

# Global Citizenship and Social Justice Education in the Canadian Postsecondary System



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## Introduction

One of the basic purposes of postsecondary education has always been to develop civic knowledge in students. As the focus of institutions moved more to career and skills development, their role in developing civic consciousness declined. In the last couple of years, there has been a resurgence at institutions on the need to provide students with the knowledge and skills required for an interconnected and globalized world. This article reviews trends in global citizenship education in postsecondary institutions with a particular focus on the Canadian postsecondary system.

### Trends in Global Citizenship Education in Postsecondary Institutions

Post secondary institutions have always been active locations for local, national and global activism on a number of issues depending on the era. Global Citizenship

education can take many forms and in fact many institutions have approached global citizenship education in their own way. Looking at education for global citizenship, Shultz (2007) examines three approaches to education for global citizenship which has been used in the typology below:

#### TYPES OF PROGRAMS

Type	Approach to global citizenship education
Neo – liberal approach	This approach is linked to global economic participation and enables the individual to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for trans-national mobility. Study Abroad programs in postsecondary institutions as well as the internationalization of curriculum fall under this category.
Radical approach	This approach is characterized by opposition to global institutions and multinational institutions that are viewed as creating and perpetuating global inequality. The focus of the education in this approach is to look for ways to strengthen local and national institutions. The 1960's and early 1970's saw an increased activism on college campuses stemming from this approach to globalization and global relations.
Transformational approach	This approach focuses on factors that have led to new kinds of exclusion and inclusion and disparity locally, nationally and globally. According to Shultz, the global citizen with this approach looks to engage with others based on a common humanity, a shared planet and a shared future. Recent interests in postsecondary institutions tend to follow this approach and is usually a combination of the other two approaches as well as active involvement in local, national and global communities.

Shultz, L. (2007). Educating for Global Citizenship: Conflicting Agendas and Understandings. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 53 (3) p. 248-258

The neo-liberal approach has been the focus of a lot of global citizenship education in the past but more and more institutions are now using the transformational approach.

Researchers are beginning to examine global citizenship education and look for ways in which that education can go beyond the study abroad model and provide students with a greater opportunity to be involved in their local, national and global community. Some researchers have pointed out that there is the need for education to provide students with the necessary skills and knowledge needed to acquire a delicate balance of cultural, national and global identifications<sup>1</sup>

The United States and the United Kingdom have taken the lead in developing global citizenship programs which is evident from the extensive research coming from these countries. In Jacoby (2009) Caryn Musil<sup>2</sup> writes that the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise listed four broad essential learning outcomes that they felt students would need as they go out into the world. Included in the list is Personal and Social Responsibility.

Included in personal and social responsibility are the following:

- Civic knowledge and engagement both local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning.

According to Musil, "The challenge is how to translate all four of these consensus outcomes into the academic and co-curricular life of students and into the everyday practices and policies of a tradition-bound academy"

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<sup>1</sup> Banks J. A. ed. (2004). *Diversity and Citizenship Education: Global Perspectives*. San Francisco Jossey Bass.

<sup>2</sup> Musil, C. M. (2009). *Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility: The Civic Learning Spiral* in Jacoby and Associates. *Civic Engagement in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices*. San Francisco Jossey Bass.

One solution as put forth by the Association of American Colleges and Universities' shared futures project is to "Use general education to help students understand the connections between global learning and ethical citizenship."<sup>3</sup>

Also adding to the pressure for change are employers who are looking for graduates to have broader skill sets. As reported by Musil (2009), the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise in 2007 reported that "In a national poll of business leaders, 76 percent of employers want colleges to place more emphasis on the intercultural competencies that lead to teamwork skills in diverse groups, and 72 percent want more emphasis on global knowledge." Postsecondary institutions therefore are beginning to take note of this need and respond to it.

The Association of American Colleges and Universities went further and created a project called "Shared Futures: Global Learning and Social Responsibility". The guiding principles for the shared futures project clearly sets out what they see as the role postsecondary institutions ought to play in educating global citizens as seen below:

*A twenty-first century liberal education must provide students with the knowledge and commitment to be socially responsible citizens in a diverse democracy and increasingly interconnected world.*

*Colleges and universities committed to liberal education have important civic responsibilities to their communities, their nations, and the larger world.*

*Global learning helps students:*

- Gain a deep, comparative knowledge of the world's peoples and tensions of their worlds;
- Explore the historical legacies that have created the dynamics and tensions of their world;

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<sup>3</sup> AACU. Shared Futures Project - <http://www.aacu.org/SharedFutures/>

- *Develop intercultural competencies so they can move across boundaries and unfamiliar territory and see the world from multiple perspectives;*
- *Sustain difficult conversations in the face of highly emotional and perhaps uncongenial differences;*
- *Understand and perhaps redefine democratic principles and practices within a global context;*
- *Gain opportunities to engage in practical work with fundamental issues that affect communities not yet well served by their societies;*
- *Believe that their action and ideas will influence the world in which they live.”*

Shultz and Jorgenson’s<sup>4</sup> review of the literature lists a number of initiatives in postsecondary institutions on global citizenship education. They point out that “One of the most obvious trends is that despite the common commitment to educate students for global citizenship, no two programs of global citizenship education are alike. Each institution of higher education has created its own unique initiative consisting of various forms of policy, programming, pre-requisites, credentialing and student and community involvement”.

They take for example, an in-depth look at a number of these initiatives including the Roehampton University’s Crucible in the United Kingdom which combines human rights, social justice and citizenship education.

### **Canadian Trends in Global Citizenship Education**

In Canada, a number of institutions are also moving towards the transformational approach to global citizenship education. Each institution as elsewhere approaches this in their own unique way. Below are a number of examples of current programs on global citizenship at Canadian postsecondary institutions.

#### **Centennial College**

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<sup>4</sup> Shultz, L. and Jorgenson, S. Global Citizenship Education in Postsecondary Institutions: A Review of the Literature - [http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/uai\\_globaleducation/pdfs/GCE\\_lit\\_review.pdf](http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/uai_globaleducation/pdfs/GCE_lit_review.pdf)

Centennial College has taken the lead in implementing a transformational approach to global citizenship education in Canada. In 2004 a taskforce was created to consider a Signature Learning Experience (SLE) for students that will be unique to the College and will be transformational for students. This Signature Learning Experience also combines human rights, social justice and citizenship education and takes this further by encouraging action by students. At the core of the experience are the principles of equity, social justice and inclusion. These core principles are also embedded in College documents. The pilot project to deliver the course began in the fall of 2006.

The Signature Learning Experience that was developed, reflects the College’s promise to students of a distinctive, inclusive educational experience that builds on the foundation of global citizenship, social justice and diversity. The project has four main components; a course, a portfolio, professional development for staff and finally, infusing the principles in all college activities. The course has since September 2008 become a required General Education course for all students enrolled in a diploma program at the College. The course is based on five core concepts; Identity and Values, Inequality and Equity, Social Analysis, Social Action and Reflective Practice.

In addition to the SLE, the creation of the Institute for Global Citizenship and Equity will add to the College the ability to reach out and partner with national and international organizations on global citizenship initiatives. In addition, Centennial College has developed policies and college documents that reflect the commitment to social justice and equity. The Institute for Global Citizenship and Equity is a natural evolution that will enable the College to direct more attention to documenting the transformation.

The Institute is forward looking and enables the College to provide a clustering of energy and resources on global citizenship and equity. Faculty, staff, students and the community are encouraged to work together on new and ongoing projects that explore issues related to global citizenship and equity.

The focus of the Institute is to inspire in people a desire to use education for the benefit of their local, national and global community. It will work with schools to provide opportunities for students to be involved in activities within their communities or globally towards

social justice. The goal is to encourage the development of people who recognize the interdependence of all people and the need for all people to work toward universal social justice and equity

### **Other Global Citizenship Programs**

At McMaster University, interest in global citizenship resulted in the creation of the Institute on Globalization and the Human Condition in 1998. The focus of this institute was mainly on research and graduate studies. A masters degree in Globalization Studies was developed.

The University of British Columbia, from 2000 to 2005 made a commitment to the idea of educating students for global citizenship. This commitment was made in university documents, seminars and workshops and other resources. They also developed courses including a distance learning course called *Perspectives on Global Citizenship*. The goal of the course is to equip graduates with the knowledge and competencies which will enable them to work and participate as global citizens.

The University of Alberta introduced a unique experiential learning model. In 2007, they combined the goal of community service and cross cultural exchanges by developing a course called Global Citizenship Field Experience in Ghana. This was seen as a way to broaden pre-service teacher's horizons and educational experience by having them live and work briefly in a foreign country. Ultimately this experience is expected to help them teach global citizenship in their own diverse classrooms in Canada.

The University of Winnipeg has the Global College which is focused on the university's activities around human rights and global citizenship.

### **Programs in Partnership with Non-Governmental Organizations**

The University of Guelph in partnership with non-governmental agencies has developed a global citizenship program that provides both volunteer opportunities and learner programs for students. The program consists of periods spent volunteering on a program overseas. On their return, students are required

to organize activities on the campus to promote international understanding. The program aims to achieve a dual purpose of enabling students to apply their theoretical knowledge in an international context and to increase global citizenship across the campus.

There are other examples of academic institutions in Canada partnering with non-governmental organizations to develop programs for youth engagement. The Canada World Youth's Youth Leaders in Action program allows students to earn academic credits for their participation in the Canada World Youth programs. At Marie-Victorin College students have the option of earning an Attestation of Collegial Studies in Community Development and Intercultural Relations. At Dalhousie University students earn credits in its International Development Studies program and at Capilano University, students earn 3 academic credits towards the Global Stewardship program.

### **Programming for Global Citizenship Education**

There is growing evidence of interest by students in global engagement. College and university campuses have become sites for youth run non-profit organizations that are all seeking to change the world one way or other. Evidence of the interest in getting more engaged can be seen in the number and successes of these Youth Run Organizations. Programs include community development projects locally, nationally and on the international level. These groups include AISEC, Journalists for Human Rights, Youth Challenge International, Free the Children and Engineers Without Borders which all have chapters or members on College and University campuses in Canada.

In addition, Canadian institutions responding to this need for engagement have partnered with development agencies to provide students with opportunities for engagement. These have been accomplished in a number of ways. For example the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation has a global citizenship program that has provided funding for a number of Canadian academic institutions for activities on global citizenship including workshops, conferences, student activities and research.

## **Conclusions**

There is growing interest and programming in the area of global citizenship at postsecondary institutions however, as Shultz and Jorgenson point out there are gaps to be filled in terms of research on the kinds of programming that will help provide the learning outcomes required and the types of assessment and evaluation needed to document the outcomes.

As this brief overview of trends indicates, the field is still unfolding. Banks states that in order to “help students acquire reflective and clarified cultural, national, and global identifications, citizenship education must teach them to know, to care and to act.” (P. 322) The seminal question is are global citizenship education programs teaching students to care and to act?

One of the areas for further research in the Canadian postsecondary sector is the impact that a social justice education model has on civic engagement and developing global citizens. What are the core elements of a curriculum that will produce a globally engaged student and how can we measure the effectiveness of such a program. These are questions that we will continue to wrestle with as institutions pursue the goal of educating students who are engaged locally, nationally and globally.

## **Reference**

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