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Adult Education and Critical Global Citizenship

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Abstract: This paper addresses two areas of critical concern regarding adult education and conceptions of global citizenship: the impact of deep integration of the Americas and the invisibility of the Indigenous world view in adult education literature regarding citizenship and human rights. It argues for a radical reconceptualization of these key areas.

Summary

This paper introduces some key findings of a study that sought to examine firstly, the model(s) of citizenship being developed and advanced, both explicitly and implicitly, in the North America Free Trade (NAFTA) Zone – Canada, U.S. and Mexico and implications for adult educators and secondly, the implications of deep integration and related modes of citizenship on the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Our research sought to explore the impact of the deep integration agenda in these areas, specifically in relation to models of citizenship, and what might be the anticipated future impact on adult education. Of particular importance in this project was locating the actual, rather than rhetorical, expression of the Indigenous voice in the dominant discourse relating to global citizenship.

The paper takes as its starting point the UNESCO 1997 statement that educators are called upon “to create greater community participation; to raise awareness about prejudice and discrimination; to encourage greater recognition, participation, and accountability of nongovernmental organizations and local community groups; and to promote a culture of peace, intercultural dialogue, and human rights (UNESCO, 1997, p. 36),” (cited in Schugurensky, 2006, pp. 75-76). Baxi wrote that one characteristic of the critical global citizen is having an understanding of the concept of “critical human rights realism,” where the forces for change, “the real birthplaces of human rights . . . are found in the actual sites (acts and feats) of resistance and struggle” (Baxi, 1999, p. 116, cited in Twining, 2006, p. 263).

It is the premise of this paper that adult human rights education is central to the concept of (global) citizenship that lies at the heart of both the Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning and the Agenda for the Future. It is our contention, however, that as elite-driven plans for “deep” integration continue to shape socio-economic and political realities, adult education has moved steadily away from those ideals. We view this project as ultimately producing important new knowledge regarding the implications of increased regional integration of trade and security, the nature of the relationship between sustainable cultural development for Indigenous peoples and constructions of global citizenship.

Locating Citizenship

The study began with a consideration of the ways in which the global citizenship discourse is being articulated. Tilly (1997, 602) acknowledges that alterations of the western politics and economies and the resultant threat to valued rights have led to citizenship having become “a pressing intellectual issue”. In his *Primer of Citizenship*, Tilly wrote that, “analysts of citizenship must take care to distinguish description, analysis and advocacy or risk substitution of wishful thinking for mapping of the possible” (Ibid.). In the global citizenship literature, the

concept itself is often contested in terms of its ascribed meanings, importance and usage [i]. One version of citizenship, most commonly associated with constitutionalism and the rule of law, interprets citizenship in terms of opportunities associated with status and consequential rights and privileges. Another is defined in relation to democracy and is framed in terms of the right and obligation to engage in or ‘exercise’ obligations.

A view of global citizenship frequently articulated in social movements such as the anti-globalization and ecological movements has much in common with the concept of world citizenship, or cosmo-polites – citizen of the universe - articulated by many of the ancient Stoics (Dower, 2002). In this perspective, global citizenship is generally conceived of in terms of obligations to fellow human beings as well as to the environment, and in the inter-relationships between states and countries. Aspects of this view of citizenship are found, for example, in the 1997 Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning. Most commonly, however, notions of citizenship are associated with the relationship of rights and obligations between the individual and the state. Both perspectives are apparent in school curricula such as social studies, as well as in public discourse.

Adult Education for Global Citizenship

In the field of education, global citizenship projects and discourses have gained increasing currency within curriculum and policy documents across North America as well as the United Kingdom. Global citizenship was a major theme at the 2003 conference of the American Educational Research Association. In November 2004, the University of Alberta hosted important international dialogue through the International Conference on Human Rights and Global Citizenship [1]. Scotland hosts two major studies on global citizenship at the Universities of Aberdeen and Glasgow. In most if not all cases, the concept of global citizenship is a site of contestation. Without exception, the role and contribution of Indigenous people’s languages, cultures and world views in understanding and conceptualising global citizenship is rendered invisible.

The Citizenship Education Research Network (CERN) focuses on four identified areas of research which are informative in understanding how citizenship is conceived within education in North America : “models of citizenship, typologies of citizens and contexts of citizenship;” “values in citizenship education;” behaviours, attitudes, skills and knowledge in citizenship education;” and “teaching practices in citizenship education”. The critical contribution of Indigenous peoples’, languages, cultures and knowledge in understanding and conceptualising global citizenship is rendered invisible within these areas of citizenship research and study.

Notably since 9/11, the concept of citizenship that is given the most press is that of citizenship obligations on the one hand, and these obligations not uncommonly include surveillance and reporting as a civic duty, and removable privileges on the other.

Foucault’s explanation of the development of the ‘art of government’ and its relationship to the emergence of the political economy that developed between the 16th and 18th centuries has relevance. One of the most deeply disturbing and well-documented characteristics of this current phase of the political economy is the expansion of an extreme form of the surveillance society that has led to new constructions and classes of citizens and non-citizens. Human rights and civil rights are perhaps the greatest casualties of this process.

Methodology and Analysis

Our study drew on data from policy documents, literature, curricula, and international reports. Critical theory was used to the extent we deemed it useful (Brookfield, 2005), in

particular, a critical political economy perspective grounded the analysis in social reality (Stewart-Harawira, 2005). (See also Allman, 2001; Holst, 2002; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005; Morrow & Torres, 2002; Twining, 2006; Youngman, 1996). Inarguably, the concept of “critical” global citizenship needs to be defined and understood from the perspective of the “oppressed” (Freire, 2005 [1973]). Thus we believe that analyses of class-divided societies, globally, and the ways in which different class interests are satisfied at the expense of others can do much to enhance the actual and potential role of adult educators in supporting the global justice agenda. For the purpose of deconstructing the nuanced discourses of global citizenship, however, we turned to critical political economy theory, specifically, critical realism and historical materialism. This approach incorporates class whilst also engaging with issues of political power and was integral to uncovering some of the ways in which concepts of global citizenship function as another form of exclusion.

The ‘Deep Integration’ Agenda

The specific free trade economic models represented by the NAFTA and FTAA Agreements provided the starting point for an exploration of the deep regional integration agenda in the Americas. This examination was extended to the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP) affirmed in March 2005 between the Presidents of Canada, the US and Mexico, and the North American Community extended state model proposed by the Council for Foreign Relations (CFR) Task Force (Stewart-Harawira 2007). We looked at this from the related agendas of prosperity and security, two critical discourses that are articulated as characteristics of two supra-state models; the European Union (EU) and the proposed North American Community. The key objective of the SPP is to strengthen North American competitiveness particularly in the face of increased competition from China, India and the EU. Hence its three key principles are: “improved security from external threats to North America; strengthened internal measures; and bolstered economic growth for the region as a whole, particularly in the face of increased global competition”(Ackleson & Kastner, 2005).

The importance of strengthening North American competitiveness against the EU is better understood in the context of a competing free trade agreement between the EU and Latin America. The countries of Latin America including Mexico are rich in mineral resources, a fact which aggravates tensions between the US and countries such as Bolivia which refuse to participate in American free trade agreements in favor of re-nationalizing and protecting Indigenous lands and resources. Of particular interest to this study were new forms of inclusion and exclusion in citizenship discourse. These include the construction of particular Indigenous groups as terrorists (Price, 2001; Gonzales, 2005; Curry, 2007;), the implications of differentiated citizenship for adult education, and the role of the human rights agenda.

Discussion

The research and analysis was guided by the following key questions: what is the discourse of (global) citizenship being articulated by the planners of social, economic, political, military and cultural (“deep”) integration on a continental scale? What kind of space exists in this model for Indigenous peoples as fully participating citizens with all the rights that accrue to them in international Indigenous rights law?

Two specific examples provide valuable insights with regard to the deep integration agenda and the discourse of citizenship. The first is the Glamis Gold Ltd's Montana Exploradora Marlin Project in Guatemala. The Marline Mine project is funded by the International Finance

Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank. This project has met with ongoing resistance from Indigenous Mayan communities whose lives and health stand to be impacted by the mine despite what is described on their website as extensive community consultation¹, the development of an Indigenous Development Program, and the investment of over \$1.3 million dollars in social and environmental programs. The Company is described by the IFC as a “good corporate citizen” yet there is ongoing opposition from some of the Indigenous communities some of which has been met with violence.

The second example is the strategic co-optation of Indigenous peoples into the Summits of the Americas processes and the accompanying rhetoric of supporting declarations of Indigenous human rights. The contrast between the aims and goals of these processes and those of the alternative Indigenous summits of the Americas such as the Third Continental Summit of Indigenous Peoples held in Guatemala on March 26th highlights the nature of the struggle between the regional integration through trade agenda and Indigenous goals and values concerning their human rights.

Findings and Conclusions

The deep integration agenda in the NAFTA zone goes well beyond a free trade agreement, although that is an essential pillar supporting the project. Until now, regionalization has been largely conceptualized in terms of three competing but related models. The forms of regionalism that we see today represent a modification of the ‘fortress’ approach that for a brief moment in time was signaled in the post-1989 period. Some of the characteristics of this latest form of regionalism are summed up in the phrase ‘postmodern state’ coined by Cooper (1998, 2003) and in which security, read as ‘militarization and surveillance’ and prosperity have become inextricably linked within market discourses and foreign policy rhetoric and practice.

As expected, our research found that human rights discourses rendered by the purveyors of market-driven resource exploitation are driven by requirements for consultation and consent. There are strong connections between human rights violations and the extent to which exclusion of the Indigenous voice, other than that of elites, is integral to advancing the “Free Trade Plus” agenda. The role of co-optation is also critical. The strategic co-optation of mainstream Indigenous leadership and the deliberate exclusion of Indigenous groups with concerns about the impact of resource exploitation on the health of communities and the environment obscures the violation of human rights that occurs both through acts of genocide as in Guatemala and through governmental support for industrial practices known to be toxic to human communities. This situation occurs throughout the Americas. Inevitably, the rights of Indigenous peoples are further degraded as they suffer the multiple consequences of competing neo-colonial resource exploitation endeavors. In seeking to understand the implications for the realization of the ten themes contained in the 1997 Agenda for the Future, one of which is “adult learning and democracy”, we find that, while critical adult education play an important role in advocacy and social justice movements, with some few exceptions the absence of the Indigenous voice functions to perpetuate a social myopia about the denigration of Indigenous rights in policies and practices that ostensibly support democracy. The examples that we looked at demonstrate very clearly that the rhetoric of a particular human rights discourse is in fact used to justify conditions which violate the principle of the indivisibility and interdependence of human rights but sustain

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the notion of a particular type of global citizen, although not the “critical” global citizen as we define it.

Implications for Adult Education Theory and Practice

In relation to implications for the international agenda of adult citizenship education practices, specifically “a kind of citizenship education that promotes democracy, peace, justice, tolerance, dialogue, mutual recognition, and negotiation to replace the culture of violence that pervades homes, local communities, nations, and relations among countries” (1997 Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning cited Schugurensky, 2006, p. 75), there are at least two critical implications drawn from this work. One characteristic of the critical global citizen, Baxi writes, is having an understanding of the concept of “critical human rights realism,” where the forces for change, “the real birthplaces of human rights . . . are found in the actual sites (acts and feats) of resistance and struggle” (Baxi, 1999, p. 116, cited in Twining, 2006, p. 263). Following Baxi, one critical implication that flows from this study is the contribution of adult education in the development of critical global citizens who are actively engaged in social revolution and transformation. The other is the urgency of the role of critical adult education in Indigenous communities whose struggle against the juggernaut of post-modern colonialism has impacts for the entire world.

The findings of this research emphasize the importance of human rights education. Importantly, however, they also emphasize the fact that human rights and human rights education must be contextualized within a critical political economic perspective if a desired outcome is effective strategic action. We believe that the principles and practices embedded in Indigenous worldviews are essential in the envisioning and construction of a different global world. It is therefore our contention that the Indigenous voice should be integral in the theory and practice of adult citizenship and human rights. Its absence indicates that this is neither well understood nor appreciated. It is our hope that the research represented by this paper represents significant foundational work in beginning to restore this balance.

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