

## **Teacher-Initiated, Student-Centered Global Education in a K to 8 School**

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### **Abstract**

Despite a growing recognition that established notions of democracy, nationhood, citizenship, and ethnicity are giving way to emerging notions of democratic, multicultural, global citizenship, there are few curricular guidelines to achieve this expectation. This is especially the case at the elementary level where there isn’t even a consensus that such an approach is appropriate. Faced with this lack of consensus and the resulting lack of curricular leadership and driven by the need to respond to the needs and interests of their students, elementary teachers, influenced by the particularities of their local circumstances, follow their instincts and rely on each other with respect to how to teach what is variously called global education, global citizenship education, or education from a global perspective. Elementary teachers are reshaping the practice of what is referred to in this paper as global (citizenship) education at the classroom level. While such innovations can frequently lead to creative results, they can also result in highly idiosyncratic interpretations of what constitutes the most effective approach to teaching from a global perspective or what constitutes global citizenship. This paper is a case study of the efforts of the staff of one small-town Ontario elementary school to infuse a global perspective throughout the grades from K to 8 and across the curriculum.

### **Introduction**

Global education and global citizenship education are responses to what Singh, Kenway, and Apple (2005) refer to as neoliberal “globalization from above” (p. 3). Singh and colleagues argue that “no analysis of contemporary transitions in education policies, pedagogies, and politics can be fully serious without placing at its very core sensitivity to the ongoing struggles over “globalization from above” that constantly reshape the terrain on which educators of all kinds operate” (p. 10).

The issues presented to educators by “globalization from above” vary greatly

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in magnitude. Some, such as the ecological crisis we face and the threat of pandemics, pose clear threats to the well-being of our planet and to everyone and everything on it. Solutions to these challenges will have to involve large-scale and concerted global action. Other issues are undeniably pressing but are of a different genre. These include the recognition that old notions of democracy, nationhood, citizenship, and ethnicity must give way to dynamic notions of “democratic multicultural global citizenship” (Torres, 1998, p. 423) that recognize diversity while seeking “a shared set of values” (Banks, 2004, p. 3).

Responding to change—whether that change be viewed as life- or livelihood-threatening or, at its most benign, as learning to cope with new social realities—is not a new concern for educators. For more than a century, from the time of Dewey (1916, 1938), progressive educators have been arguing that schools must prepare students “for life” (Singh, Kenway, & Apple, 2005, p. 10). By educating “for life” they mean “graduating students who can think critically and have a deep understanding of ideas, developing students able to produce knowledge by drawing on resources from different fields and integrating these with their own experiential knowledge so as to speak to their real life contexts” (p. 10).

It has to be recognized that despite these historical and contemporary efforts to transform schools into centres of critical thought and action, the transformative pedagogical models associated with global citizenship education remain, as Schweisfurth (2006) points out, “at the periphery of the concerns of the [teaching] profession” (p. 49).

Nonetheless, a significant number of teachers, including elementary teachers—many of them operating more by instinct and good intentions than by a familiarity with the literature—are taking up the challenge of teaching “democratic multicultural global citizenship” or, more simply, teaching “for life.”

There is much to learn from these classroom experiences. We contend that most practitioners and teacher educators are failing to “mainstream” global citizenship education (Ibrahim, 2005). Furthermore, notwithstanding what Evans (2006) identifies as “eclectic and distinctive tendencies” (p. 410) among global citizenship educational practitioners, in the absence of formalized guidelines and authorized resource materials, it is the initiatives and the developing skills of elementary school teachers that are reshaping the practice of global citizenship education in elementary classrooms.

However unique the features of this era of globalization, we must recognize that there is much continuity in the task facing global citizenship educators in the present day. In the early days of the progressive education movement, the world was no less dangerous or challenging than it is now. Dewey and his contemporaries developed their theories of the social responsibilities of schools during an era that Hobsbawm (1995) later referred to as the “Age of Extremes.” We can only speculate on how history might have changed had the ideas of the progressive educational reformers prevailed in North American and European classrooms in the first three decades of the twentieth century. The challenge facing teachers today is to succeed better than this earlier generation of educators in teaching the values, skills, and knowledge required to address the threats posed by neoliberal “globalization from above” so that future generations will not speculate on what might have happened had we prevailed in our efforts to transform curricular and pedagogical practice in the early decades of the twenty-

first century. Meeting this challenge by educating “for life” is, according to Singh, Kenway and Apple (2005), a form of resistance to globalization from above.

As Schweisfurth suggested above, global educators find themselves at the margins of the profession. It is certainly true that teachers who opt to teach “for life” have chosen the path less taken. Education ministries clearly reflect the priorities imposed by the logic of neoliberal globalization (O'Sullivan, 1999) even as the curriculum documents they authorize include space—for those inclined to do so—to teach from a global perspective (Schweisfurth, 2006). O'Sullivan argues that official discourse in Canada does not promote the graduating of deep-thinking, critically minded students; rather, it reflects the goal of preparing students to be productive citizens in a highly competitive global economy—an approach he describes as “utilitarian.” Efforts by global educators that run counter to the neoliberal approach are a key element in “a crucial arena” which constitutes “a central set of institutions and processes through which we can understand the relations within and among the global and the local” (Singh, Kenway and Apple, 2005, p. 9).

This paper examines the role played by elementary schools in defining and teaching the values, skills, and knowledge that citizens of the globalized twenty-first century will require if they are to deal effectively with coming changes. Our findings emerged from a participant-observation field study undertaken in 2005 by the principal investigator. The site was W. H. Knight Elementary School (a pseudonym), in a small town in southern Ontario. There, a core group of the school's staff, led by a primary teacher, J. C., with the active support of then principal, A. T., developed (as they are continuing to develop) a school-wide, K–8 global citizenship education program—one that since has been integrated into all aspects of the curriculum.

For the most part, studies of what is generally referred to as global education practice (Pike, 1996) are normative arguments in favour of a global-oriented classroom practice. Global education is typically presented as a value to be injected into the curriculum (Pike, 1996, 2000a, 2000b; Pike & Selby, 1988; Selby, n.d.). There is little in the literature on what teachers are actually doing when they teach global education. To the extent that classroom-based practice is reported in the literature, it invariably focuses on global practices at the secondary level (Davies, Evans, & Reid, 2005; Davies & Issitt, 2005; Evans & Reynolds, 2004) and relies on teacher self-reporting rather than on direct classroom observation by researchers (L. Davies, 2006). The virtual invisibility of the elementary school experience constitutes a large gap in the literature, a situation that Case (1995) noted more than a decade ago, and that still has not been rectified. We offer this paper as a first step in rectifying both these shortcomings.

## **Methodology**

This case study began with an invitation. The school principal, A. T., asked the principal investigator to visit the school and meet the core group of ten teachers. These ten represented half of the W. H. Knight teaching staff. Specifically, A. T. asked the investigator to observe the global education program that these teachers had developed—very much on their own. After an initial visit in early 2005, the

principal investigator conducted six after-school “study sessions” with the core group and the principal, using selected readings on global education, including works by Hanvey (1976), O’Sullivan (1999), Pike (1996), and Selby (n.d). The particular articles read and discussed during these sessions were chosen because they advocated an approach to global education that the teachers had instinctively chosen to follow even though they were not familiar with this literature at the time.

These study sessions had several objectives:

- To establish a rapport between the staff and the principal investigator, as well as to develop a common language and points of reference.
- To demonstrate to the teachers that their curricular and pedagogical choices corresponded to a particular approach to global education, most notably the one represented by Pike and Selby.
- To provide an opportunity for the teachers to compare their thinking and their practice with the global education canon.

No thought was given to presenting the teachers with literature that might be interpreted as critical of their efforts, such as the Openshaw and White (2005) anthology, which questions the very idea of global citizenship. With respect to global citizenship education practice, it is our view that the challenge for teacher educators and educational administrators is to create the conditions that move global education from the periphery into the mainstream, while creating a comfort zone in which teachers feel confident in tackling what many see as controversial issues (Davies, 2006; DfID, n.d.; Evans, 2006). In circumstances where creative teachers are developing their own “eclectic and distinctive” global education practices, it is important to learn what works from these practitioners. The goal, after all, is to develop pre- and in-service materials for a pedagogy of global citizenship education and to build broad-based support for it among classroom teachers and educational administrators.

To this end, the principal investigator participated in classroom observation, conducted formal interviews (which were taped) with the core group and the principal, and attended many “all school” events to gather data relating to the development and practice of the school’s global citizenship education program. All ten teachers in the core group as well as the principal wrote personal statements outlining their classroom experience and their philosophy of global education. No students were formally interviewed, although the principal investigator had many conversations with them, both inside and outside the classroom.

The *participation* aspect of the participant-observer methodology (drawn from Patton, 1990) mainly involved preparing and facilitating study sessions, accompanying staff to two professional development workshops in Toronto, and holding frequent formal and informal consultations with the staff about their classroom practice—or, in the case of the principal, her role in this staff-driven initiative.

The observation aspect of this methodology involved sitting in on classes and observing the activities therein; or, alternatively, hovering over the banks of computers in the Learning Resource Centre while students worked on

information and communications technology (ICT) aspects of the global program. Early drafts of our observations and conclusions were circulated to the staff; no modifications were required as a result.

### **Global (Citizenship) Education: A Field of Study with Ill-Defined Borders**

Arguably, Dewey (1916, 1938) was the first great proponent of what today is usually called *global (citizenship) education*. His emphasis on *social problem solving* and critical thinking arose from his philosophically based understanding of the role played by schools in an unjust society, on the one hand, and complex problems of public policy, on the other. Dewey was responding to the pressing need for democratic intervention by an informed and active citizenry; he hoped that such intervention would lead to the transformations required to resolve social problems in the early twentieth century.

More recently, Hanvey (1976), Pike (1996, 2000a, 2000b), Selby (n.d.), and Pike & Selby (1988) have left an indelible mark on the current understanding and practice of global (citizenship) education.

At first glance, the term *global (citizenship) education* would seem to render the *local* invisible; in fact, much of what global educators do arises from, and is influenced by, local circumstances and local issues (Pike, 1996). Indeed, Noddings (2005) suggests that the local *must* be at the centre of education from a global perspective. Franzway (2005) sees the local as the site of teacher intervention in the struggle to counteract the negative effects of neoliberal globalization. Schweisfurth (2006) identifies a number of local influences that affect teachers' decisions regarding what to teach and how to teach. These include the following:

- The confidence (or lack thereof) that teachers have regarding their personal knowledge and/or skills in teaching from a global perspective.
- The number of teachers involved in the given school, i.e., an isolated individual? a small number? a majority?
- The support, or lack thereof, from school and school board administrators.
- The attitudes of students and parents toward curricular innovations.
- The characteristics of the broader community: How open is it to global initiatives? (pp. 48–49).

There is substantial literature advocating the infusion of global education across the curriculum (Greig, Pike, & Selby, 1989; Selby, n.d.; Pike, 1996, 2000a, 2000b; Pike & Selby, 1988; Tye, 1999). There is also a growing volume of literature on global citizenship education (Banks, 2004; Davies, Evans, & Reid, 2005; Davies & Issitt, 2005; Davies, 2006; Openshaw and White, 2005). Note that there are similarities and differences between global education and global *citizenship* education. A close reading of the literature (certainly of those works just cited) reveals a debate over the importance (or unimportance) of distinguishing between these two concepts—indeed, over their very validity. Whatever the outcome of this debate, teachers are, in practice, combining global education with citizenship education. And, they are finding, as the teachers cited in this study attest, that these approaches complement and supplement each other.

Thus, in this review of elementary teacher classroom practice, we have decided to sidestep the debate over these concepts in favour of looking at how practitioners are teaching from a global perspective; and to minimize, indeed ignore, the theoretical complexities. To this end, we have chosen to use the term *global (citizenship) education*, with the parentheses indicating the teacher practice of linking these two concepts.

Since there is no prescribed global (citizenship) education curriculum, educators have to develop their own understanding of what it means and how it might be implemented. Pike (1996) notes that despite the “many different ways” that teachers approach global (citizenship) education, a consensus does seem to have evolved among Canadian global educators regarding what lies at the core of this approach. This consensus can be summarized as follows:

- It applies across the curriculum.
- It focuses on global issues and problems.
- It engages both the heart and the mind.
- It addresses how we learn, not just what we learn.
- It encourages action. (Pike, 2000b, pp. 221-223).

### **The Origins of the W. H. Knight Global (Citizenship) Education Program and Its Links with ICT**

Ironically, the global orientation at W. H. Knight originated not as a collective enthusiasm among the staff for “things global,” but rather in the school’s ICT potential. It dawned on primary teacher J. C. that this potential could facilitate the injection of the “global” into a “local” program. How, then, did this local program become so thoroughly *globalized* without losing its local roots?

In the autumn of 2001, J. C. and the other grade one teachers did a community study about the local town. The grade one students studied different aspects of their town through field trips and guest speakers; meanwhile, their grade eight reading buddies were assigned the task of posting the younger students’ findings on the school’s website.

This Grade 1 community study marked the beginning of what W. H. Knight teacher–librarian C. C. described as the school’s “technological revolution.” It also laid the foundation for the global (citizenship) education initiative. With the successful completion of this ICT-intensive project, the school received some additional funding from the federal government’s Grassroots Program (which is now defunct). The principal, A. T., used these funds to provide professional development time for teachers to improve their ICT skills. From the very beginning, A. T. clearly understood the importance of ICT to the school’s global (citizenship) education program:

Students and teachers no longer have to leave the school building to interact with another school or community, down the street or across the world. In today’s world, a teacher raising their students’ awareness of what other people in other communities do day to day and what they value is vital both to prepare for the world of work but also for “the work of life.” Helping a student understand diversity and develop tolerance in their local community as well as their national and global communities will develop well-rounded citizens, which is a

fundamental goal of our educational system. (Notes prepared by A.T. for the principle researcher).

J. C., reflecting on the origins of global (citizenship) education at the school, also cited the community study as the starting point:

The process for me began, oddly enough, not by examining global issues but by examining the local community ... from a grade one perspective through a collaborative Web-based project in conjunction with grade eight students. Through the success of this ... project I became interested in how technology can help us as a school to communicate and collaborate with each other within the school and beyond. (Notes prepared by J.C. for the principle researcher).

The summer and fall of 2003 was an especially significant time for the emergence of the W. H. Knight global (citizenship) education program and its inseparable links with ICT. That summer, J. C., impressed by the opportunities offered by i-EARN (the International Education and Resource Network), travelled to Japan at his own expense to attend its annual international conference. As a direct result of contacts he made there, several important initiatives emerged:

- A partnership was formed to jointly study environmental issues with a New Brunswick school. The two schools posted the results of these studies on a shared website.
- A delegation of Dutch students spent a week at W. H. Knight.
- The school established an active partnership with the Freetown Centre for the Rehabilitation of Child Soldiers and War Affected Youth in Sierra Leone.

A number of teachers noted that these activities were key to deepening their commitment to the school's global (citizenship) education work. Primary teacher, M. B., wrote in her statement:

The exchange opportunity with the teachers and students from Holland was one I will never forget .... Seeing both the Dutch and Canadian students interact was truly a testimony to the success of learning on a global scale. Some of our students do not get as many opportunities as others, and hearing them talk about their experiences during those six days was priceless.

In the following academic year (2003–04), the entire school become involved in further projects. One of these, *Be the Change: Make a Difference*, highlighted the many things that students were already doing as part of their school activities; this helped the students further develop social conscience as well as active citizenship skills. As stated on the school's website, “the idea here is that we can all make a difference once we decide to be the change.” Schoolwide projects included launching an antibullying campaign, supporting the community food bank, and contributing to a book drive to provide books for libraries in First Nations communities. None of these activities were, in any way, global;

arguably, though, they prepared the teachers for such activities, while providing the students with a range of knowledge, values, and skills that allowed for a deepening of the global learning strategy. The first real opportunity to “go global” arose when the Dutch students visited. This was followed by the partnership with the Freetown Centre for Child Soldiers and War Affected Youth in Sierra Leone, hereafter referred to as the Sierra Leone Centre.

Through the Sierra Leone Centre project, which was only possible because of ICT, students at W. H. Knight partnered with youth whose experiences were far removed from their own. Older students at the school were able to use ICT to communicate with their African counterparts, thus making possible a long-distance building of friendships in an otherwise inaccessible corner of the world. Arguably, this partnership is the most significant development to have emerged from the school’s global (citizenship) education initiative. Through the Web, the African students have kept their Canadian friends informed of their activities, which include producing a video that documents various aspects of their lives. The students at W. H. Knight, whose previous understanding of war had been filtered through the popular media, have gained insight into the devastating impact of war on children.

Primary teacher, M. B., recognizes that ICT is a tool for realizing the objectives of a broader initiative—namely, the global (citizenship) education program. That program, in turn, has been “a spark that some of us really needed to continue to make our teaching more interesting, providing us with an opportunity to help the kids do some problem solving and critical thinking.” J. C. links the ICT to the broader academic and human outcomes the school is achieving:

It soon became evident that when students and teachers were working on these projects, not only were they covering a wide variety of curriculum expectations, but they were also learning valuable technological skills far above and beyond what the curriculum required. In addition, students were more engaged in what they were doing and character traits, such as respect, tolerance, empathy, co-operation, caring, etc., were being naturally developed in powerful ways. It was the success of these projects and the fact that they were visible to the whole school and beyond that fostered the ever-expanding growth of global projects in our school. (Notes prepared by J.C. for the principle researcher).

The above has been an overview of the school’s global (citizenship) education program. How has that program affected the work of individual teachers? Each teacher at the school has his or her own concept of global citizenship education and a unique approach to delivering it to students. The following two accounts demonstrate the commonalities and differences that one finds in the global practices at the school.

### **A Primary Teacher’s Story**

M. B., an experienced grade two teacher, has a big heart and an abiding love for her students. She enthusiastically sends teddy bears and Flat Stanleys around the world to facilitate her students’ learning through direct, Internet-assisted

communication with students from other countries and cultures. Her self-stated goal is to engage the “head, heart, and hand” of the students. She is one of the core teachers of the W. H. Knight global experience; hers is a compelling example of a globally oriented practitioner emerging from the particularity of the local.

She summed up her approach as follows:

There is a sign ... that ... I think is really important ... in a park. It says, “If there is going to be peace we have to start with the children.” I think that is exactly what it comes down to. If the world is going to pull itself out of whatever it's into, you've got to start with the kids because the adults are sort of stuck. (Interview, May 28, 2005).

Explaining her commitment to global (citizenship) education at the primary level, she said that by age seven her students are growing out of their egocentric stage and are starting to become aware of other people's needs. When moved to do so, they “will give you the shirts off their back.” For example, she was amazed by the reaction of her students to the tsunami disaster: many of them, with no prompting from teachers, brought in their piggy banks to make donations to the tsunami victims. M. B. attributed this spontaneous response to the global (citizenship) education work, which had, by then, become imbedded in many teachers' classroom practices.

In keeping with global (citizenship) education philosophies, M. B. and her colleagues did not limit the school's response to the tsunami to simply accepting donations from the students. They turned it into a “teachable moment.” A young man that M. B. knew, David, had been vacationing in Thailand at the time of the tsunami and had been staying at one of the affected beaches. He came in to speak to the students, who were speechless as he gave his presentation, using “before” and “after” photos to show the extent of the damage caused by the tsunami. M. B. said that

the students asked questions that showed sympathy and empathy for the victims and the survivors of the disaster and in the 4 days following the presentation, the school raised just over \$3,400 for the tsunami survivors. (Interview, May 25, 2005).

After his visit, M. B.'s grade two students were inspired to write to David. She commented:

Some of the letters were the best pieces of grade two writing that I have seen. They described how they felt, stated their admiration for David's courage, and wrote him notes of encouragement. David was truly touched by the letters. (Interview, May 25, 2005).

Nor did the students' response to the tsunami stop there. They wrote “messages of hope” for the survivors, using their growing writing and computer skills. They used a particular program, the Kid Pix program, to design pictures to represent their hopes for the children who had been affected by the tsunami. The students,

M. B. noted, “were concerned about the immediate needs of the children: parents, home, family, toys, playgrounds and schools.”

M. B. concluded her thoughts on how the students’ reaction to the tsunami infused itself into her classroom program:

I feel that these experiences have encouraged my students to develop skills that they would not otherwise have used without their involvement in these types of activities. Critical thinking, empathy, sympathy, connections to the outside world have all been fostered through our class global projects. I sincerely hope that we as teachers have fostered an understanding of global issues on a basic level and that these students will continue with their participation in global issues. (Interview, May 25, 2005).

Obviously, the classroom response to the tsunami was not the product of a preplanned unit on natural disasters; it was a spontaneous response to a natural disaster that moved the children to want to know more and to do something for the child victims. The classroom activities that arose from this spontaneous response were, however, folded into the curriculum. For example, the students applied and expanded their computer communication skills; they engaged in writing tasks; they learned some basics about the countries affected by the tsunami; and they learned how tsunamis are formed.

### **An Intermediate Teacher’s Story**

W. H. Knight grade seven teacher N. C. is, she herself will tell you, a pro-activist who focuses on encouraging her students to get involved in social change. Her students need to realize that “their decisions do have an impact and that they do have power.” She hopes to make them passionate about the issues facing humanity:

I am a notorious letter writer and I continue to be. I question and demand answers. . . . This is the kind of thinking that I want to instill in every child I teach. The final goal would be to contribute to the creation of a generation of passionate adults. The lack of passion in so many adults that I meet bewilders me and is very hard to deal with. On the other hand, when I see a sparkle of passion in the children that I teach, it is magic. (Notes prepared by N.C. for the principle investigator).

N. C. has long accepted the “interconnectedness of things,” a key element in the global (citizenship) education philosophy; and she believes strongly that what we do affects others and that we can make a difference.

N. C. strives to link everything she does in class to the real world, be it the local community or the global one. When she launches a classroom study of the novel *The Heaven Shop* (Ellis, 2004), her approach recognizes that the story raises many issues that the students will not have a lot of information about (e.g., southern Africa, HIV/AIDS, village life, cultural references). That is why she “front loads” the unit; in other words, “before the students do anything, any reading, any writing or anything, I spend the time letting them get the background knowledge that they don’t have but which they will need to

understand the issues in the novel.” By facilitating independent background research, she provides students with the opportunity to engage critically with the novel’s themes. This process of front loading involves the following:

- Assigning the students to groups that study the AIDS crisis, using the primary sources she provides. Each group studies one of a number of African and developed countries (including Canada and the United States) and how each country handles the crisis.
- Reviewing the HIV/AIDS death rates in these countries from UN statistics, and preparing charts demonstrating these statistics.
- Presenting the group findings to the class, starting with wealthy countries like Canada and the United States, followed by the statistics from Africa.
- Analyzing the data that show the great difference in the death rate between the developed and the developing world, the extent of which startles the students.
- Showing the students a photo essay about the AIDS crisis in Africa, in order to put a human face on it; and getting the students to write a reaction to the photo essay in journal format, in this way recording their first thoughts on the AIDS issue.
- Developing a series of statements about HIV/AIDS, and asking each student to note down whether they agree or disagree with each statement. Later on, as they read the book, they revisit these statements and indicate whether they have changed their point of view, and if so, why.

By the end of the unit, the students have completed a novel study. They have also conducted research, analyzed data, and presented their findings; explored their feelings toward the victims of HIV/AIDS; and come to understand some of the differences between developed and developing countries with regard to their capacity to respond to health crises.

## Findings

The W. H. Knight global (citizenship) program has a number of idiosyncrasies.

1. It did not originate in a fervent interest in global education by one or two of the school’s staff; rather, it grew out of an appreciation of ICT’s capacity as a communication tool. The school’s program became decidedly global only after J. C.’s trip to the i-EARN conference in Japan. That trip, however, was motivated by the ICT possibilities of i-EARN, not its global (citizenship) education potential. Even then, it wasn’t a straight line from the conference to a global orientation. The early projects undertaken after the conference were local or national in scope (e.g., the partnership with a New Brunswick school). It was, however, precisely the partnership with the New Brunswick school that opened the door to the globalization of the W. H. Knight curriculum. That partnership led to the visit by the Dutch students: the New Brunswick school had received a Dutch delegation the year before, and J. C.’s counterpart persuaded him to host the Dutch students. The i-EARN conference in Japan also led to the work with the

Sierra Leone Centre. The founder and director of that centre had been at the conference. J. C. realized that with ICT, a relationship could be developed and sustained between the centre and the school.

2. One teacher put it rather well as we were chatting: “Global education isn’t all we do.” The W. H. Knight program includes global (citizenship) education, but it’s not *all global ed all the time*. Like elementary schools everywhere, W. H. Knight is under pressure to fulfil conventional curricular outcomes and to excel in provincial standardized literacy and numeracy tests. The teachers are busy delivering curriculum—but, at times, with a difference. To the extent that it is possible—and they see the possibilities throughout the curriculum—they deliver it using a global perspective.
3. The W. H. Knight global (citizenship) education program is deeply rooted in the local. The visit of the Dutch students points to this. Certainly, the Canadian students learned a lot about the Netherlands; however, one of the most memorable aspects of the visit was what the W. H. Knight students learned about Canada from the Dutch—specifically, Canada’s key role in liberating that country from the Nazis. The ceremony at the local town hall that commemorated the 59<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Holland was attended by W. H. Knight and their Dutch visitors, by veterans of the campaign, and by local citizens. By all accounts, this event was the most significant moment of the visit.
4. The leadership for the program came not from the principal or from a teacher in one of the senior grades; instead, it was a primary teacher, J. C., who inspired the core group to commit to this approach. Very soon after, the principal, A. T., came on board; she would play an important role, securing resources and making the global program schoolwide. She did so without ever usurping the classroom-level leadership, which remained in the hands of the core group of teachers.
5. A broad and deep relationship has developed between the school and the Sierra Leone Centre. This unlikely partnership between a small-town Canadian school and children who have suffered the trauma of being forced into military service, or who have suffered physical and psychological abuse as child victims of the war, is central to W. H. Knight’s global education work. War and peace and the impact of both on children are topics that have become deeply meaningful for these Canadian students.
6. Global (citizenship) education has been fused seamlessly into the existing provincial curriculum. Whether in primary language classes, where teddy bears or Flat Stanlies are sent to other countries, thereby provoking an exchange with the recipient classes; or the music program, which now has a large proportion of World Music content; or the character education program, which is virtually indistinguishable from the global program; or decisions about whom to invite to all-school assemblies (African drummers, a Holocaust survivor, an African choir, etc.), the global is always present, not as an add-on but as an integral part of all aspects of school life.

An important aspect of W. H. Knight's experience with global education is that, while we have been speaking of the school's "program," there is, within the consensus worked out among the participating teachers both formally and (mostly) informally, a great deal of variation among classes (e.g., Evan's "eclectic and distinctive tendencies" and Pike's "many different ways").

We found that despite individual teacher predilections, W. H. Knight's global (citizenship) education program is situated—albeit imperfectly—within the framework of transformatory education (Miller, 1996). The teachers, certainly with individual differences, have embraced an openness for social change with a view to addressing injustices at home and abroad—including, by way of example, the appalling situation facing many First Nations peoples and the phenomenon of child soldiers and war-affected youth. The teachers at W. H. Knight struggle to explain to their students how it is that so much of humanity suffers from systemic poverty and its social and political consequences.

With respect to Schweisfurth's views on local influences, the experience of the W. H. Knight teachers is instructive. The teachers expressed growing confidence in their ability to teach from a global perspective. Their knowledge of global issues grew as they needed it, and so did their ability to handle the ICT demands of the global program. Some of this new knowledge and skill was acquired literally "on the job" and some was acquired in workshops. All of it emerged in response to the demands the teachers placed on themselves to meet student needs. The number of teachers involved in the program and the active support of the principal helped foster a supportive learning community that did not rely on any one individual. So, for example, when global initiator J. C. was absent from the school, others took over and the program carried on.

The support the principal gave the program was exemplary. Without ever usurping the teacher-initiated project, she guided it, found resources for it, and became one of its most visible champions. The local school board supported the work at W. H. Knight, though that support was more moral than material.

There is no doubt that the students bought into the program, as did their parents. Our study did not include parent interviews; however, all teachers agreed that the parents were strongly supportive. This was evident in conversations that teachers had with parents, in the parents' attendance at assemblies involving guests who were part of the global program (speakers, dancers, singers, etc.), and in parents' willingness to billet the Dutch students. Furthermore, even though the students were addressing potentially controversial issues such as child soldiers in Sierra Leone and HIV/AIDS in southern Africa, no one, including the principal, reported parental complaints or concerns about program content.

The broader community, too, has demonstrated an appreciation of the program. This was evidenced during the visit by the Dutch students, who attended the commemoration at the local town hall of the 59th anniversary of the Dutch liberation, in the presence of local veterans of that campaign.

## **Conclusion**

Some would question certain aspects of the W. H. Knight global (citizenship) program. For example, they might argue that raising money for the tsunami survivors, baking for the local food bank, and purchasing computer and video equipment for the Sierra Leone Centre are not really transformational activities.

Indeed, some would declare that on their own, such activities are mere charity and thus reinforce, instead of questioning, the power imbalances that underpin the dehumanizing poverty suffered by so many of the world's people including many in Canada. To these people, we would reply that these examples take on another meaning in the classroom, provided that teacher and students critically examine the causes of social and economic inequities. By way of example, the school's ongoing involvement with the Sierra Leone Centre has allowed the teachers to raise fundamental issues of war and peace, social justice, and endemic poverty in that African country. Further research on the impact all of this has on student values is lacking—and is sorely needed. As Brown (2002) notes, we have not established standards by which to test the effectiveness of social justice programs in our schools. However, based on their own experiences, W. H. Knight teachers are convinced that their efforts are contributing to caring students with a sense of responsibility toward others.

Another concern raised about the W. H. Knight program is that, given the almost complete absence of computers in the classrooms of publicly funded schools in developing countries, ICT hardly represents an equal exchange with the developing world's students, especially its poorest students. True, very few classrooms in the developing world's public schools have ICT capacity; yet the students at W. H. Knight have been able to communicate with students in Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, and Uganda, to name only three distant countries. In these places, the communication often is not with schools but rather with other institutions, such as the Sierra Leone Centre, which is an after-school centre. Through international contacts, such as the i-EARN network, and with the assistance of the students of W. H. Knight, that centre's director has raised enough money to purchase ICT equipment and online time. Canadian students, then, are learning about life in a postconflict society and at the same time are helping their counterparts get the equipment they need not only to communicate with them but also to record CDs of their songs and videos of their lives. This strikes us as an equal partnership as well as an example of exemplary global citizenship. We are convinced that over time, partnerships like these will expand as local schools and youth centres in the developing world gain Internet access.

Clearly, the W. H. Knight global (citizenship) education program is not *the* model for all public elementary schools. Nonetheless, it is an important model. What we learn from this experience is that, even without curricular leadership from the centre, local schools can define and implement responses to global issues. The teachers at W. H. Knight are comfortable revealing their individual perspectives, knowing that students will be able to access other voices through collaborative practice, visits by local and international personalities, and frequent ICT connections. By focusing on student-centred inquiry and critical pedagogy, the teachers at W. H. Knight are preparing students to develop what Case (1995) identified as one of the most important traits that young students can acquire through global (citizenship) education—namely, “open-mindedness, full-mindedness and fair-mindedness.”

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