

DEFINING GLOBAL EDUCATION

Many people have limited understanding of the concept of global education; they think it is mostly based on technology and making sure students are taught how to use it correctly to communicate and problem solve. While this is one critical factor of global learning, there is a much deeper level of which many people are unaware. This deeper, psychological level is the basis of this analysis. Students who are genuine products of global education systems value diversity, embrace varying cultures, empathize with those that are different than themselves, try to understand different perspectives, seek out opportunities to experience other cultures, and avoid ethnocentrism. In their writings, Tye (2003) and Li (2003) both identified a need to bring global perspectives into schools. They each presented evidence explaining the basis of this need and proposed how to best make necessary changes. To accomplish the common goal of building global consciousness in students, Tye suggested that American educators reach out to foreign ones while Li asserted that analyzing bioregionalism's close ties to global education provides opportunities to explore the interconnectedness of the world.

THE CURRENT STATE OF GLOBAL EDUCATION

Both authors agreed that the way people are educated strongly affects how globally conscious they will become. Tye wrote:

The major finding from my study was that throughout the world, schooling is still seen as a major force in the building of national loyalties. This is true despite the inexorable movement toward regionalism and international cooperation and the growing interconnectedness of the global systems. (Tye, 2003, p. 165)

Li stated (2003) that global education is necessary "if social justice and human equality are to be attained" (p. 69). Both authors also expressed concern that current educational systems

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encourage ethnocentricity and actually marginalize oppressed people further. Tye made this clear in his opening paragraph:

In the 1990s, the global education movement in the United States took on a number of ethnocentric characteristics. Largely because of attacks from the political Right, global educators worked hard to avoid issues that were controversial. In addition, they often strove for what was euphemistically called “balance”. That is, “teach about other peoples and countries, but do it ‘patriotically’”. (Tye, 2003, p. 165)

Li also made it clear that he finds this problematic when he noted that “apparently socially reconstructive educational reforms can in fact suppress resistance movements that foster the agency of subaltern people” (2003, pp. 68-69). Both authors made it evident that they view today’s attempts at global education as inadequate, with Tye’s concern focused primarily on America.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

In his article, Tye outlined his research in which he analyzed the effectiveness of global education attempts in many other nations. His findings clearly showed that American systems are not as successful in implementing global educational practices as other countries: “in addition to the many global education programs within individual nations, there are a number of networks that connect schools from several countries. Unfortunately, far too few U.S. schools are involved in such multinational projects” (Tye, 2003, p.167). He gave examples of such networks and noted the nations that have chosen to be a part of them. He asserted that until American educators reach out to educators in other nations who are also genuinely interested in the global education movement, they will continue to be less globally connected than many other parts of the world. He stated, “my hope is that American educators will participate in bringing a

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global perspective to our schools and classrooms and that they will do this, at least in part, by seeking dialogue with global educators around the world” (Tye, 2003, p. 168).

Li argued that attempts at global education would be much more successful if they recognized the link between bioregionalism, or learning about one’s local identity, and global consciousness. He asserted that it is practically impossible to learn about local issues and cultures without recognizing their global connections. He cited the worldwide environmental movement as an example of this; the negative effects of pollution are devastating everywhere and this presents problems impossible to solve without worldwide awareness, contribution, and cooperation (Li, 2003). Li’s argument was based on the idea of thinking globally and acting locally:

the establishment of a global civil society is based on a commitment to integrate local activism with global networking...interlocking localities shape and form the global.

Thus, bioregion-based education as a basis for socially responsible educational reform must attend to the dynamic global/local assemblage. (Li, 2003, p. 62)

Li deepened his analysis by insisting that “proponents of education do not share a common perceptual lens” (2003, p. 62). In other words, there is not a shared, global consensus detailing what should be taught and how to go about teaching it. Different regions of the world naturally, and often unintentionally, teach content in ways biased towards their own global positions and histories. He points out that education involves both “substantive” learning (the content knowledge of systems, events, geography, etc.) and “perceptual” learning (creating open-mindedness, empathy, resisting stereotypes, etc.) (Li, 2003). It is critical that educators teach students to use the perceptual dimension to accomplish the learning goals of the substantive one. In other words, students should question what they learn with an open mind to think critically

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about it rather than accepting it in the way it is presented. On the same token, educators should think about the content they are teaching similarly to avoid ethnocentric tendencies. When this happens, learners are able to analyze situations and see their own role in established systems that marginalize oppressed people:

In view of the lack of reciprocal interactions between people of developing and developed nations, many concerned educators who develop global education programs have made efforts to incorporate critical inquiry into the ideological underpinnings of the global pursuit of development. Such critical inquiry aims at unveiling how promoting belief in the concept of growth-oriented development has become a way for developed nations to maintain worldwide hegemony and affluence. It also attests to the overwhelming evidence that the global pursuit of growth oriented development actually *sustains* poverty and contributes to the worsening of ecological problems in Third World countries and beyond. (Li, 2003, p. 63)

Tye also expressed similar concern when he wrote, “globalization...has signaled the solidification of a world economic order based on cynicism and individual profit...our times demand a corresponding change in consciousness. Global education can make a significant contribution to such a change” (Tye, 2003, p. 168).

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

The most obvious conclusion to draw from this analysis is that educational systems must change if they hope to create truly global citizens. The world has gone through many shifts in thinking, from the Enlightenment to Industrialization, and we are now on the brink of a new Global era. Our current teaching methods which encourage memorization and mastery of a pre-

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determined set of skills are simply not adequate for the future. This system is based around a testing program that minimizes the importance of higher level thinking skills, or the way of the future, and stresses lower level thinking skills, or the way of the past. To move into the states of global awareness and involvement that Tye and Li described, it is imperative that educators begin to tackle global problems with a sense of urgency and in innovative ways.

There are many texts that address this inevitable shift in times. In *A Whole New Mind*, Pink wrote:

The last few decades have belonged to a certain kind of person with a certain kind of mind...But the keys to the kingdom are changing hands. The future belongs to a very different kind of person with a very different kind of mind-creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers, and meaning makers. These people...will not reap society's richest rewards and share its greatest joys...We are moving from an economy and a society built on the logical, linear, computerlike capabilities of the Information Age to an economy and a society built on the inventive, empathetic, big-picture capabilities of what's rising in its place. (Pink, 2006, pp. 1-2).

Though Pink did not focus on education in this book, the changes he described make it evident that our educational system must dramatically shift to accommodate and prepare learners of the future. Specifically, the portions about "empathizers", "meaning makers", and "big-picture capabilities" relate directly to Tye and Li's writings discussed in the previous pages. To create global citizens capable of empathizing and making meaning, we must teach them how to perceive the global community in such a way that they take ownership and become involved. Li summed it up nicely when he concluded his piece, stating that "the confluence of global

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education and bio-region based education indicates the possibility of developing a “global” perspective that is sensitive to the interrelatedness of today’s ecological problems and to the particular needs of local communities” (Li, 2003, p.73).

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