

WORLD CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN MY CLASSROOM

World citizenship, a lofty ideal, a philosophical concept, a noble idea but what does it have to do with me? A classroom of children full of energy and frustration and anger and confusion sometimes directed towards each other is enough for me, thanks. If only I could get them to settle down so I can teach them to read and write, the rest is not my problem. Then there are the quiet ones, how are they faring? There is no time. Is it enough, or even possible, to teach specific skills without consideration for the social dynamics of the classroom? What are the implications of that type of teaching for the future?

The function of the educational system is not only for children to gain academic skills, but to enable them to play a protagonist role in the evolution of society. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights states that education is a means by which people, “learn respect for the dignity of others and the means and methods of ensuring that respect in all societies” (Commission on Human Rights Resolution 1995/47.) It should aim “at the building of a universal culture of human rights” (Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995–2005). These are goals for the education of all students, regardless of their land of birth or residence, their nationality or status in society. World Citizenship Education, also called Global Education, is “education that opens people’s eyes and minds to the realities of the world, and awakens them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights for all”. Global Education is understood to encompass Development Education, Human Rights

Education, Education for Sustainability, Education for Peace and Conflict Prevention and Intercultural Education; being the global dimensions of Education for Citizenship (Global Education in Finland 2005, 15). Additionally, according to the document Kansainvälyyskasvatus 2010 (World Citizenship Education 2010) produced by the Ministry of Education of Finland, global education comprises human rights, equality, peace and media education; education for intercultural understanding; issues relating to development and fair practice; and education for sustainable development. This should be seen in all classrooms, regardless of the ethnic composition of the students. All students are diverse and need to learn to work with others. Having foreign-born students in the class can provide additional resources for that process to take place.

Minorities defy definition

From a global perspective, the concepts of minority and majority defy definition. (see more in Tuomi 2006) The same people who are members of a minority group in one region are in the majority in another. There are all sorts of minorities, and even minorities inside other minorities. There can never be a minority group so small that it cannot include a smaller minority, so defining minority groups per se is not possible, nor is it always wise to do so. Society is currently so prone to prejudice that even trying to label minorities may create a pretext to increase, rather than decrease, discrimination. The segregated are often seen as playing a part in their own segregation while, except for a few extreme cases, this is not the case. The majority plays an important role in the maintenance of the status quo in questions of discrimination. Holistic structural and attitudinal changes need to take place in addition to learning the essential tools for communication and constructive, goal orientated consultation.

Many western European countries that traditionally have considered themselves culturally homogeneous states, such as Finland, are going through changes in population demographics (Johnson 2003). The peripheral "geographical cul de sac" position of Finland away from the Earth's main crossroads created a relative dearth of diversity other than their own cultural and linguistic minority groups this (see Grönfors and Tuomi 2006), which reduced Finns' exposure to variation in habits and customs. From the 1960s to the 1980s the foreign population remained stable at 0.3% (Foreigners and

International Migration 2002). Now, foreign-born schoolchildren aged 5–19, represent 3% of their age cohort. (Statistics Finland, 66.) Although the number is small, the relative jump has presented Finnish society with challenges requiring immediate adjustment by teachers and other school staff.

Approaches in the Integrating Immigrant Children have varied from country to country and in some countries from school to school (Integrating Immigrant Children... 2004). Professionals in special education and second language acquisition also approach the question differently. Some focus attention on segregated preparatory classes with intensive intervention in language and cultural acclimation, others use special education teachers and include immigrant children with other children with special needs.

Most essential is the use of teachers trained in good pedagogical skills, who are attracted to diversity and understand second language acquisition. Additionally, despite all efforts on the part of teaching staff and the immigrant children, the effect of all these approaches will be diminished if the student body is unprepared to accept the immigrant as an equal partner in the school and enable them to start their own process in life long learning. Change is inevitable. It is not only the role of the newcomer to adapt to the status quo of the majority, but rather, there is change for all involved.

World citizenship education: essential at the grassroots

World Citizenship Education which stresses the rights and obligations of all towards all others is not only global level endeavour but is even more important at the grassroots because it is at the grassroots level that children learn in practice how to function with others. It is only with this type of experience that young people can gain the skills that they will need in the future, and to work at both the local and global level. More concretely, how can we uphold and advance World Citizenship Education, in our schools and not include our fellow classmates regardless of their land of birth?

Schools need to be based on principles rather than on traditions. According to McLaren (1968), schools often depend on external forms of customs and traditions. Schools often develop “we have always done it that way” customs, McLaren calls them “ritual acts” which can become important for their own sake making it is easy to lose sight of the valuable principles behind them.

When the meanings behind cultural acts get lost, the same principles, in a different cultural garb, can become unrecognizable. In cross-cultural contacts, the ability to recognize common principles expressed in a variety of ways is a valuable skill. Rather than basing what is done on tradition, an examination of why it is done and what principles can be found behind them will help to identify and recognize a diverse expression of the same principle. The value of “cleanliness” when eating, for example, can be seen in washing hands before meals, using personal chopsticks rather than commonly used knives and forks, or using only the right hand while eating. In a diversity-positive school, all the children should be able to see that the principles on which their schools’ environment is based are recognizable as the same values that their own society holds dear. With this understanding, children and staff can more readily recognize those same values reflected in a different way by those from other cultures.

Unless immigrant students and their families see the values of their new school as being in harmony with their own, why should they care to collaborate? Schools need a two pronged approach which includes World Citizenship Education for all and the training of immigrant children. While these two processes are mutually dependant on each other, they are also mutually supportive. All children benefit from sound pedagogical practices. While the training of immigrant children require certain skills, such as second language acquisition and teaching literacy to older children, the professional development of the teacher can be adapted and applied to the needs of their other students as well.

World Citizenship Education in the Classroom

The Human Dignity Project (see Tuomi, M. T. 2004/2001) realizing World Citizenship Education started in Finland in 1995 to investigate how to create a diversity-positive environment, to provide children with the tools to prevent problems from starting in the classroom and to deal with those that do occur, and to lighten the load of the teacher by creating a milieu conducive to learning. A theory was developed, followed by a two-year action research study conducted with school starters (1995–1997). The same theory was tested in Lebanon. (Ghosn 2004).

The Human Dignity Paradigm (see Figure 1) is a picture of how a diversity-positive environment can be accomplished. It includes four parts. The first

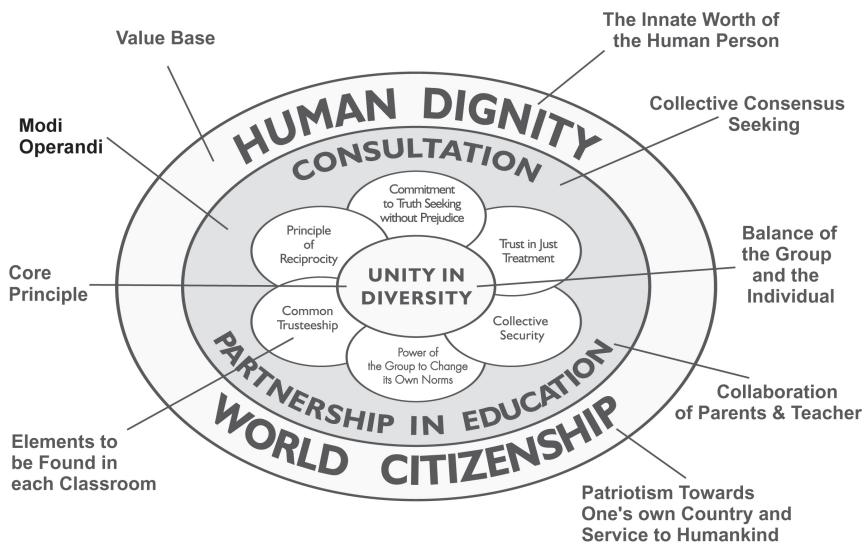


Figure 1: The Human Dignity Paradigm

© Tuomi

part, Human Dignity and World Citizenship, can be seen as part of a person's worldview. Each human being is endowed with human dignity; it is innate and cannot be taken away. All the citizens of the world are included in our "in group". There is only one human race. Racism exists not in the skin but in the mind. It is scientifically provable that humankind is one entity (Tuomi 2004/2001, 48–51).

Humankind is not a "gray mass" of people. Most human aspects we all have in common and some are vastly diverse. This is expressed in the core principle unity in diversity, seen in the center of the figure. This balance is seen throughout the research, such as in a unity in goals and diversity in application. Unity in diversity can be achieved through the use of consultation for both determining goals and the means to attain them. In the case of children in schools, it also involves a partnership between the teacher and parents. This partnership (shown in Figure 2) is necessary if the whole child is to be taken into consideration since parents have the chief responsibility for the education of their children. Despite the fact children's formal education takes place in

schools, they address only part of the whole child, which is made up of intellectual, physical and ethical or spiritual aspects. It is only in a partnership of teachers and parents that the whole child can be addressed.

The petals of the flower, seen in the figure above, show what needs to be present in a classroom in order for consultation and a teacher-parent partnership to take place. It can be described so:

- Commitment to Truth Seeking without Prejudice: How can people consult together to find the best solution unless they agree that knowing is valuable?
- Trust in Just Treatment: In consultation, the participants must feel that even if their ideas are unpopular, they will still be treated fairly.
- Collective Security: A redistribution of power is required. Truth and justice, rather than bullying or physical strength, holds the power. All individuals will be protected.
- Power of the Group to Change its Own Norms: No matter what the conditions found in society, the teacher and the students may set, develop and maintain agreed on norms within their classroom.
- Common Trusteeship: The diverse attributes of the group members must be seen as its resources to be protected and nurtured.
- Principle of Reciprocity: Every right includes a reciprocal obligation to protect that right for others. Not only my rights and your obligations are important, but also my obligations and your rights too.

	Main Role	Supportive Role
Parents	Education	Instruction
Teacher	Instruction	Education

© Tuomi

Figure 2: Partnership in Education

Partnership in Education describes a division of labor between the teacher and the students' parents, each being mutually supportive of the other. The parents have the primary role in education of their children when using the widest sense of the term. Teachers are in the main role of the instruction of children as mandated and defined by the state. Parents are in a supportive role in the schooling of their child. Indeed, parents would be obliged to take over the role of schooling of their children in the event that the state did not provide schooling. The teacher is in a supportive role of the holistic education of the child together with the parents. This partnership is of the utmost importance when the children and their parents are from another culture when a great deal of understanding and application is needed together with upholding the dignity and rights of the principles of both cultures. Teachers may find themselves in situations which require looking at the situation from a perspective which they have never thought of before. It will also require them to set limits when a custom deviates from the local laws. Having a good working relationship between parents and teacher can assist in both the prevention and resolution of these types of situations and assist in guidance and career counseling.

Striving for an environment of justice is a continuous process requiring constant attention. The value base, human dignity and world citizenship encompassed both 1) self-integrity and the integrity of others and 2) the moral right and obligation to work for the realization of the well-being of all. The core principle, unity in diversity, was a concept which provided the balance of the individual and the group in the realization of both rights and obligations. The means of doing this, consultation and partnership in education provided tools for the stakeholders to pro-actively affect their future.

Teaching children with immigrant backgrounds

All children are unique, and immigrant children are no exception. Teachers must develop their pedagogical and didactical skills to understand the learning styles and challenges of each of their students. The OECD multinational study PISA differentiates students into three large and very diverse groups of children (OECD 2001, 153) when analyzing data. Teachers can consider these factors when planning their teaching:

- Non-native students: those born abroad and whose parents were also born abroad. These children may have arrived as babies or as teenagers,

greatly affecting their situation, but those who remember may have witnessed or experienced very different laws and life styles, social upheavals, war or torture. Their involvement and awareness of the decision to move to another country can affect their preparedness, acceptance and reaction to their move.

- First-generation students: those born in Finland but whose parents were both born abroad. These children have experienced no other country than Finland. They have grown up with Finnish media and playmates but their parents may find it very difficult to help them with their homework.
- Native students: those students who were born in Finland and who have at least one parent born in Finland. These children can get help from parents. Often these children are bilingual so their normal language development may differ from monolingual children.

The didactics of teaching immigrant children, as with all children, is based on knowing the child, their background, their culture, what they know and what they have experienced. This can all be taken into consideration when planning their lessons but teachers need not overstress the “foreign” dimension of the child. It is important to focus on the child’s personality and learning style rather than on his or her immigrant status. The collaboration of the classroom teacher with the second language teacher and the child’s home language teacher, in addition to the parents, will greatly enhance the teacher’s ability to understand and evaluate the child’s skills. With this support, if problems do occur, the teacher will be better able to differentiate if the contributing factors are weak language skills, normal bilingual language development, difficulty in mastering specific content, post-traumatic stress or depression, loss of sensory perception due to genetic or war situations or possible neurological disabilities.

It is always important to remember that foreign language learning for immigrants, third language acquisition, involves mastering grammatical concepts and vocabulary in three different languages, rather than two. When an English speaker learns Italian in Finland, the student must understand, for example, the concept of “direct object” in Italian grammar as explained in Finnish and must understand that the term “direct object” may have different implications and function differently in all three languages. An understanding of the roots of the child’s native language may also help. Teaching English to a child in Finland

from Iran whose native language is Persian can be approached very differently from a child from Iraq whose native language is Arabic since English and Persian are both Indo-European languages and can have some structural similarities despite the difference in the script used. Prepping the students ahead of time, letting them know the topics to be discussed, the vocabulary to be used and providing them with all available materials may be much more conducive to learning than trying to patch up problems after the class. Pre-prepping can give the student just the edge that they need to keep up with the lesson and learn during class time along with their fellow students. While immigrant students have additional challenges, research has shown that they are motivated students and have positive attitudes towards school (Where Immigrant Students Succeed...). They most certainly deserve the fair chance of acceptance by their fellow students.

It is essential that all students identify themselves, and others, as noble human beings, endowed with dignity, and that they see themselves as actors in the participatory citizenship for humankind. All students should learn to collaborate with others to develop a just and stable society which is based on a commitment to a standard of justice that does not focus only on my rights and your obligations, but also your rights and my obligations as well.

World Citizenship Education is not a matter of putting maps on the wall, though awareness of the world may help. It has deeply to do with how we see ourselves in relationship to others, what kind of future we want, what kind of future we want our children to inherit and what we as teachers are willing to do to see it happen. What tools are we as teachers giving students to deal with the future? There are no quick tricks, no easy solutions. World Citizenship Education prepares all of our students for their future lives. Immigrant students are just one small part of that process. While World Citizenship Education may indeed be a lofty ideal, we as teachers, can start today by creating diversity-positive environments in our classrooms.

References

- Commission on Human Rights Resolution 1995/47.
- Decade for Human Rights Education. UN Commission Resolution 1995/47 in *Commission on Human Rights: report on the 51st session, 30 January–10 March 1995*, p. 147–150. UN Document E/1995/23-E/CN.4/1995/176; ESCOR, 1995, Suppl. no. 3.
- Foreigners and International Migration 2002*. Population 2003, 8, Statistics Finland, Helsinki, Finland.
- Ghosn, I.-K. (2004). Partnership in education: Lebanese evolution of a Finnish educational model. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 48(1), 35–50.
- Global Education in Finland*. (2004). The European Global Education. Peer Review Process. National Report of Finland. Lisbon: North-South Centre of the Council of Europe.
- Integrating Immigrant Children into Schools in Europe 2004*. Brussels: European Commission.
- Johnson, L. S. (2003). The Diversity Imperative: building a culturally responsive school ethos. *Intercultural Education* 14(1), 17–31.
- Kansainvälyyskasvatus (2010): Ehdotus kansalliseksi kansainvälyyskasvatukseen toimenpideohjelmaksi*. 2006. Opetusministeriön työryhmämuistioita ja selvityksiä 2006:4. <http://www.minedu.fi/julkaisut/index.html>.
- Knowledge and Skills for Life: First Results from PISA 2000*. Paris: OECD 2001.
- McLaren, P. (1986). *Schooling as a Ritual Performance*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- The Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education*, subsequently approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations with resolution A/RES/184 on 23 December 1994. UN Document A/49/261/-E/1994/110/Add. 1.
- Population Structure and Vital Statistics by Municipality 2003. Population 2004: 4, Helsinki: Statistics Finland.
- Tuomi, M. T. (2006). “Creating a School Culture of Human Dignity or, Do Minorities Deserve Special Treatment?” in *From the Margin to the Centre: Capturing the Perspectives of Young People from European Minority Groups*, C. Fridrich, ed. III-41–45.

- Tuomi, M. T. and J. Grönfors (2006). "The Roma Minority in Finland – an Overview", in *From the Margin to the Centre: Capturing the Perspectives of Young People from European Minority Groups*, C. Fridrich, ed. p. III-152–154.
- Tuomi, M. T. (2004). Planning teachers' professional development for global education, *Intercultural Education*, 15(3), 295–306.
- Tuomi, M. T. (2004/2001). *Human Dignity in the Learning Environment: Testing a Sociological Paradigm for a Diversity-Positive Milieu with School Starters, 3rd edition*, Jyväskylä: Institute for Educational Research.
- Where Immigrant Students Succeed – A Comparative Review of Performance and Engagement in PISA 2003.* 2006. Paris: OECD.