

The Student as Global Citizen: Feasible Utopia or Dangerous Mirage?

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It was said

‘When anyone asked him where he came from, he said: “I am a citizen of the world”.’

Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Diogenes the Cynic*,
quoted in Martha Nussbaum

And a little more recently Bertrand Russell referred to himself as a citizen of the universe (closing section of *The Problems of Philosophy*).

Introduction

- Intriguing concept – the very idea of ‘global citizen’
- But what is it?
- And why has the very term – the student as a global citizen – arrived recently?
- Push and pull?
- Is the matter here primarily economic, educational, political ...?
 - (It has been said that ‘the crisis of C is a political crisis and so calls for a political solution, not a pedagogical solution’.)
- How might it play out in higher education?
- Pitfalls and possibilities.

Initial suggestion

- Different readings
- Sense that GC is not just a 'notoriously difficult concept' but is a contested concept
- Not an empty signifier by any means
- But rather different interests, and different educational agendas playing within it
 - Possessing understanding
 - Being informed
 - Being adaptable
 - Playing one's part
 - Fairer society for all

Why now?

Answers with increasing weight:

- Sense of the world as a 'global village' (in a networked age)
- Universities see themselves as global
 - and it's part of their internationalisation programme
- They see their graduates as global ambassadors
- They want their graduates to stand out in a global market to top talent
- Univs' global identity amid world rankings
- Worldly entrepreneurialism for graduates
 - to be understood as universities' contribution to global 'cognitive capitalism'

The idea of the citizen

- Diogenes
- Possibilities and pitfalls
- Fault lines
- Issues/ dimensions
 - Community (world community; world governance)
 - Cosmopolitanism
 - Being human
 - Feminism
 - Universality
 - Identity
 - Wisdom
 - The 'other'/ the stranger
 - 'Being' a global citizen – the action/ agency of such a person.

Hannah Arendt (1)

- Citizenship is associated with the political sphere
- Not social or personal
- About *participation* in political institutions – requires *action*
- Negotiating *competing* interests and perspectives
- Through speech and persuasion
- C requires public *physical* spaces
- & freedom of expression
- ie, *separate from (private)* ethnic, religious, gender *identity*
- A process of *collective* identity construction

Arendt (2) - issues

- Can there be a worldly or global citizenship?
- What is the source of collective bonds?
- Is 'global' citizenship political or apolitical? (A: 'Nobody can be a citizen of the world as he is the citizen of his country.')
- But perhaps if C is a philosophical concept, then it makes sense – ie, global citizenship becomes a recognition of human being as such.
- But still, what would active participation mean?
- Russell – 'citizen of the universe' – was active worldly at least
- But then *actively* negotiating diverse interests and perspectives?

Martha C Nussbaum

- Example of university graduate, in work in a Beijing office
 - *What university curriculum would prepare her for such a situation?*
 - Stoics: 2 communities – local & c of human argument and aspiration
 - Cross-cultural awareness – helps ethical inquiry
 - ‘C of the W’: an invitation to be a philosophical exile from own way of life
 - Give the community of humanity our first allegiance
 - But multiple allegiances – concentric circles (beyond identity politics)
 - And recognition of differences – but not suspending judgement
 - Requires sensitive and empathic interpretation
 - HE: a multicultural curriculum for ‘mutual respect’ – but searching for commonalities across diversities.
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Nussbaum (2)

- A philosophical stance – ie, we are all human (community of humanity)
- Philosophical exile – but recognizes that the local is not easily shrugged off – indeed, to the contrary, is itself to be recognized
- Wants to retain judgement and criticality – but how/ where
- Places heavy reliance on the curriculum – but yet looks to sensitivity and empathy
- But/ and a curricula approach that has its place in the modular ('course') offerings of USA higher education.

Peters

- Distinguishes the cosmopolitan and the postcolonial projects (as responses to the death of the university)
- Cosmopolitan University (renewal from the inside)
 - **Moral C** (single moral community)
 - **Political C** (global human rights)
 - **Economic C** (does not demand any kind of 'responsibility'; graduates as global consumers/ economic travelers in transnational spaces 'without subjecting own cultural values to the exchange and test of their host culture'.)
 - *Comparing these 3, MP sees a role especially for the 'liberal arts'*
- - but only providing that they 'escape their local origins' to take on a new globalism
 - And assist in the cultivation of a 'cosmopolitan self'.
- Postcolonial University (renewal from outside)
 - Issues of power: NB 'Why is my curriculum white?' (UCL)
 - (De Souza Santos – epistemic hegemony)
- Embracing of indigenous peoples

Peters (2)

- Implies the possibility of an economic form of GC
- & implies an answer to the question 'Why now'?
- Overly focuses on the humanities and liberal arts
- (We need an idea of GC that will traverse the whole university.)
- Plays up 'post-humanistic pedagogies' that 'seriously engage with ... diversity', a 'culture of diversity'
- But also wants to allow room for 'critical resistance and dissidence'.
 - Not clear how he squares his own circle of (1) total openness to others (so as to avoid Western imperialism) and (2) emptiness.

Key issues

- Community?
- Political or Social – or Philosophical?
- Participation?
- Identity? Singular or plural?
- Universality?
- Epistemology?
- &/or Ontology?
- Educational possibilities [NB: distinguish children from adults]
 - Relationship with disciplines
 - Language(s)
 - Possible pitfalls?

Contested, empty or just messy?

- So what kind of concept is ‘the student as global citizen’?

Is it:

(a) Empty - No

(b) Messy - Yes

or

(c) Contested – is there a major fault line (or are there clear fault lines)?

Yes: 2 fault lines:

- epistemology/ ontology
- curriculum/ pedagogy

Global citizenship – more than being globally networked

- Citizenship cannot be – in the first place - a matter of knowledge
- The world is full of difference and is always changing
- So the world cannot be understood in a satisfactory way.
- But it is an increasingly small world – a ‘networked’ world
- We are networked in the world, even if we do not leave our immediate communities.
- We are confronted with the world
- But ‘global citizenship’ is something else.

A matter of being

- Being a global citizen is just that – *being* a global citizen
- A matter of embracing the world in one's very being
- So more important than curriculum is pedagogy
- The c may help but it can be a hindrance – too much knowledge is problematic
- What is it for? To promote a way of being in the world.

Two forms of understanding (the world)

- GC is to care about the world
- To have a concern for the world
- To be interested in the world
 - But not just to read news stories from around the world
- Not just (1) to have sufficient understanding (information) but to be able to strike up a conversation and do so with (2) understanding (empathy)
- To show one's concernedness
- To be with-the-world
- To learn from-the-world
- But also to critique the world.

The significance of pedagogy

- Curriculum is important
- But only as a means to the larger end of eliciting this concern for the world
- The educational challenge is that of bringing on this mode of being
- Information – to be brought into play to realise its limitations
- To make judgements in situations where there are no right answers, only multiple perspectives
- ‘Multiplicities’
- Pedagogical space and time

A role for international students

- Universities are in themselves microcosms of the world
- Often, students from 100+ nations
- Who can learn from each other
- We need the invention of imaginative pedagogical spaces bringing students together
- Inquiring into and learning from each other

The significance of discussion

- Students being brought together to engage with strange matters
- Reserving judgement
- Deep understanding is prior
- Any subject – civil engineering – being an engineer in another land
- Internet – engagement with another society

Glimpsing an ecological global citizenship

- Precisely a citizenship that comes to have
 - A sense of the world's interconnectedness
 - With its fragility
 - It possessing multiple ecosystems in which human beings are situated
 - (eg knowledge, societies, persons, learning, culture, economy, natural environment)
 - And of those ecosystems being impaired, or having fallen short of their possibilities
- A care and concern for this (fragile, impaired, interconnected) world

Conclusions: pitfalls and possibilities

- The idea of the student as a global citizen is messy
- It remains important but requires careful handling
- It could become a dangerous mirage
- At best, another space in which students are exposed to a saturated curriculum
- At worst, an educational ideology for the perpetuation of
 - (a) economic neo-liberal global subjects and
 - (b) neocolonialism
- But it holds the possibility of empathic and informed understanding of the world, not just peoples but the whole world
 - An ecological global citizenship
 - But we need to be educationally adept – pedagogy is *much* more important than curriculum
 - a pedagogy of collective strangeness and engagement.

