Towards a theory of world-centered citizenship education

Toni Fuss Kirkwood-Tucker proposes that the effects of globalization on humanity necessitate a shift from a curriculum of national citizenship education to a curriculum focused on ‘world-centered’ citizenship education. She suggests what such a curriculum should include.

Introduction
Globalization has significantly altered the civic landscape, making exclusive nation-state citizenship education an anachronism of the twentieth century. Its inevitability and intrusion into human, non-human, and environmental communities is threatening people’s ways of life, from urban sprawls to the remotest villages on earth. Its effects are contradictory. On one hand, globalization has made people and nations more aware of the world around them, arousing curiosity and interest in fellow human beings sharing the global village (Anderson 1979, 1990, Becker 1979). It has resulted in dynamic, cross-cultural communications and transnational transactions unprecedented in the history of the world (Zong 2002). It has fuelled entrepreneurial spirit and engendered educational opportunities, cultivating hope for a better life for all humanity. On the other hand, globalization is perceived as the manipulation of indigenous labor and resources by multinational corporations in their exploitative pursuits of capital accumulation (Roddick 2000). It is seen as severely disrupting traditional communities and diluting cultural identities (Meyer and Geschiere 1999), once secure and insular in their stability, now becoming increasingly isolated and desperate in a world of abundance and conspicuous consumption. Fear of growing political polarization, technological and economic injustices, and ensuing cultural conflicts are abounding. (Huntington 1996)

Moreover, marginalized people view globalization as an example of western infiltration and exploitation (Gaudelli 2002). Since 9/11, tensions among Arab, Christian, and Judaic worlds comprise the newest challenge in creating a world free of violence and war.

The debate among social studies scholars regarding the controversy about what it means to be a citizen in a world of accelerating change and growing interdependence requires reconceptualization. I propose that the effects of globalization on humanity necessitate a shift from a curriculum of national citizenship education to a curriculum focused on world-centered citizenship education (Parker, Ninomiya and Cogan 1999).

Meaning of world-centered citizenship
Can a citizen of Argentina, Canada, Ghana, Korea, New Zealand or Russia also be a citizen of the world? The answer is a definitive yes. World-centered citizenship contains the same salient elements as national citizenship. Although identity with one’s nation-state is firmly grounded in the premise that people are citizens of countries of birth of varying territorial sizes, populations, cultures and political and economic power, they also share one planet with its immensity of beauty and vastness of problems. Although sense of identity is and will remain rooted in the local and the personal, it is suggested that educators should work at a series of interconnected levels from local to multinational to prepare future generations to live meaningful lives in an interdependent world (Cogan and Derricott 1999).

A curriculum for world-centered citizenship education neither interferes nor conflicts with love for one’s country, but exclusive dedication to one’s country is no longer sufficient. In a world of diminishing borders, cultural diffusion, transnational migrations, and academic, cultural, economic, political, technological, and environmental interconnectedness, the human family shares the same global village (McLuhan 1964). World-centered citizenship education constitutes a psychological expansion from national citizenship embracing one’s country to world citizenship embracing humanity. It is essential on many accounts. As positive and negative effects of globalization indiscriminately impact on peoples everywhere, one must engage in collective partnerships to solve shared problems, save a shared future, and work toward the common good (Barber 2000). Young people must see themselves as active members of local, regional, national, and multinational communities which can contribute to healthier and safer societies grounded in democratic nation-building across time and space (Hahn 2002). A world-centered citizenship education offers an opportunity to live in multiple worlds with dignity and respect, united with citizens of the community of nations collectively addressing the world problematique (Botkin et al.1979). It provides a sense of unity rather than a sense of division.

Moving from national citizenship to world-centered citizenship
A world-centered citizenship education requires a series of interconnected dimensions of thought, belief and action, grounded in cognitive structures and psychological foundations, moving the individual from:

- knowledge and understanding of national history, nation-centric and ethnic-specific issues to a broader knowledge of global history and issues concerning all of humanity grounded in balance, inclusiveness, and multiple perspectives;
commitment to equal rights, equity, justice, and personal freedom in one’s own nation to a commitment to these rights manifested in global ethics for all humanity;

• intellectual competence, compassion, and participation in nation-building to intellectual competence, compassion, and collaboration in world citizenship-building, inspiring future generations to improve the human condition.

The first dimension requires a balanced knowledge and understanding of the histories of civilizations across time and space, including seminal contributions to humankind by all civilizations; local, national, and international issues confronting all of humanity; the history of imperialism and its ramifications on indigenous populations past and present; the role of power in shaping the affairs of the world; a sense of geography and its effects on human culture; exploitation of children and marginalized groups; gender and sexual orientation inequities; health and population issues; and environmental degradation affecting the quality of life in industrialized and developing nations. Knowledge about the world must be grounded in balance, inclusiveness, and multiple perspectives. Five centuries of the educational legacy of imperialism have shaped mainstream academic knowledge that excludes the views of the conquered, marginalized, and oppressed peoples of the world (Said 1978, 1993, Willinsky 1998). Teaching and learning about the world must be driven by multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary scholarship from diverse cultures and suppressed concerns of marginalized groups not currently included in the curriculum of the United States. Merryfield (2002), one of the leading contemporary global scholars, argued that: ‘Students must examine the origins and assumptions that underlie the mainstream, Eurocentric, Cold War framework that divides the world into ‘us’ and ‘them’ and analyze alternative frameworks for understanding people and the planet past and present’.

Cogan (1997) warned that emphasis on contemporary challenges should not outweigh contemplation of the past and future. Referring to the temporal dimension of a global citizenship education, he reminds the reader that the personal and social dimensions of an individual are in large part historically conditioned and that citizens are in need of the rich knowledge of their own history to give them a sense of connectedness, rootedness, and depth of understanding of the larger world.

The second dimension in moving from national citizenship education to world-centered citizenship education encompasses moving from a commitment to equal rights, equity, justice, and personal freedom in one’s own nation to a commitment to these rights manifested in global ethics for all humanity. This dimension refers to the belief that the civilized world professes to the dignity and equality of the individual, yet the history of the world is abounding with human injustice. The act of torture has become one of the most sophisticated modern mechanisms to force human beings to testify against themselves (Amnesty International 2003) and is employed in varying degrees and methods in many nations including the United States. In times of conflict between two or more governments, the ‘enemy’ is often defined as racially inferior, decrepit, or even bestial. Distorted cartoons lampoon the accused as subhuman. Since 9/11 and the war on Al-Qaeda, the United States Department of Justice has secretly detained thousands of non-citizens allegedly connected to terrorist activities (McKenna 2003). Many of the detainees are students from the Middle East and North Africa studying at American universities. Under the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act (US Patriot Act) signed into law on October 26, 2001, non-citizens of all backgrounds living in the United States are highly vulnerable. Furthermore, post-modern scholars point to the enduring educational and psychological damages wrought by western imperialism (Said, Willinsky). On the positive side, since the late twentieth century, European countries with large Gastarbeiter populations seem less able to manipulate the arrival and removal of migrant laborers as a direct result of abiding by the universal standards of human rights (Soysal 1994).

In a world driven by power, greed and conflict, the practice of global ethics is a fundamental principle in creating a sustainable planet where all members of the human family share equally in the world’s finite resources and privileged human capital. In educating the global citizens of the future, it is necessary that they ‘develop a personal capacity for and commitment to a civic ethic characterized by socially responsible habits of mind, heart and action.’ (Cogan) At the United Nations Millennium Conference of the world’s leading CEOs, the Secretary-General received endorsement of the private sector’s commitment to make globalization work for the world’s people in the ‘Global Compact’, affirming that global ethics constitute a fundamental principle in creating a more just and peaceful world.

The third dimension in moving from national citizenship education to a world-centered citizenship education suggests expanding intellectual competence, compassion, and participation in nation-building to intellectual competence, compassion and collaboration in world citizenship-building, to inspire future generations to improve the human condition. Intelligent, critical, and systematic thought must accompany human collective decisions by global citizens of the twenty-first century, who must possess competence in adaptability, flexibility, and peace-building strategies of negotiation, compromise, cooperation, mediation, and non-violent conflict resolution. Global citizens are trained to exercise the power of reasoning, objectivity, and neutrality; understand and are sensitive to cultural differences and issues of human rights; and have a repertoire of responsible and cooperative problem-solving skills, making use of information-based technologies. They exhibit a deep commitment to protecting the environment. A critical
knowledge to be imbued in future generations is an understanding of the widening gap between North and South and inequalities due to power, capitalism and immoral actions. Educating for world-centered citizenship is a social activity. It involves people living and working together, interacting with each other in a variety of settings and contexts. Global citizens are able to engage in public debate and collaborate respectfully with people whose ideas and values differ from their own (Kirkwood 2001a, 2001b, Kirkwood and Benton 2002).

Global citizens of the twenty-first century develop a capacity for compassion for the less fortunate. They are actively engaged in the improvement of the human condition, contributing to the common good in a variety of ways (Annan 2000). Whereas traditional citizenship education has often described the good citizen as the loyal servant of the state or the informed voter, both of which are largely passive roles, education for world-centered citizenship embraces progressive approaches accompanied by liberal thought. It encompasses thoughtful involvement in a broad configuration of economic, cultural, social, and political domains reflecting ‘primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience’ (Dewey 1916/1966).

Finally, global citizens possess a moral imperative that matches individual self-interest to the collective good undermined by globalization. (Bickmore 2002)

Conclusion
Moving the focus from a curriculum of national citizenship education to a curriculum for world-centered citizenship education holds promise for the improvement of the human condition in a troubled world. It provides opportunity for the peoples of the industrialized and developing worlds to give assistance to the disadvantaged, marginalized, and oppressed, offering their unique cultural experiences. Global pedagogy embraces all of humanity regardless of ethnicity and individual differences, engendering hope in the collective effort of creating a just world. Young people educated in world-centered citizenship education can be empowered with knowledge, attitudes, skills, and compassion, competent to set an example of what it means to be a member of a civilized world. With the commitment of competent teachers, future generations have the opportunity to change the destiny of the world in which they have to live. ©

References
Kirkwood, T F (2001b) ‘Preparing Teachers to Teach from a Global Perspective.’ The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin. 67(2): 5-12

Toni Fuss Kirkwood-Tucker, Ed.D. is Associate Professor of Social Studies and Global Education in the Department of Teacher Education, Florida Atlantic University. Her interests lies in global citizenship education, teaching and learning about global education in teacher education programs and schools, and minority issues. Email: kirkwoodtf@aol.com