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Book review: *Research on Teaching Global Issues: Pedagogy for global citizenship education*, edited by John P. Meyers

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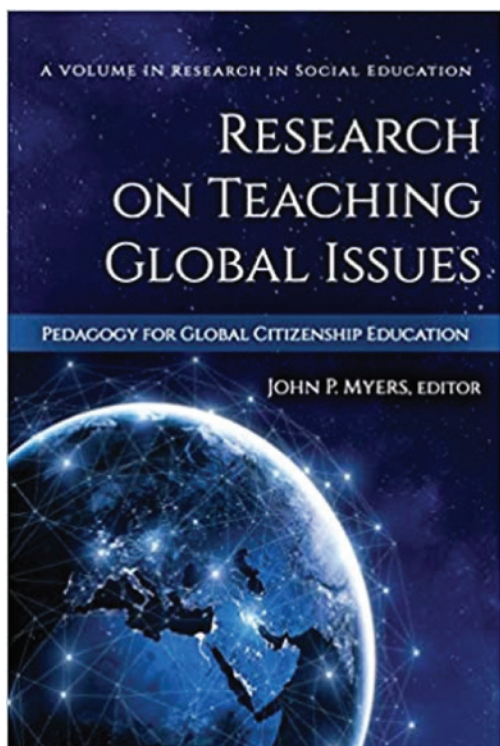
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Book review

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Research on Teaching Global Issues: Pedagogy for global citizenship education, edited by John P. Meyers

Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2020; 176 pp.;
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John P. Meyers' 2020 book *Research on Teaching Global Issues: Pedagogy for global citizenship education*, adhering to its title, presents and discusses some of the contemporary debates in the field of global citizenship education (GCE) within the teaching agenda. In the last years, and especially after the United Nations agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, notably Goal 4.7, the profile of GCE has gained greater attention in education; educational practitioners increasingly seek ways of incorporating global education as part of their teaching and learning practice. However, as pointed out by the contributing authors in this edition, including Meyers himself, although the field of GCE is relevant in contemporary education and the role of teachers is crucial to incorporating it and to facilitating its implementation, there has been a lack of academic work and research evidence focusing on and presenting aspects of GCE within the teaching agenda.

The need for more research in this aspect of GCE is not only highlighted by the editor and authors of this edition, but also demonstrated by the growing number of recent publications in this academic area, such as work by Goodwin (2020) and Ekanayake et al. (2020). I therefore welcome Meyers' edition as it offers great insight to the ongoing discussion and debates in the field of GCE within the teaching profession. Meyers writes the introductory chapter of this edition and chooses to start his discussion by reflecting on the events of March 2019 – a time when students across the world, inspired by Greta Thunberg, skipped school to protest for more effective government action to address the damages of climate change. Political underpinnings and their influence and relevance to GCE discourse are apparent not only in this chapter but in all chapters of the book.

The 176-page edition is organized in two different sections. Section 1 offers a more theoretical focus, exploring the contexts and policies shaping the teaching of global issues. Section 2 provides a more practical insight into the implementation of GCE approaches in practice, presenting five different case studies of teaching global issues. Each of the book's nine chapters has a specific purpose and helps to build the reader's theoretical understanding of GCE. The edition presents the methods and practices that could be used to incorporate GCE as part of the curriculum. There is also reference to the hidden agendas within the GCE framework that seek to dominate the educational discourse in an era of constant control, commodification and intensification of the teaching profession (Apple, 2018).

Section 1 establishes the field of GCE and teaching as a unique area of academic interest. In doing so it provides insight into the scholarship within the field and how it has developed in the last decade (chapter 2). Chapter 3, authored by Lynette Shultz, Thashika Pillay, Carrie Karsgaard and Karen Pashby, offers a critical approach to GCE and how this is perceived and comprehended by young people (aged 16–18), who rarely are given a voice in matters that directly affect them. The authors base their theoretical framework on post-colonial discourses and their findings focus on challenging dominant idiosyncrasies of our Westernized society:

The youth viewed critical thinking as a necessity for valuing difference and diversity and unlearning hegemonic systems of thinking that perpetuate neo-colonial perspectives. (44)

Section 1 concludes with a chapter from Rapoport exploring the challenges and opportunities presented in implementing GCE as part of the social studies curriculum in the United States. This section, though brief, provides a clear outline of some of the theoretical frameworks in the field of GCE. Such an outline also helps to expose some of the ongoing debates in the field and allows readers to familiarize themselves with the wide-ranging spectrum covered by GCE.

Section 2 explores five case studies of implementing GCE and teaching global issues. Each of these case studies presents five unique ways of incorporating teaching approaches that aim to reinforce GCE in different contexts. These are also accompanied by the challenges and opportunities that each approach has to offer. For example, in chapter 5, Douglas Bourn explores how the Fairtrade programme in the context of the UK could be used to facilitate GCE values. Although Bourn considers these to be helpful ways of approaching GCE, he also warns that teachers need to examine all materials used critically, so that they do not end up simply reinforcing well-established Westernized stereotypes. Chapter 6 provides insightful research from a US context, where the University of South Florida's Contemporary Art Museum offered workshops to teachers. These allowed the teachers to familiarize themselves

with current global issues through the exploration of pieces of contemporary art from across the world and to engage in relevant discussion based on GCE values with their students. Chapters 7 and 9 present case studies from the context of Singapore and Hong Kong respectively, analysing efforts to develop more critical approaches of GCE as part of teaching and learning practices. Chapter 8 focuses on research based on the Albatross tool, enabling participants to explore a simulation that challenges strongly embedded Westernized perceptions of our society.

Meyers' edition indicates that global citizenship education and teaching constitute a unique field of academic interest, one in which there is an imperative need for more research. The choice of chapters is effective, providing an opportunity for the reader to engage with a range of theoretical debates in this scholarship field and to explore a range of case studies and methodological approaches relevant to the field of GCE.

Meyers' publication successfully makes the debates found in the field accessible and relevant for teachers and their practices, drawing on several practical examples. At the same time the work maintains a high academic profile and presents current debates in the field of global citizenship education. Looking at this publication from the dual perspective of a teacher–teacher trainer and a researcher in global citizenship education, this edition provides a good scientific and practical guide for teachers and researchers, whether novice or experienced.

Two of the most vivid aspects that jump out of the book are the theoretical influences and underpinnings of GCE—aspects that are mentioned explicitly or implicitly by all individual authors in the edition. One of the key debates that is discussed and highlighted refers to a key distinction between a more critical GCE approach and a more economic GCE one, based on the values of human capital theory. Although this differentiation is quite obvious for more experienced researchers, discussions here allow for this to be accessible for all readers. Further unpacking of the different types of global citizenship education and their theoretical and political underpinnings can be found in Oxley and Morris's (2013) typology.

As there is an underlying connection and criticism of the dominance of Western perceptions in the field of global citizenship education and teaching, this edition would have benefited from additional chapters from authors from the 'South'. Although this edition addresses the problem of dominant and colonial voices, and in several chapters highlights the fact that teachers will need to examine the materials and the approaches they use critically, these voices are notably absent. Including these perspectives here would have provided the reader with a more comprehensive and varied exploration of GCE and teaching.

Overall I welcome Meyers' publication and consider it a well-needed work for the field of GCE and teaching. In highlighting numerous areas of interests and gaps in knowledge, the book provides a compelling case for greater academic attention on the role of the teachers in developing global learning. Together the chapters demonstrate how effective teaching can only happen if teachers are actively involved in the process of comprehending, planning, implementing and critically evaluating aspects of global citizenship education. Most importantly, though, and in line with other academics and recent publications (Bourn, 2020), Meyers highlights that implementing the exclusive teaching of global issues in current education systems is not easy. However, it should define teaching and learning practice and be understood as a pedagogical approach.

As noted above, I claim that although the element of global citizenship education is discussed within a critical framework in Meyers' text, the work would have benefited from a more diverse set of voices and projects across the world. However,

it is important to remember that due to the nature of the field, global citizenship education will continue to be under constant review and debate. Within the context of teaching and education, the role and engagement of teachers in such initiatives is crucial and imperative for today's context. A publication such as this one from Meyers thus provides both a welcome starting point for novice researchers and an opportunity for more experienced colleagues to explore the field of global citizenship education in greater detail. In so doing it helps us to continue building our understanding of how GCE can be linked to our students' experiences, and so make learning relevant for them.

Notes on the contributor

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