

7-11-2012

## Postcolonial Perspectives Book Review 41 (1)

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### Recommended Citation

(2012) "Postcolonial Perspectives Book Review 41 (1)," *Canadian and International Education / Education canadienne et internationale*: Vol. 41: Iss. 1, Article 8.

Available at: <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cie-eci/vol41/iss1/8>

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*Postcolonial Perspectives on Global Citizenship Education*. Edited by Vanessa de Oliveira Andreotti and Lynn T. M. de Souza. New York: Routledge, 2010, pp. 245.

Reviewed by Marianne A. Larsen, Western University

The body of writing on global citizenship education (GCE) has grown considerably over the last decade or so. However, many researching the topic would agree that the field is in need of critical scholarship that engages theoretically with its complex and contested nature. The recent book *Postcolonial Perspectives on Global Citizenship Education* (2012), edited by Vanessa de Oliveira Andreotti and Lynn Mario T. M. de Souza, makes an important and long-overdue contribution to the small, but emerging body of literature that critiques existing under-theorized notions of global citizenship education and provides ideas for how we might rethink pedagogical work in this field.

Readers of the *Canadian and International Education* journal will be interested in this collection not only because it is timely, related to issues and topics explored previously in this journal, but also that almost half of the authors are past or present members of the *Comparative and International Education Society of Canada*. In this way, the book is an acknowledgement of the contributions of many Canadians to the emerging body of critical theoretical literature on GCE.

The book is divided into 3 sections. In the first, the authors engage in theoretical analyses of GCE and the benefits and limitations of using post-colonial theory as a tool of analysis. The second section consists of chapters that critique GCE initiatives, including Western development work, study abroad, international education, and the 'Make Poverty History' campaign. In the final section of the book, the authors turn their attention to re-conceptualizing global citizenship education "otherwise", providing examples of what a reconstructed GCE based on principles of reflexivity, mutual learning, and openness in our encounters with the 'Other' might look like.

In the first part of the book, the authors engage explicitly with post-colonial theory as an alternative framework to theorize global citizenship education in light of the spread of neo-liberal economic reforms. Some of the authors draw explicitly on classical post-colonial theorists such as Fanon, Memmi, and Said. Others cast their post-positivist net more widely and engage with socio-cultural theorists such as Appiah, Appuradai, Bhabha, Spivak, and Žižek. A couple of authors even attempt to bring together post-colonial theorizing with critical pedagogy as Stevenson does in his rereading of Frantz

Fanon and Paulo Friere. Indeed, I agree with Wright's observation that critical pedagogy is "particularly well-'placed' to bring alternative perspectives to putatively *global* citizenship education" (p. 61).

There are some overlapping themes explored in the book. Many of the authors try to tease apart the contested and complex nature of global citizenship, addressing who is and who is not considered a global citizen, who is global citizenship for, where GCE is practiced and where it is not. Authors explore the different ways that the discourse of GCE has been taken up, used and abused. They interrogate a number of taken-for-granted assumptions associated with more liberal forms of global education and GCE, including the related notions of charity and benevolence, and corresponding view of the "Other" as one to be saved or helped. A critique of the Eurocentric nature of GCE is also explored by authors in this collection, including the impact of forcing liberal democracy on colonial settings. This book makes a very crucial contribution to the existing literature on GCE in highlighting the importance of indigenous knowledges, and suggests that conceptual frameworks proposed by Aboriginal scholars provide a vehicle for challenging existing epistemological insularities in GCE.

Although I agree with the criticisms articulated by the authors, I felt many were collapsing what might be called neo-liberal forms of global citizenship (e.g. preparing students to be globally competent) with more critical and emancipatory forms of GCE. It appeared as though everything done under the banner of GCE was under attack. I found a number of authors, in the first part of the book in particular, made bold claims without empirical data to back up their assertions about the exclusionary, colonial and hegemonic legacy of GCE. de Souza's chapter about indigenous education in Brazil was one welcome exception to this.

The book caused me to contemplate more deeply how we go about transforming post-colonial theories of GCE into productive practices. In other words, what do we do? I agree with Pashby's observation about the limitation of theoretical work into classroom practice. I had hoped that authors would have engaged more with operationalizing what critical and de-colonized forms of GCE look like in pedagogical settings. Lisa Taylor's chapter on her efforts to bring a "pedagogy of implication" to her pre-service teachers addressed this gap, but I would have liked to have more examples on how we can translate post-colonial and anti-colonial critiques of GCE into classroom practice, especially at the level of compulsory education.

While I am fully aware of the necessity of bringing a critical lens to the analysis of global citizenship education, at times I was frustrated reading the critique. Stevenson claimed that he did not want to be overly critical of the

“Make Poverty History” campaign (and yet he was); and along similar lines, Tarc, in his discussion about Oxfam’s description of the global citizen as one who is ‘outraged by social injustice’ and takes action, said that we cannot take at face value that acting represents some inherent good, but neither “do we want to cynically equate and thereby minimize the potential singularity of actions.” (p. 120) Yet, I do have the sense that some of the authors minimized the work of social, grass-roots activists to create a world that values all knowledge and difference as sources of richness and opportunity. At what point do we move from critique to action?

Žižek’s contention that critical analysis (such as found in this book) provides “no ‘practical’ advice on what to do” (quoted in Jefferess, p. 43) and that the only logical response is to do nothing, is not only fundamentally flawed, but unethical. That being said, while this collection provides ample, critical evidence of the limitations and problematic consequences of GCE, it also provides some hope. The critique is meant to unsettle us and shake up our taken-for-granted assumptions, and in so doing, spur us to change. In this respect, I wholeheartedly support what Andreotti, Ahenakew and Cooper in call for in the concluding chapter: the “removal of blinders to one’s own ignorance in order to create the conditions for critical genealogy, humility, mutuality, reciprocity and solidarity necessary for an ethical project of global citizenship education.” (p. 236). In this respect, *Postcolonial Perspectives on Global Citizenship Education*, makes significant strides not only in contributing to the existing body of critical literature on global citizenship education, but in reconstructing the very nature of the field itself. I highly recommend it to readers of this journal.