessing education, its praxis and theory, as a change agent for sustainable and inclusive globalization*. The aim is that, in time, global education studies develop towards the major subject status that can, for instance, be studied in the context of a full Master's programme. The current minor subject comprises of the following nine courses: (1) *The phenomenon of globalization*, (2) *World citizenship and identity*, (3) *Human rights and global ethos*, (4) *Religions in the global village: walls and bridges*, (5) *Multicultural classroom & school: microcosm of the world*, (6) *Good governance, democracy and civic education*, (7) *Education as an instrument for sustainable global change*, (8) *Holistic thinking & philosophy of Global Education*, (9) *Research of Global Education and multiculturalism*. Studies include various forms of contact teaching (lectures, exercises, demonstrations, simulations etc.) as well as independent work, both individually and in groups. At all times the purpose is to encourage student to investigate the reality and interconnections of the issues, to form a coherent understanding, to acquire core skills & i.e. to instil a *culture of learning*.

Global education studies & both the Master's programme at the University of Oulu and the minor subject at the University of Lapland & were developed and launched for the expressed purpose of addressing the aforementioned concerns responding to the needs of human development in the current global paradigm shift. As far as we know, they are among *the very few programmes dedicated to this purpose*.

EPILOGUE

As amply demonstrated in this article, education is potentially a *manageable change agent* for international, social and human development. We are yet a long way from having global education included as a compulsory element in teacher training. Although the importance of education as a means for sustainable development, promoting international stability and preventing conflict has been emphasized by almost all international stakeholders, education has rarely, if at all, been utilized as *a strategic and systematic instrument* for stabilizing societal conditions and for society building & let alone for *building a sustainable and inclusive global future!*

The source of my optimism, however, is the fact that people's thinking is changing, slowly but inevitably. Increasing numbers of people worldwide are dedicating their thoughts, skills and resources to what amounts to a *sense of global responsibility and an accompanying culture of service* & the basic requirements of world citizenship. So, despite ongoing trouble, we can assume that, in the long run, a prosperous and harmonious global future is not only possible but, indeed, inevitable & an historical imperative.

The Persian prisoner in the Ottoman Palestine, Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892), wrote over a century ago: *All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization* (1952 [circa 1860-1892], p. 215). Of the qualities of a true world citizen, he wrote: *That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race. ... It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.* (1978 [circa 1875-1892], p. 167.)



And, referring to the power of education to tap the human potential, Bahá'u'lláh (1978 [circa 1875-1892], p. 162) explained: *‘Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom.’*

While the future itself may hold for us a bright promise, it is our choices and actions today that delineate what kind of a path will take us to that future. This is where educating world citizens steps into the picture, and this is where the current inadequacies of teacher training stand at their sharpest contrast. Those of us, who are in a position to make a difference in this matter, carry a grave responsibility.

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