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Résumé de l'article

In narrative style, this paper looks at how a particular teaching-learning event, a meeting in 2003 between Canadian high school students and their Costa Rican host families in Pedrogosso, Costa Rica, unveils pedagogies of global citizenship. By interweaving insights obtained from scholars of education, experiences of students, and reflections by teachers, the author shows how learning for world citizenship often happens in unexpected and unscripted circumstances, when teachers are absent—although, not without responsibility.

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Teaching Global Citizenship: A Teacher Reflects on a Learning-Teaching Event and Implications for Global Citizenship Education

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Abstract

In narrative style, this paper looks at how a particular teaching-learning event, a meeting in 2003 between Canadian high school students and their Costa Rican host families in Pedrogosso, Costa Rica, unveils pedagogies of global citizenship. By interweaving insights obtained from scholars of education, experiences of students, and reflections by teachers, the author shows how learning for world citizenship often happens in unexpected and unscripted circumstances, when teachers are absent—although, not without responsibility.

Keywords: Global citizenship; global citizenship education; experiential learning; international practicums.

A responsible teacher does not ask more from their students than what they themselves are prepared to give.
– Larry Peakau, 2020

I was a high school teacher for 25 years, teaching social studies. For the past nine years, I have been a university professor, teaching global citizenship education[1] (GCE). One of my most memorable teaching experiences—for what it signalled about GCE and for the anxiety it elicited—occurred on a two-week high school global citizenship practicum trip to Pedrogosso, Costa Rica, in the spring of 2003. It happened in a small school house on the night that we, thirteen students and two teachers from Winnipeg, Canada, arrived and met the families that were to be hosting us. Over the past 19 years, I have often thought about that evening, wondering what was learned about and for global citizenship, and worrying about my teaching responsibilities. This paper describes the evening's un-foldings, examines how several scholars (thinkers and writers) of education and world citizenship might interpret its educative significance, explores how those insights reverberated in participants' memories nine years later, and finally, looks at how teachers' reflections on teaching for global citizenship portends a critical teaching responsibility. This paper, represents a 19-year quest to analyze and better understand a particular teaching-learning event, a single case, as Jardine (1992) called it. (Speaking as a hermeneutical phenomenologist, Jardine drew attention to the fecundity that may derive from a teacher writing about a single teaching-learning event.) My hope is that knowledge of GCE is elucidated and that my analysis resonates with educators of world citizenship, especially now, during the global pandemic—this time of fear, division, and polarization.

The event

When we arrived at the schoolhouse where we were to meet the host families in Costa Rica, it was already filled with people, young and old. It seemed like the whole community had come out to greet us. The students seemed anxious and nervous. Several looked scared and overwhelmed. In a short while each would go off into the darkness, on their own, with host moms and dads, brothers and sisters to live with people they did not know, whose language they did not speak. As their teacher, I felt anxious and helpless. I too was about to meet my host family. Here we all were in a small schoolhouse in the rainforests of the Costa Rican highlands, Spanish-speaking Costa Ricans on one

side of the room, English-speaking Canadians on the other, each looking at the foreigners on the other side of the room. Almost 20 years later, and having conducted scores of international practicums since then, I still feel the emotional intensity of that night—of not knowing what to do and not knowing what to expect. I felt at once responsible and immobilized. This was a first for me, travelling internationally with students, being responsible for their well-being. I wondered, what was my role here as teacher, pedagogically and ethically?

A short welcome program was presented followed by individual student-host introductions. The tension in the room was palpable as each student met their host parent, onstage. Then something unexpected happened. As our guide/translator was introducing the third student, Dan (pseudonym), a large burly young man, to his host mom, a short petit elderly woman, the mom ran across the stage and gave Dan a big bracing hug, almost knocking him to the floor [2]. The room broke up in peals of laughter. Everyone laughed: the Costa Ricans and the Canadians, the old and the young. The tension in the room seemed to evaporate; there was a palpable shift in what I saw and felt—the grimaces and frowns replaced with smiles and laughs, ones that lingered. It felt as though a barrier between them and us, between Costa Ricans and Canadians, had been breached—a transformation of sorts—as though we were now a part of the same group, having a good laugh at the same thing, and something was learned. But is this what actually transpired, as I remember it almost 20 years later? Was something learned, and if so, what was learned and what did it have to do with global citizenship? And, what role did the teachers play in this learning; and for what were they responsible?

(The event described above was also depicted in Kornelsen, 2019)

Philosophers interpret

Over the years, to help understand that evening's educative meaning, I have turned to scholars who have been influential in my knowledge of GCE: Kwame Anthony Appiah, John Dewey, Martin Buber, Martha Nussbaum, Maxime Greene, Max Van Manen, and Paulo Freire. These writers represent a range of theoretical perspectives and ways of seeing, interpreting, and responding to experience (critical, pragmatic, existential, phenomenological, theological, ethical, and political).[3] What follows are brief musings (some would say much too brief) of how each might interpret, inform, or raise questions of what ensued that night.

Kwame Anthony Appiah (2008), suggests that one of the single most important determinants in desegregating a divided world and for cultivating cosmopolitanism is increased travel opportunities for youth; referencing Gordon Allport, he says that contact between individuals of different groups must be on terms of equality and must be in an activity where shared goals are pursued. Is this what happened in that moment, when we all laughed, a divided group from different parts of the world, 1000s of kilometres apart, became desegregated? If so, what were our shared goals? Were they to live together happily for two weeks? In addition, how does one relate what happened as an encounter "on terms of equality"?

John Dewey (1897), argued that life experience in the social world helps people realize their connection to a larger community and helps them to know who they are in that community. He stated,

> the only true education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the demands of the social situations in which [they] find [themselves]. Through these demands [they] are stimulated to act as a member of a unity, to *emerge from [their] original narrowness of action and feeling,* and to conceive of [themselves] from the standpoint of the welfare of the group to which [they] belong. (p. 3)

After experiencing the social demands of that evening's meeting, did individuals conceive of themselves from the standpoint of the welfare of a group to which they had not previously belonged—being members of larger community now; perhaps of a global community? **Apparently, yes. In interviews nine years later, recalling this event and others like it, students spoke of how, as a consequence, they felt as though they now belonged to a larger, more global community (See Kornelsen, 2014).**

Martin Buber (2006) was concerned with cultivating interpersonal relationships across boundaries of ethnic, racial, and religious difference, through a process he called dialogue. Genuine dialogue, Buber said, means experiencing the other side of the relationship, and thinking in ways that include, "orienting ourselves to the presence of the other person" (p. 33). It rarely happens he said, often in unexpected and unguarded situations. The hug was unexpected; the laughter was unguarded; and it was mutually experienced, and seen (The Costa Ricans and Canadians seeing each other laugh.). As a result, to use Buberian language, did people relate, not as *Its*, but as *Thous* and as members of the same community? If so, might the outcome have been feelings of relatedness and commonality, ones that were lasting; and might those feelings be generalized to Others, elsewhere, globally?

Martha Nussbaum, political and moral philosopher, has written extensively on global citizenship and GCE. In one of her first books on the topic, *Cultivating humanity: A classical defense of reform in liberal education* (1996), she argues that a fundamental quality of world citizenship is seeing oneself as a human being bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern. We all, Costa Ricans and Canadians, appeared worried about this meeting of strangers; and it appeared as though we all recognized the gesture (a grandmother hugging a grandchild). But did the laugh, this common and universal reaction, unite us with one another? Did people, in that moment, experience this trait of global citizenship, realizing that they were bound up with the other folks in that room by ties of recognition and concern?

Maxime Greene (1995), echoing Hannah Arendt (1978) argues that disorienting life experiences are critical for young people to consciously undertake the world—saying that on this search, a refusal of the comfortable is always required. Was this that type of experience? If it was, what were students learning, about undertaking the world? And what of our teaching roles, Adrienne (the other teacher) and mine, at this time of discomfort and disorientation, what was required of us, their teachers? For what were we responsible? It might be argued that we were applying our teaching responsibilities and that we were divising a situation that gave students an opportunity to experience something new and unexpected as Greene (1995) suggested?

Max Van Manen (2016), talks of Kairos moments, those spontaneous teaching occasions that demand of teachers the right thing to do at the right time. He says that, because these moments are "contingent, immediate, situational, improvisational" (p. 82), what is required is an "attentive attunement of one's whole being to the (student's) experience of the world" (p. 50). For years, Adrienne and I were worried about how we delivered our responsibilities that night and other times like it in Costa Rica, in situations where our interpretations of an event, called for cross-cultural sensitivity and awareness; where we were uncertain of our role or of what was required of us. Often, on these occasions, we responded with silence—because, we did not know what to do or say. Was that acceptable; was it right for our students? I think Van Manen would say that we might never be certain because our knowledge of students' experience of the world is incomplete, uncertain, in flux, and always contingent.

Paulo Freire (2007) talked about the goal of education being to help people name their world and to act upon it and that this process may be facilitated by teachers helping "to direct [a learner's] observations towards previously inconspicuous phenomena" (p. 82). To help students be "considerers of the world" (p. 139) and help them remove the veil, he said, teachers must be considerers together with them, and remember that they are not so much preparing students to live in the world, but are living in the world with them, together, now, as inter-active subjects. From a Freirean perspective, one could say that everyone shared a living experience that night, one where people interacted as subjects. But did we, teachers, direct learners' attention toward previously inconspicuous phenomena?

For example, Freire wrote about exploitive and unjust oppressor-oppressed relations between Global North and Global South, ones that distorted and impeded learning of one another. In this case, relations between the Costa Ricans and Canadians in that room were shaped and influenced by the neo-colonial economic arrangements between elites of the Global North and Global South—**relations that were immersed in and derived from unconscious oppressed-oppressor attitudes and behaviours**. And so, did that evening's unfolding, reinforce or unsettle oppressor-oppressed relationships? [4] Did we help unveil the world, as Freire conceived?

Freire might also remind, that this analysis of a shared experience is that of the guests, not the hosts. It is the *guest's* (**the oppressor's)** memory—of an embrace that left *them* feeling less fearful and more connected.

Students Remember

Nine years after Pedrogosso, in 2012, as a part of a PhD research project, I spoke with former participants about their Costa Rica experience. When asked about how the trip had affected their lives and perceptions of the world, responses clustered around three changes evocative of world citizenship: 1. The development of a global perspective and identity; 2. A growing awareness of global interconnectedness**,** tied to a discriminating respect for diversity and difference; 3. A heightened sense of agency and global responsibility.[5] Students linked their changes in perspective, identity, and agency to events like the one at the schoolhouse, on the first night, and subsequent experiences of connection and insight, realized in the day-to-day messiness of living with families, in instances unguarded and occasions unscripted (Kornelsen, 2014). The language that students used in describing those experiences, and on how they subsequently related to the world, gave purchase to insights of the scholars noted above. Many of the most consequential changes, in how students saw themselves and their world, were affected in the course of living their lives, often when their teachers were absent. [6]

If teachers were absent on those occasions when students experienced world citizenship, were they then without role, influence, or responsibility? Of course not. The scholars noted above, imply or advise of critical roles of teachers, whether it was actualized through shaping the learning environment (Dewey, Greene, Appiah), engaging in dialogue (Buber; Freire), involving in reasoned discussion (Nussbaum), being trusted for their glance (Van Manen) **(even though, in our case, we were often silent during times of confusion and anxiety).** Nine years later the participants spoke of trusting their teachers in choosing the Costa Rica trip in the first place and in helping them understand and interpret their experience. In short, as Sharron Todd (2003), says, "teachers, as the vehicles through which the pedagogical demand for learning to become is made real for students, cannot escape their role" (p. 31), nor their power and responsibility others like Freire (1997) and Van Manen (1990, 2016) argue.

Teachers Reflect

But, what do teacher practitioners themselves say, of their role, power, and responsibility? Eight years after interviewing the Costa Rica participants, I co-edited a book with Geraldine Balzer and Karen Magro, entitled Teaching Global Citizenship: A Canadian Perspective (Kornelsen, Balzer & Magro, 2020). Our project was premised on the idea that teacher knowledge constitutes indispensable pedagogic insights and counts as a unique way of knowing. As Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinberg (2011) say, teachers have access to understandings that can go beyond what outside researchers have produced, understandings that come from a place only teachers have traversed. Our objective was simple, offer an opportunity for high school teachers to write about the most important things they have learned about teaching for global citizenship. In taking up the question, we asked teachers to revisit and reflect critically on their teaching experience, and to link and frame their insights and questions to stories from the classroom.

As expected, teachers' responses were at once thoughtful and inimitable—particularly when writing about their teaching responsibilities, responsibilities realized and revealed through, what Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) call the "heat and thick of teaching" (p. 9). Each one of the following representative responses of teachers who contributed to this book could inform of and frame a teaching responsibility that night in Pedrogosso: 1. Be a role model for what you are teaching (**Petkau**); 2. Take responsibility in cultivating humility (**Hamm, McLoughlin and Maston)**; 3. Honour vulnerability in yourself and your students (**Skuce**); 4. Be receptive to all that might happen (**Skuce**); 5. Venture out into the world and invite students in their venturing (**Skuce**); 6. Cultivate awareness and empathy (**Magro**) 7. Know your privilege and recognize your complicity in systems of oppression (**Balzer, Kerr, Kuly, Reimer and Reimer**). 8. Be committed to moral cosmopolitanism **(Orlowski and Sfeir)**.

In one chapter of this book, Larry Peatkau (2020) [7], identified and portrayed a teaching responsibility that resonated most deeply with what I felt in Pedrogosso. He describes an incident in his first year of teaching, an experience that influenced and shaped his entire 32-year teaching career. **To help convey the profundity of this experience, the stark implication for his teaching career, and its pedagogic signal to me, I quote Paetkau at length**:

> I am reminded of an incident that happened early in my career. In 1989, in late May, I was teaching at a teachers' college in Chongqing, [People's Republic of China]. My students had been on strike for several weeks and classes were unattended. One night, representatives of my class knocked on my apartment door and suggested that I might wish to show up for class the next day. I was a bit mystified since there had been no students for weeks, but they insisted and asked that I stick to my scheduled lecture. It was Thoreau's essay on civil disobedience.
>
> When I arrived the next morning my class of 40 students had swelled to a couple hundred, most of them unable to understand English. For the next two hours I lectured and simultaneous translation happened around the room. For a teacher, the energy in the room was seductive and I fell into a kind of revolutionary zeal in my delivery. Later the department head told me that out of 500 instructors, mine was the only lecture that had been held in the past weeks.
>
> On June 4th the army crushed the students in Beijing [in Tiananmen Square], and two days later the army was pulling students out of the dormitory across from my apartment. Watching from my window, I felt sick, first knowing what awaited them, but also because I had an uncomfortable feeling that as a teacher, I had failed my responsibility. The consequences for my students were swift and devastating. I, on the other hand, having rallied the "troops" with brave words, left the country unscathed. Inciting students to action is not the same as preparing them for action. *A responsible teacher does not ask more from their students than what they themselves are prepared to give.* (Peatkau, 2020, p. 87-88)

When I read Peakau's story, I thought at once of a teachers-participants meeting that Adrienne and I organized several months after Pedrogosso to talk about learnings from the Costa Rica practicum. In this meeting, Adrienne and I asked students, whether we should organize a trip back to Costa Rica. They rejected the idea, not because they did not have a positive experience, nor that they did not understand the rationale for choosing Costa Rica as practicum site, [8] but rather because a critical part of their learning, of what they had come to know about themselves and of the world, had come from watching their teachers being afraid. The students described witnessing Adrienne and me struggling with doing or saying the right thing in any given unexpected situation such as how to act on that first night in the school house in Pedrogosso. (They knew that this was a first time for Adrienne and me as well, visiting Pedrogosso and traveling internationally with young people. This would not happen again, they said, if we returned to the same place.) Witnessing their teachers experiencing what they themselves were experiencing—anxiety and uncertainty—had been critical to their education they explained. It normalized (and subdued?) their own fears and anxieties—like when meeting their hosts families on the first night.

If this is so, then perhaps the anxiety I felt that night in Pedrogosso, for reasons similar to the students'—worries about meeting my host family—is a global citizenship teaching responsibility. For as Peakau says, "A responsible teacher does not ask more from their students than what they themselves are prepared to give" (Peakau 2020, p. 88). **In other words, does this imply that I needed to feel the anxiety that the students felt, and for the same reasons?**

Conclusion

On an evening in the spring of 2003, in Pedrogosso, Costa Rica, a group of young Canadians met a group of Costa Rican parents. What happened that evening, raises questions of, and signals pedagogies for global citizenship. Scholars of GCE, **like Appiah, Dewey, Buber, Nussbaum, Greene, Van Manen, and Freire**, suggest that as a consequence of that experience, participants might have seen themselves as belonging to a larger community, of living in a less divided world, and of better knowing their humanity. Memories of participants nine years later, showed that that evening's experience, and others like it in Costa Rica, mostly confirmed the insights of those scholars. Participants spoke of how, as a result, they had developed a global perspective and identity, a growing

awareness of global interconnectedness, and a heightened sense of agency and global responsibility [5]. It was suggested by both, scholars and students, that teachers in that room that night, were responsible for planning and facilitating the practicum, for being trusted by their students and for helping then understand and know its significance. As Todd (2003) says, teachers are the vehicles through which the pedagogical demand for learning is made real. However, in addition and recently, teachers themselves, writing about their responsibilities in teaching for world citizenship, offer conceptions that reverberate for the night in question. One, in particular, implies that the fear I felt before the laughter may have enacted a teaching responsibility.

Finally, it must be said, this paper represents a snapshot of a time and a place, focusing on one group of people in that room that night, students and teachers from Canada. It does not include the voices and perspectives of the Costa Rican hosts. What they would say about what they saw and felt would expand the horizons of global citizenship education.

Endnotes

1 Much has been written in critique of world citizenship and world citizenship education. Important issues include: Whose version of global citizenship is being articulated? What of Indigenous perspectives and epistemologies (see Joseph Kincheloe, 2005; Philip Higgs, 2018)? Is it feasible to practice citizenship at a global level? Is it possible or desirable to cultivate an identity and allegiance that is global? Is it possible to navigate the tension at the core of global citizenship, between universalism and pluralism, without mythicizing or regressing (see Maxine Greene)? How do we educate for perspectives that reconcile two global outlooks, a universal sense of justice and a sympathetic imagination of the different; in other words, for mindsets that are critical, yet curious and imaginative at once (see Sharon Todd, 2009; Lloyd Kornelsen, 2014)?

2 Nine years later, I shared my memory of the ‘event’ with Dan (pseudonym), the student. He remembered it much as I had (the grandmother’s hug and the subsequent laughter in the room). However, he added that as they were walking off the stage, she apologized to him for not having coffee at her house, raising questions of cross-cultural hosting expectations. Moreover, the grandmother, and the people of Pedrogosso who were there that night, have not spoken. And so, it must be remembered that this interpretation of a shared experience is that of the guests, not the hosts.

3 Many other interpretations could be provided, for example: psychological, sociological, anthropological.

4 For example, see Illich (1968), Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich O. (2002) and Epprecht (2004) for discussions of how these types of North American school practicum trips potentially reinforce oppressor-oppressed relationships **and perspectives** between North and South.

5 These three groupings of changes are discussed at length in Chapters 5 and 6 of Kornelsen, 2014, both in terms of experiences that may have led to the changes and how they were described by students.

6 This was consistent with what I had suspected for long while. Many of the most significant transformational changes [8] that students underwent in my class, especially for those qualities associated with global citizenship, happened not so much from the history/social studies I ‘taught’ or because of any particular teaching strategy I employed. They were frequently elicited from students seeing and understanding one another for the first time—overcoming stereotypes, chauvinisms, misunderstandings and fears of others—in classrooms brimming with difference and diversity (Kornelsen, 2019). **This is not to say that I do not believe that teachers do not have potential for great affect. They do. But it often happens indirectly (see for example, Dewey, 1938; Buber, 2006)**

[7] Larry Paetkau retired from teaching in 2017 and is presently working with Swiss photographer, Christoph Hammer, on a book documenting the impact of climate, economy, and technology on rural life in western Canada (Kornelsen L., Balzer, G., & Magro K.M. (2020)

[8] Costa Rica was chosen because the country was seen as a counter-argument to the often pervasively bleak and hopeless Western media characterizations of the 'Third World.' At the time, Costa Rica was heralded by many in the international development community as a model for sustainable and peaceful development: It disbanded its military in 1948 to fund universal and free education; it emphasized cooperative community development, it was a world leader in rainforest protection, and it was the home of the first United Nations peace university in the world. How exactly a 'hopeful' Costa Rica experience might engender a sense of agency and other attributes of global citizenship in students, and whether this would be manifested in their lives later on, I did not know. (Kornelsen, 2014)

[9] When using the term transformational learning, Jack Mezirow's (1995) conception of perspective transformation is assumed:

> Becoming critically aware of how and why our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand and feel about our world; of reformulating these assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable and integrative perspective; and of making decisions or otherwise acting on these new undertakings. (as cited in Kiely, 2004, p.6)

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