

The Critical Global Educator: Global citizenship education as sustainable development, by Maureen Ellis

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An illuminating, if sometimes challenging, entry into the theoretical and empirical literature on global education, *The Critical Global Educator: Global citizenship education as sustainable development* by Maureen Ellis is written in the context of the ever-shifting pedagogical terrain of *global education* in the UK, an umbrella term that encompasses education about cosmopolitan citizenship, human rights, sustainable development, and development education. The main contribution of this book is, through extensive research with over 500 respondents in the field of education (teachers, teacher educators, academics, and civil society stakeholders), the identification of a substantive lack of critical theoretical underpinnings and praxis for the various disparate global education approaches used in UK schools, and the articulation of a new path for invigorating their pedagogical foundations. The author proposes a new cross-disciplinary unifying paradigm, Global Citizenship Education as Sustainable Development (GCESD), and a new theoretical framework for education stakeholders in the UK that will empower the emergent critical global educator.

The book's first chapter charts the evolution of the author's own critical global faculties, drawing on life experiences and linking those to the development of critical realist perspectives that in turn informed educational practice. In Chapter 2, the author traces the ongoing and problematical relationship between globalization processes and their treatment within formal education, highlighting the challenges of teaching diffuse values under a global education umbrella in the UK. Chapter 3 theorizes the potential critical global educator, presenting a road map for a more coherent and consistent delivery of global education, based on four conceptual frames: critical realist philosophy, critical theory, critical discourse studies, and linguistic research. It also articulates familiar divisions between the presumably anti-humanist neo-liberal society in which we live and the utopian society of Freire's 'articulated alternative pedagogy of hope [which] can equip teachers to ethically address a globalised political economy' (79).

Drawing on data from a survey administered to over 350 PGCE students, Chapter 4 argues for the use of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a methodological and analytical framework for 'systemic, self- or negotiated evaluation of critical global educators' (86). Here the author laments the 'lack of teacher education in the political economy and cultural politics of their labour' (105) and suggests that developing critical global educators will require making critical discourse theory statutory for teacher training programmes.

In Chapter 5 the author turns a critical lens to the current state of play of global education in UK schools, rightly recognizing the profound effect of macro-political activity on the way in which educators receive, interpret, and enact policy directives around global education. Crucially the author points out the lack of theoretical grounding in policy documents, also highlighting that discontinued educational policies (e.g. the 'global dimension in schools' DfES 2005 policy document) are, once officially validated and/or discarded, still left to float around schools without direction, influencing practice.

Chapter 6 presents research data on 18 in-depth interviews with academics, practitioners from NGOs and Development Education Centres (DEC), teacher educators, and teachers, which show that now-defunct UK global education policies still play a role in current conceptualization and practice of global education. The author's findings support claims that, while personal life experiences can lead to the development of perspectives similar to or in line with a humanistic cosmopolitanism, the lack of formal theoretical training as a support for teacher development 'weakened professional resolve and diminished transformational power' (194). Analysis further

identified respondents' self-awareness of their role as political actors in schools and recognition of the need for new approaches to supporting theoretical rigour in educational practice.

The author concludes the book in Chapter 7 with eight recommendations aimed at combating uncoordinated, uncritical educational policies on global issues by supplying much-needed theoretical grounding. The first three recommendations call for institutionalizing critical discourse studies in teacher training programmes, and supporting both within curriculum and policy development explicit acknowledgement of the political economy of educational work. A fourth recommendation suggests integrating critical action research into teacher work; the remaining recommendations call for changes in HEI and academic practice to support critical GCESD. In the current political climate of conservatism – where some politicians openly advocate scrapping the UK Human Rights Act; where the national citizenship curriculum is challenged on the basis of being *too* global and not sufficiently focused on British citizenship; and where the cosmopolitan aspirations of the EU project are met in some quarters with calls for 'Brexit' – these lofty goals may seem rather distant. Yet they are admirable and vitally necessary for the promotion of a critically engaged social justice citizenry.

This is a thoughtful but at times challenging read. It presents an impassioned argument for making the theoretical foundations of global education more accessible to teachers and educators, by focusing on bridging the gap between unreflexive policy and practice on the one hand, and a critically reflective, theoretically grounded approach on the other hand. This would seem to suggest that a key part of the solution lies in making clearer connections between the theoretical and the practical currents weaving in and out of formal education, governmental policy, and higher education. Yet too often the dense poetry of intellectualized language becomes the practical task of the book's endeavour. The result can occasionally frustrate: 'Cultures constitute context, connotation, conative, biotic medium, media within which curriculum, campus and community "real"ise sustainability' (127).

Of course, one could argue that this is the entire point of the book. If we want to see a more critical approach to global education in schools, we need to challenge educators to engage with ideas and perspectives that are too often the domain of the academic intellectual, disassociated from the un-interrogated work of teaching young people about human rights, sustainable development, and the many contested meanings of citizenship. However, forcing the reader to negotiate linguistic checkpoints before proceeding to the substance of the argument can sometimes impose a connective barrier.

Poetic licences (and protestations) notwithstanding, there is much to admire here; in particular the author is to be applauded for the sharp integration of the many theoretical strands and perspectives that flow in and out of the various 'global educations' at work in the UK over the past decade. For educational scholars and practitioners concerned with sustainable development, human rights, and global citizenship, this book is a challenge to look deeper within the political and social structures underpinning and influencing pedagogy, and to embody such critically self-reflective practices in future work.

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