Global Education and its Tensions: Case Studies of Two Schools in Singapore and the United States

While globalization is an age-old phenomenon occurring as early as 60,000 years ago when humans ventured out of Africa leading to the emergence of new civilizations, the concept became popularized in the 1970s and 1980s when the dominance of liberal democracy created a climate favourable for global exchanges (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 1999). However, this romanticization of globalization appeared to have reached its peak towards the end of 2016, a period characterized by resistance towards major international trade agreements such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between the European Union and the United States as well as the Trans-Pacific Partnership signed by twelve countries around the world and covering 40% of the world’s economy. The growing resurgence of protectionism in major economies prompted fears about the effects of anti-globalization in major news media with titles such as “Globalization 2.0 is coming to an end” (Smith, 2016) and “We’ve reached the end of global trade” (Foroohar, 2016). The World Economic Forum (2017) warned that “the transition towards a more multipolar world order [was] putting global cooperation under strain” (p. 4). Yet, despite the seeming retreat of global trade, global conflict had not diminished. The Global Terrorism Index 2016 reported a 650% increase in deaths from terrorism in OECD countries from 2014 to 2015 (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2016). At the end of 2016, Russia’s ambassador to Turkey was assassinated at an art gallery in Ankara; a large truck plowed through a Christmas market in Berlin killing twelve people; and various stabbing incidents occurred throughout Europe. The persistence of what Beck (2007) terms “world risk societies” (p. 9) in which global risks such as terrorism and climate change permeate everyday local realities, means that societies cannot afford to remain isolationist as such global problems cannot be resolved by the nation-state alone. Today, the rise of extremism, xenophobia, and intolerance has meant a greater urgency
on the part of educators, rather than politicians or business organizations invested in national or corporate interests, to develop in students essential skills and dispositions for a more secure and hospitable future. It is no wonder then that governments have continued to invest in global education as a platform to equip students to thrive in increasingly networked societies.

The central aim of global education is to “prepare students to live in a progressively interconnected world where the study of human values, institutions, and behaviors is contextually examined through a pedagogical style that promotes critical engagement of complex, diverse information toward socially meaningful action” (Gaudelli, 2003, p. 11). This paper examines how global education is enacted in two schools in Singapore and the United States. Given that a central characteristic of the twenty-first century is globalization, global education is inevitably embedded in the discourse of twenty-first century competencies utilized by policymakers worldwide. However, while global education has typically been studied as a singular subject such as Human Rights or integrated into History, Social Studies, or Civics Education, this study differs as it examines two schools that have adopted a whole-school approach to global education. That is, global education is embedded in the culture of schooling and infused across all curricula subjects. The first part of the paper provides an overview of global education and its two key emphases – globalism and global citizenship. The second part highlights key tensions emerging from observations of global education in the two schools and discusses their implications for educators.

**Overview of Global Education**

**Historical Emergence**

Global education is not a new phenomenon and is known to have a history of related predecessor movements throughout the twentieth century such as multicultural education (Tye, 2009). As the world became increasingly recognized as interconnected and “global”
following the Second World War and as the vocabulary of globalization became more widely employed, interest in global education arose (Fujikane, 2003).

In the 1960s and 1970s, there emerged a range of overlapping educational movements that could be broadly categorized under the umbrella term, “Education for global citizenship.” These included global education, development education, human rights education, peace education, education for sustainable development, environmental education, and citizenship education (Fricke, Gathercole, & Skinner, 2015; Hicks, 2003). What united these different movements was the view that issues could only be effectively explored through a globally oriented perspective. When global education was incorporated into school curricula in the United Kingdom and the United States, its aim was initially to encourage students to become more aware of global issues. Early courses focused on cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary analysis of human life that became widespread across elementary schools (Tye, 2009). What had originally been termed World Studies that focused on a study of history, geography, and social issues within specific countries in the world, expanded to include a more integrated perspective on problems affecting the world as a whole. By the 1980s, these programmes were replaced with global education which was less a specific subject than an approach to facilitating in students a consciousness of themselves as members of the human race. In England and Wales, more than half of the education authorities began actively promoting global education in school curricula (Hicks, 2003; Holden, 2000).

Aside from the United Kingdom and United States, global education garnered significant attention in Asian countries. In the 1980s, the Japanese government began to place more emphasis on preparing students to be globally competitive attributed in part by pressures from major corporations that recognized the need for a more creative, culturally-aware workforce. At the same time, parallel global education movements promoting human rights and peace education flourished in several schools (Asano, 2000). In Hong Kong and
Shanghai, government policies lent strong attention to global education. For example, guidelines to the Civics Education syllabus in Hong Kong in 1996 proposed the need for students to learn about global citizenship, global village, human rights and responsibilities. A 2001 report from the central government in China proposed curriculum reform that included the need to develop global perspective in four aspects – global awareness, global knowledge, global skills, and global behavior (Lee & Leung, 2006).

Unlike these countries, global education is not explicitly mentioned in Singapore and the terminology appears absent in education policies even though these are often formulated in response to globalization. For example, when former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong (1997) announced a major blueprint for education in 1997 entitled “Thinking Schools, Learning Nation” (TSLN), his speech opened with a description of “an intensely global future” (para. 3). In this sense, TSLN was a vision conceived in response to ensuring Singapore’s survival and prosperity in the face of economic developments around the world. TSLN was subsequently concretized through policies such as Teach Less, Learn More as well as Character and Citizenship Education. Once again, these policies were meant to support the government’s aim of developing a competitive magnet economy by nurturing dispositions conducive to innovation (Author, 2016). More recently, the Ministry of Education (2010) launched the twenty-first century competencies framework and in its brochure, the first line reads, “How do we prepare our children to thrive in a future driven by globalization and technological advancements?” (p. 2). Similarly, in reflecting on the increasing interconnectedness of the world, former Minister of Education Heng Swee Keat (2012) remarked that twenty-first century competencies were vital to preparing Singaporean youths with a global outlook – “Our students need civic literacy, global awareness and cross-cultural skills so that they can interact with people of diverse backgrounds with confidence and empathy” (para. 3).
Despite the government’s recognition that education reform must address the fact of a
globalized world, what is lacking is a more integrated approach to infusing global education
in schools. In Singapore schools, global education is more apparent in the subject Social
Studies which was made compulsory for all secondary three to five students (fifteen to
seventeen year olds) from 2001. Social Studies is essentially an issues-based curriculum and
one of its key aims is to enable students “to understand their identity as Singaporeans with a
global outlook” (Curriculum Planning and Development Division, 2016, p. 3). Even though it
incorporates case studies around the world, these contentious issues are often presented in
factual, simplistic ways that allow little room for debate (Ho, 2009). The challenge is how
education in Singapore can move beyond dogmatic responses to globalization and instead
consider ways to equip students to critically study the complex and multifaceted effects of
globalization.

**Key Emphases of Global Education**

Despite growing interest in global education across history, there is no universally
accepted definition of global education given its overlaps with other education for global
citizenship movements described earlier (Fricke, Gathercole, & Skinner, 2015). Global
education has also been used interchangeably with world-centered education, global
perspectives in education (Kirkwood, 2001), and more commonly today, global citizenship
education. The concern that global education encourages a minimalist, passive form of global
awareness, led to the popular adoption of a relatively new term, global citizenship education,
by nongovernmental organizations such as OXFAM and UNESCO that advocated activating
students’ participation and sense of responsibility to their world (Davies, 2006). For example,
UNESCO (2017) stated that global citizenship education “aims to empower learners to
assume active roles to face and resolve global challenges and to become proactive
contributors to a more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure world” (para. 1) while
OXFAM (2015) defined a global citizen as someone who “is passionately committed to social justice” and “works with others to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place,” among other attributes (p. 5). These descriptions emphasize a more active commitment to global justice.

On one hand, scholars such as Davies and Pike (2009) have called for closer integration between global education and citizenship education arguing that in today’s world, citizens are no longer tied to the nation but have multiple citizenships and concurrent allegiances to various groups and communities. They advocate global citizenship education that encourages deeper cultural engagement going beyond an understanding of global issues. On the other hand, others have observed that global education is an emerging and growing field and so, global citizenship education should be perceived as its extension. Richardson used the analogy of six blindfolded people looking at the concept of global education. They arrive at their own interpretations and each is partly right. He argued:

The term ‘global education’ is as good as any to evoke the whole field … It implies a focus on many different, though overlapping levels from very local and immediate to the vast realities named with phrases such as ‘world society’ and ‘global village’. It implies also a holistic view of education, with a concern for children’s emotions, relationships and sense of personal identity as well as with information and knowledge. (Cited in Ballin & Griffin, 1999, p. 1)

In this paper, I recognize the importance of global citizenship as an important focus in global education but at the same time, as Richardson suggests, I retain the use of the term global education in its expansive sense. Here, the term encompasses two key emphases – its earlier iteration involving knowledge about issues and injustices arising from globalization or what is termed globalism as well as its later accent on global citizenship involving active participation and responsibility to others in the fraternity of human beings.
Global education’s first emphasis is centrally concerned with globalism. While globalization is an empirical phenomenon manifested in political, economic, technological, cultural and other spheres, the discourse about globalization, its thematization and analysis, is termed globalism (Papastepanou, 2005). This paradigm incorporates what Case (1993) described as the substantive domain of global education focusing on increasing students’ knowledge about present global issues, interconnected global systems, diverse cultural values systems, and global geography. Pike and Selby’s (1988) influential handbook on global education proposed studying the global in four dimensions – the spatial (involving analysis of the ways in which issues in one site are interconnected with others), the temporal (involving analysis of changes affecting the world across time), issues (involving analysis of contemporary concerns affecting the lives of individuals, communities and the planet as a whole), and human potential (involving analysis of trends affecting the planet and its future).

Another global education programme developed by UNESCO sought to promote knowledge about the Second World War and its connection to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in order to heighten students’ attunement to global wars and violence (UNESCO, 2007). Exposure to interconnected knowledge about the world pushes students to problematize “self,” “nation,” and “other” as bounded concepts.

Case (1993) extended the substantive domain that dealt with knowledge of global issues and events to include a perceptual domain that involved “nurturing perspectives that are empathic, free of stereotypes, not predicated on naive or simplistic assumptions, and not colored by prejudicial sentiments” (p. 318). In one of the earliest documents related to developing global perspectives, Hanvey (1976) outlined five core areas, namely, perspective consciousness, state of the planet awareness, cross-cultural awareness, knowledge of global dynamics, and awareness of human choices. Other work concerning perspective-taking explored how educators can cultivate self-reflection that encourages students to examine their
own assumptions and bias as they engage with global issues (Calder, 2000), that fosters a consciousness in students of the perspectives of multiple communities and cultural groups around the world (Boix-Mansilla & Gardner, 2007), and that sensitizes students to the voices of marginalized or silenced communities, particularly indigenous perspectives (Kirkwood, 2001).

Global education’s emphasis on globalism aims to expand students’ knowledge and perspectives about global concerns that then becomes a stepping stone to the second emphasis that calls for more committed engagement to the human fraternity through the development of global citizenship capacities. Various scholars have sought to characterize a typology of core discourses informing global citizenship. Gaudelli (2009) described five different visions of global citizenship discourses – neoliberal, nationalist, Marxist, world justice/governance, and cosmopolitan. A major barrier to global education is the perpetuation of neoliberal and nationalist versions of global education that champion competition and seek to develop patriotic citizens loyal to the nation state (Myers, 2016). Through an extensive literature review, Oxley and Morris (2013) identified eight conceptions of global citizenship under two broad categories – cosmopolitan and advocacy. Cosmopolitan types include political, moral, economic and cultural global citizenship while advocacy types include social, critical, environmental, and spiritual global citizenship. They argued that forms of global citizenship occur inconsistently so that, for example, the intended aims of critical and moral global citizenship that critique injustices arising from capitalism may clash with actual enactments of economic global citizenship that often mask neoliberal agendas.

In schools, ethical visions of developing globally empathetic students are often overshadowed by instrumental approaches to equipping students with a set of skills needed for the global workplace (Author, 2017). This is partly because the economic impetus of global education has been strongly endorsed by influential transnational organizations such as
OECD, World Bank, and World Economic Forum that seek to align curriculum goals with the development of human capital needed for the global economy (Spring, 2014; Tan, 2014). Parallel to this, policymakers commonly mobilize discourses of economic competitiveness and national vulnerability to legitimize education reform. For example, in Singapore, the narrative of survival has been utilized to support a nationalist approach to global education (Koh, 2013).

To mitigate such neoliberal impulses in global education, there is a need to empower students with the critical capacities to critique dominant ideological narratives and discourses of power. More importantly, the development of ethical capacities should be at the core of global education. If, ethics, as derived from the Aristotelian use of the term, revolves broadly around the question “how should a human being live?”; then ethics, as opposed to morality, is not so much concerned with normative principles of right or wrong but with questions about how one should live in relation to diverse others in the world (Nussbaum, 1997). The kinds of ethical capacities needed to secure a more hospitable twenty-first century involve skills to negotiate, engage, and converse (physically, virtually, or imaginatively) with others as well as dispositions such as the capacity to suspend judgement about others and the capacity to demonstrate empathetic sensitivity to the oppression of others as a result of globalization. In this light, the development of critical, ethical capacities must be complemented with strengthening affective connections to the foreign other. A global citizen is one who is cosmopolitan-minded or oriented to the world as a whole regardless of geographic boundaries (O’Byrne, 2003). To be attuned to the world is to also embrace feelings of “universal identity” and “universal morality” (Heater, 1999, p. 137). To foster cosmopolitan affinities with diverse others, Nussbaum (1997) argued that a fundamental agenda in education should involve cultivating empathetic understanding towards those hurt by the excesses of globalization. Such affective sensibilities are not merely passive but active as Baildon and
Damico (2011) discussed in their conceptualization of “relational cosmopolitanism” in which one’s sense of affinity to the marginalized other results in a willingness to act in the face of injustice. In this light, Davies (2017) argued that education for global citizenship should be centrally expressed by democratic engagement for social justice and teachers should be encouraged to be sociopolitical activists.

In summary, global education broadly emphasizes globalism and global citizenship that entail three aims: 1) expanding knowledge about global concerns; 2) expanding perspectives about global concerns; and 3) equipping students with critical, ethical, and affective capacities to think, act, and feel in response to global problems. The challenge is how teachers can infuse these dimensions of global education in various subjects across the curriculum.

**Methodology**

The focus of this paper is to provide on-the-ground empirical insights into how global education is enacted in schools according to the three aims above and its observed tensions. Data was collected from two secondary schools – Homer High School (HHS) in Singapore and Silas High School (SHS) in the United States (pseudonyms are used to protect the confidentiality of schools and teachers). This included curriculum documents related to school policies; one hour semi-structured interviews with school leaders including the Principal, Vice Principal, Department Heads, as well as teachers (there were a total of 24 from HHS and 18 from SHS); and classroom observations of one unit consisting of four to six connected lessons involving five teachers at the upper secondary level (equivalent to grades 9 and 10) teaching the following subjects: English Language/Language Arts, Literature, Science, Mathematics, and Interdisciplinary Studies¹. A total of 44 lessons between 60 to 90 mins each were observed. All interviews and observations were audio recorded and selected observations were video recorded. These recordings were subsequently
transcribed for data analysis. Teachers were selected via convenience sampling based on recommendations by the Principal or Deputy Principal.

Both schools are starkly different in that HHS has a predominantly Chinese student population (more than 90%) and an ethos strongly influenced by Confucian values while SHS has a predominantly white student population (more than 90%) and is located in a community in Connecticut historically steeped in Protestant values. The two schools, however, were chosen based on Yin’s (2009) notion of “replication design” (p. 53) which concerns the careful selection of each site so that they share common theoretical characteristics. The two school sites were selected because both systematically and intentionally incorporated a whole-school approach to global education. Both schools participated in a conference on global education held at Teachers College, Columbia University in 2012 and subsequently worked with me as well as scholars from that university to customize a global framework that could inform their entire curriculum. SHS participated in a district-wide initiative to develop a “Twenty-first Century Lens” or framework that could inform curriculum from kindergarten through twelfth grade in order “to prepare all students to reach their full potential as life-long learners and socially responsible contributors to our global community.” The framework was used to design and evaluate lessons across all subjects and explicitly described sixteen core competencies in four categories – critical thinking, creative thinking, global thinking, and communication.

Similarly, a global ethos is apparent in HHS which prides itself as being a “world-class institution” that aims to equip students “with the skills and insights they need to thrive in this new, global age.” The school was the first in Singapore to set up a satellite campus in China and has established a robust global academy that has fostered connections with over ninety-five schools in twenty countries. All students are required to participate in overseas immersion programmes that can stretch as long as six months and global awareness is
fostered through its Bicultural Studies and Current Affairs programmes. In 2013, the school began to more intentionally infuse global education in all subject areas through the development of a “Global Literacies Matrix”, a framework detailing twenty-two core competencies in three categories – critical thinking, creative thinking, and caring thinking. A number of coaching sessions were held to demonstrate to Heads of Departments how they can use the framework for lesson planning and for mentoring beginning teachers.

One benefit of twenty-first century frameworks, such as those developed by OECD and those designed by schools like SHS and HHS, is that they have created a common language around global education by specifying key competencies students will need in the future. This unifying discourse leads to “coherence making” (Fullan, 2001, p. 159) and pushes teachers to go beyond narrow disciplinary knowledge and concepts. However, as previously mentioned, a key limitation is the tendency to highlight visible, measurable skills, often tied to those required in the global corporate workplace. In what follows, this paper will focus on examining key tensions that emerge as schools utilize such frameworks as a catalyst to promote global education across the curriculum. Data collected was analyzed by conducting an initial coding of the classes of each teacher observed according to three aims of global education identified in the literature: 1) Expanding knowledge about global concerns; 2) expanding perspectives about global concerns; and 3) equipping students with critical, ethical, and affective capacities to think, act, and feel in response to global problems. Data coded in these broad categories was further synthesized to highlight key tensions of global education observed. Interviews were supplemented to provide more in-depth understanding of beliefs informing teachers’ practices.
Findings and Discussion: Tensions of Global Education

1) Tensions between the Universal and Particular

If one of global education’s central aims involves expanding students’ knowledge about global concerns, one central dilemma teachers face is whether such knowledge should privilege “universal truths” or emphasize its connections to particular contexts. On one hand, global education seeks to foster students’ affinity to the fraternity of human beings transcending communal affiliations. The emphasis on universality translates into equipping students with generalizable knowledge and appreciation of shared beliefs. At the same time, the emphasis on commonality with others can paradoxically erase historical and cultural differences. As French Philosopher Badiou (2001) has insisted, any claims to universality must then be rooted in particular events.

A close examination of both schools revealed this tension between the universal and particular existed most clearly at the disciplinary level rather than within subjects. More specifically, in subjects such as Science and Mathematics, students engaged with global issues in more generic ways compared to Languages and Humanities where they were more intentionally pushed to consider historical specificity and cultural contexts. For example, several lessons in Maria’s Grade 10 Chemistry curriculum at SHS were designed to allow students to experience a range of scenarios involving chemistry in the world. As she explained, her objective was to enable students to “explore new possibilities for approaching an ill-defined problem, potentially with multiple solutions” and “embrace change eagerly and generate new possibilities.” In one lesson on the topic of “Investigating Reaction Rates”, she began the class by providing the following scenario:

A company has contacted your group and would like to know which concentration, particle size, and temperature would be best to use in their hydrocracking process.

Your job is to determine which concentration, temperature, particle size will cause the
magnesium and hydrochloric acid to completely react as quickly as possible. You will be designing this experiment. You must have a hypothesis, a procedure, and data. You may not begin your experiment until you have completed the procedure.

After students had brainstormed with their group mates and conducted their research, they had to write a letter to the hydrocracking company suggesting a method for their industrial process and supporting this with data. Such scenario-based lessons were common in Maria’s classes and global education was interpreted predominantly as the inclusion of authentic problems that allowed students to apply theoretical concepts. As Maria explained, “It’s hard for me to think about Chemistry in a global sense; Chemistry is Chemistry everywhere you go, the facts are always the same.” Maria perceived concepts in Chemistry as universal and hence applicable to a variety of scenarios.

Of the three forms of constructivism – piagetian, radical, and sociohistorical (Eisenhart, Finkel, & Marion, 1996), Maria’s pedagogical approach exemplified piagetian constructivism that encourages learners to hypothesize, predict, question, investigate and experiment through active experiential learning. Conversely, some of the lessons observed in Sandra’s Grade 9 & 10 Algebra class seemed to more closely correspond to radical constructivism. Unlike piagetian constructivism, radical constructivism shifts the emphasis from students’ correct replication of what the teacher expects them to apply in solving a problem to how students adapt knowledge that may or may not correspond to established views, to construct their own understanding of experiences. In one lesson, Sandra handed out a sheet with four different graphs and told students: “I want you guys to imagine scenarios that would have a graph like this. So instead of me giving you data, I’m giving you models and you have to say what kind of data created this; what sort of real life scenarios could have come up with something like this…. And you can get creative, that’s fine.” Students proceeded to utilize concepts they had learnt in algebra as well as their own life experiences
to contextualize the models. In a later exercise, students were asked to imagine they were part of a research team. Using data from the Centre of Disease Control, they researched the global spread of disease and made predictions by testing different mathematical models.

In contrast to Maria’s scenario-based problems that assessed whether students could apply scientific concepts, the problems constructed in Sandra’s classes were deliberately less structured and more ambiguous giving students opportunities to make sense of experiences given on their own. Sandra explained that providing students with real world data could lead to global engagement as students would have to incorporate political and economic considerations in their proposed solutions. Thus, radical constructivist pedagogy employed in Sandra’s classes appeared to better equip students with dispositions necessary to navigate the porosity of knowledge in our world.

At the same time, an implicit assumption in Science and Mathematics classes in both schools was that concepts could be universally and unquestionably applied to real world scenarios. Absent from these observations were sociohistorical constructivist pedagogies that foreground ways in which concepts are historically and culturally constituted (Eisenhart, Finkel, & Marion, 1996). Even with the emphasis on inquiry-based learning, knowledge can still be fossilized, packaged as commodities to be mastered and applied to given contexts, which then supports the neoliberal agenda to develop entrepreneurial individuals with requisite scientific capital to think critically and creatively. There is a need then to particularize the universality of concepts and here, Hodson (2003) has proposed a useful model encompassing four areas:

1. Appreciating the societal impact of scientific and technological change, and recognizing that science and technology are, to some extent, culturally determined.
2. Recognizing that decisions about scientific and technological development are taken in pursuit of particular interests, and that benefits accruing to some may be at the expense of others. Recognizing that scientific and technological developments are inextricably linked with the distribution of wealth and power.

3. Developing one’s own views and establishing one’s own underlying value positions.

4. Preparing for and taking action. (p. 655)

At the first level, understanding that concepts are culturally determined necessitates equipping students to historicize scientific principles and mathematical formulas and examine different cultural influences that have informed their universal applicability today. For example, Sen (2002) has been a vocal proponent of the idea that “our global civilization is a world heritage” not merely an accumulation of ideas inherited from the West (para. 7). He explained how concepts such as sine was already employed by fifth century Indian mathematicians and later translated from the Arabic into Latin before being imported into Europe. Sen noted that there has been a chain of intellectual relations linking Western and Eastern traditions in Science and Mathematics. The tendency to leave discussions of history and culture to the Humanities means that global education via Science and Mathematics tends to be enacted in generic ways leaving students oblivious about specific contributions of cultures to the development of universal concepts. More significantly, the decontextualization of knowledge provides grounds for its depoliticization. There is then a need to extend students’ knowledge about how concepts and innovations are integrally connected to issues of power. Corresponding to the fourth level of Hodson’s model, the inclusion of an activist slant in global education would entail empowering students to become participatory citizens who take action for a more socially just, equitable, and sustainable world (Benze & Carter, 2011; Carter, 2008).
2) Tensions between Singular and Globalscapes

Global education’s second aim involves expanding students’ perspectives about global concerns. Another tension observed was that such attempts were often hindered by disciplinary boundaries. In Science and Mathematics classes observed, it was common for global issues to be explored in singular, fragmented ways. For example, when Beth, a Chemistry teacher from HHS asked students to consider the controversy underlying alternative energy sources, the discussion focused on environmental impact. Because this was a stimulus example meant to show how Chemistry could apply in the world, students had less time to engage in more complex discussions about other factors, political, cultural, and economic among others, influencing the use of alternative fuel. Indeed, this highlights another tension – how is it possible to engage with the full complexity of globalization within disciplinary boundaries? Appadurai (1990) usefully employed the metaphor, landscapes, to describe the historical and political situatedness of contemporary global flows. He highlighted five globalscapes – ethnoscapes (involving the movement of persons inhabiting our shifting world ranging from tourists to refugees etc.); technoscapes (involving the production and distribution of technologies); finanscapes (involving the exchanges of global capital); mediascapes (involving the production, dissemination and representation of information and images); and ideoscapes (involving the circulation of worldviews and ideologies). Grappling with one or two dimensions of globalization may not fully acclimatize students so that they are aware of the total situation. Perhaps this reason itself justifies the introduction of interdisciplinary subjects centered on studies of global issues or global ethics.

Pushing students to engage with diverse globalscapes appeared to be the objective of Amy’s Grade 9 Global Themes course in SHS. This was a new subject replacing an European Western History course that had been offered for decades. Amy recognized that students needed greater exposure to events shaping the world beyond the West. Further, engagement
with global issues necessitated an interdisciplinary course drawing on fields beyond History. Amy designed the course with a team of teachers who taught different subjects with the following objectives: To give students an opportunity to work collaboratively to solve interdisciplinary, complex, open-ended global problems; to provoke reflection and expand their understanding of the world, drawing on knowledge and skills gained in Science, Mathematics, English, and Humanities.

In the first lesson of a unit on imperialism, students studied the historical emergence of communism, socialism, and capitalism as a reaction to the Industrial Revolution. Discussions of these ideologies were then connected to understanding the problems with present-day capitalism and imperialism propelled by the United States. This provided a bridge for students to explore the legacy of western imperialism in continents such as Africa. One typical strategy Amy employed was to create an environment where students would be allowed to share and articulate impressionistic views. In her next lesson, Amy began by asking students to state what images they associated Africa with. Students’ responses included “wild,” “diseased,” and “impoverished people.” She then sought to disrupt their stereotypes. In subsequent lessons, Amy had students consider how the representation of Africa, constructed by Western media, operated as a form of imperialism. To consider what Africa was like before Western colonization, students were then given seven different maps of Africa before the Europeans arrived in 1860s. They worked in groups to make observations about geography, socio-cultural groupings, political organization, resources and economic development. Students had to synthesize the information gathered to defend or refute the idea that “Africa is a dark continent” resulting in a vibrant discussion such as the following:
Student A: We want to refute that it’s a Dark Continent… We think that colonization and imperialism destroyed Africa's ability to farm their own land, use their own crops, contain trade amongst themselves.

Student B: We saw Dark Continent as being in the dark of modernism. So they certainly had the potential; they somehow survived for as long as they did. But when the Europeans came, they assumed that their way was better because they clearly saw this continent needed organization.

Student C: We interpreted dark as the climate and the terrain is very unforgiving… dangerous and harsh.

The above excerpt highlights the different angles students took to imagine Africa, drawing on the historical effects of colonialism; its lack of technological advancement compared to the West; and its resource scarcity. To deepen their understanding of the effects of imperialism, the next lesson involved a simulation activity in which students played the role of economic advisors to an European colonizer. They had to decide the optimal way to expand cotton production in the African region of Mali. In particular, should they support the development of large plantation-type cotton farms or encourage small-scale Malian farmers to expand? Students were given notes and guiding questions that required them to consider the economic objectives and realities of the colonial state, the geographic region of Mali and how this affected cotton production, and the social realities of farming. Amy explained that the activity was aimed at sensitizing students to the importance of understanding multiple perspectives that would inform how students could approach the culminating assignment requiring them to apply what they learnt to address a contemporary scenario:

You work for a major corporation today and have been asked by the CEO to evaluate the company’s policies and investments in one of the following regions (Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia/India, or the Middle East). The company is facing pressure
from stockholders, environmental activists, human rights activists, local governments, local citizens, competing corporations and consumers. The CEO wants you to present to the Board of Directors your findings and recommendations for improving company policy and investment. The Board will choose ONE new initiative to implement. The chosen initiative will improve company policy and investment and provide long-term success.

In addressing modern-day imperialism, the culminating assignment was more explicitly global in nature as students had to take into account the ways multinational corporations affect local culture. The transnational nature of this problem pushed students to examine the interconnection among multiple globalscapes concerning the clash of ideologies such as democracy and socialism, the flows of capital from corporation to local sites and vice versa, the movement of people such as corporate managers and foreign workers between locations, and the environmental effects of production.

Aside from developing critical skills of analysis and synthesis, the assignment had an ethical focus as students had to apply what they learnt about the effects of imperialism in Africa’s history in order to call transnational corporations into accountability. Throughout the unit, as students became more conscious of the complex web of factors underlying Africa’s history of imperialism, they began to question its representation in popular media and to reconsider the ways they had imagined Africa as other. Ultimately, an ideal global education curriculum should equip students to become more conscious of the multiple dimensions of globalization affecting local culture and simulated activities promote democratic participation aimed at instilling a sense of responsibility to less economically advantaged others.

3) Tensions between Critical Capacities and Affective Sensitivities

Global education’s third aim entails equipping students with critical, ethical, and affective capacities to think, act, and feel in response to global problems. One tension
observed was how the second aim of expanding students’ perspectives about global concerns could conflict with this third aim by prioritizing critical analysis rather than affective engagements with global issues.

For example, Amy’s Global Themes unit shows how an interdisciplinary course potentially provides the tools for rich, perspectival engagement with global dilemmas. As Amy explained, “I think a global citizen is someone who is aware of their viewpoint in the world and is able to see multiple viewpoints. [He/She] is empathetic and desires to work towards building a global community.” The importance of expanding students’ perspectives and disrupting their narrow, often stereotypical views of others was also highlighted by Mandy who taught the Grade 9 Bicultural Studies Programme in HHS. Her interdisciplinary unit explicitly foregrounded global ethical problems as it was centered on Bioethics. Students discussed issues such as cloning and designer babies, engaging in critical reasoning as they compared Eastern and Western cultural perspectives and analyzed implications from the angles of science, morality, religion, and history.

It was clear that in Amy and Mandy’s classes, the push to acquire expanded viewpoints about global issues led to the prioritization of critical thinking as a key capacity whereas demonstrating empathetic feelings was expected but not explicitly emphasized. One reason was that this stress on exploring issues through multiple perspectives privileged open-endedness and ambiguity. Since there were unending, multiple networks of influence affecting any given community, it was difficult for students to come to any conclusive stance about how they should feel for another. Another reason was that the majority of texts students engaged with were in the form of maps, diagrams, opinion and news articles rather than literary texts. Even though students in Amy’s class read a variety of literature such as *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and memoirs such as *The Dark Child* by Camara Laye, students discussed these texts in book groups outside of class. Mandy’s class engaged
primarily in informational type articles and when asked why literature was taken out of her curriculum, she mentioned that in the past, students had mistakenly utilized fiction as evidence to support their claims in argumentative essays which was not the accepted norm in standardized assessments.

Broadly, literary texts and narratives function to provide insights into individual lives affected by global injustices and thus differ from historical and expository articles that provide macro, contextual information. Without the inclusion of literary texts in the curriculum, the kind of affect that is activated is akin to sympathy from a distance as opposed to empathy that occurs when students step into the shoes of another individual and vicariously experience his or her suffering. Martha Nussbaum has been a vocal proponent of literature as a platform for developing empathetic sensitivities. The global citizen, Nussbaum (1997) explained, cannot think well on the basis of factual knowledge alone and must engage the narrative imagination which is “the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person’s story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have” (p. 11). She argued that narrative art has the power to make us see the lives of the different with involvement and understanding. Palumbo-Liu (2012) added that literature, through providing revelation into the lives of others, invites us to imagine how we can then relate to others, particularly those who are distant and different, and to consider how that relationship occurs and goes beyond history, politics, and ideology.

Literature provides a powerful means to cultivate feelings of empathy for the foreign other and an attempt to bridge the critical-affective divide while encouraging students to explore issues from multiple perspectives could be observed in Pamela’s grade 10 Literature class in HHS. A main aim of the unit was to draw students’ attention to the complexities of “othering.” One of the short stories students read was “The Moon Above his Head” by Yann
Matel that describes the plight of an asylum seeker from Somalia, named Hashi, who struggles to integrate into Canadian society. The crux of the story revolves around the narrator, a vacationer at a ski resort in the Rockies, who investigates why Hashi chose to deliberately fall through a hole in the latrine. Pamela felt that students held intellectualized and stereotypical views of asylum seekers obtained mainly from mass media. One student was quick to judge Hashi as a “masochist” who took pleasure in his own suffering while others remarked that Hashi was not trying hard enough to conform to society’s norms. However, as the discussion of the story went on, students became more invested in understanding the asylum seeker. To sensitize students to the ways literature represents self and other, Pamela asked the following questions:

1. How does Hashi see the narrator?
2. How does narrator see himself?
3. How does Hashi see himself?
4. As a reader how do you see the narrator, Hashi, and other characters in the story?

Through these questions, students experimented with trying on different perceptual lenses. For example, at one point, they sought to look at society through the eyes of the asylum seeker and students were able to identify the range of emotions he experienced such as anger towards more privileged members of society; alienation as a result of being forced to flee from his home country abruptly; and guilt about living on after the deaths of his family members. At other points, students tried to perceive the story from the author’s lens. They highlighted the author’s agenda of pushing them to empathize with the plight of asylum seekers and displaced people in general. One student observed that the larger narrative of the story was aimed at getting readers to not simply view asylum seekers as outsiders or as acting differently from what individuals like themselves would do in their situation.
This example highlights literature’s potential in inviting us to temporarily step into different shoes in order to see from other perspectives and experiences (Gregory, 2010). Unlike non-literary texts, literary texts provide vivid sensory details of place and time that allow us to vicariously experience the lives of others we would not typically have opportunities to encounter in person. However, engagement with literature alone may not sufficiently foster deeper relationships with others. Towards the end of Pamela’s unit, students commented that they did not completely connect with the asylum seeker’s experiences because they concluded that the story was ultimately just fiction. What this highlights is how the disciplinary parameters of a Literature class led to discussions becoming confined to the fictional world. Perhaps if students had more opportunities to compare the experiences of the asylum seeker in the literary text to actual accounts, this would have facilitated a better transfer of empathy from fictional world to reality.

Essentially, global education should ideally encourage critical engagement with global issues and balance this with an emphasis on deepening students’ feelings of empathy through closer links between fictional and authentic accounts of global injustices. It is the dual operations of critical capacities and affective sensitivities that empowers one to act justly and to demonstrate the kind of performative global citizenship (O’Byrne, 2003) that is responsible and responsive to marginalized others in our world.

Implications

In this paper, I have highlighted key tensions that emerge as two schools encouraged a whole-school approach to global education by more intentionally introducing global problems into all subjects in the curriculum. To varying degrees, teachers attempted to expand students’ knowledge and perspectives about global concerns as well as equip them with critical, ethical, and affective capacities to think, act, and feel in response to global problems. Given that globalization is a multifaceted phenomenon invading all spheres of
modern life and its analysis cannot be confined to any one discipline, the paper surfaces its potential incorporation in subjects beyond History, Social Studies, or Civics Education.

However, the paper also highlights the ways in which disciplinary boundaries in the curriculum impose limits on the multidimensional and complex nature of global problems. In practice, these boundaries lead to three main tensions in pedagogical practice expressed in terms of dichotomies – the universal and particular, singular and globalscapes, critical capacities and affective sensitivities. Awareness of these tensions is a first step to encouraging teachers to disrupt boundaries which may occur in three ways.

First, when expanding students’ knowledge about global concerns, teachers can particularize universal concepts by integrating disciplinary with sociohistorical knowledge. For example, as students apply knowledge about energy efficiency in Science to explore alternative renewable energy’s potential in reducing global warming, they could also examine why there has been growing interest among scientists and activists in this field and the extent to which investment in such energy sources has impacted different societies positively and negatively across history.

Second, when expanding students’ perspectives about global concerns, teachers can encourage these to be explored both within a specific discipline as well as across disciplines. For example, when examining global inequality in Mathematics, students can begin by focusing on specific graphs depicting the distribution of income across countries and apply the Gini Coefficient and other statistical measures in their explanations. To understand this phenomenon more holistically, students should also have opportunities to explore cultural, economic, geographical, historical, and political factors that give rise to income inequality across countries and consider other ways that income inequality can be represented by drawing on knowledge from other disciplines.
Third, when developing students’ global citizenship capacities, teachers can strive to tap on both cognitive thinking processes and the affect. One strategy is to lend greater attention to the kinds of texts utilized in the classroom since texts are material objects constructed to activate particular kinds of responses. In selecting texts, teachers can consider what knowledge is represented in texts chosen. For example, the topic of refugees may be conveyed through statistics depicting the movement of people over several years or a satirical cartoon mocking a particular migrant policy. Next, teachers can consider how that knowledge is represented through a particular mode of communication – visual, auditory, linguistic etc. – and the “affordances” or possible responses it invites (Hutchby, 2001; Jewitt, 2008). For example, an opinion paper, a photograph, and a poem provoke different degrees of thought and emotion. Thus, a news article about the refugee crisis positions us to approach the issue “efferently”, that is to acquire and process the information given, whereas a literary text positions us to read it “aesthetically” allowing readers to live through and experience an individual’s reality imaginatively (Rosenblatt, 1994). Teachers could problematize the ways specific text types have become integrally tied to particular disciplines in the curriculum by encouraging students to make connections among a range of literary, non-literary, and multimodal texts that tap on critical, visual, and visceral ways of understanding the world.

To conclude, if, as Robertson (1992) asserted, “globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (p. 8), one of global education’s vital role must be to continually push the boundaries of students’ partial knowledge about issues, cultures, and communities in the world. The challenge today is how schools can effectively and holistically integrate global education into all courses of study to facilitate a deparochializing education that allows students to recognize how various fields of learning contribute to the language of human identity across time and space.
Notes

1. Both schools customized their own interdisciplinary subjects focusing specifically on global engagement. In SHS, this was called “Global Themes;” in HHS, this was termed “Bicultural Studies Programme.”

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