

Chapter 7

A Political Perspective and Global Education



Because schools and education systems affect many different stakeholders, it is to be expected that the interests of those stakeholders should be crucial to the fate of any efforts of educational change. The two obvious implications of this truism are that the first step in designing a program of global education is understanding how key stakeholder groups are positioned vis-a-vis the program. The second implication is that a political strategy to implement change requires mobilizing as much support as possible and demobilizing detractors. Collaborative negotiating strategies can help widen the support for a program. In a recent compilation of reflections of former ministers of education and other education leaders on their own efforts to produce large scale change most made reference to how crucial the politics of the process of policy design and implementation were to reform (Reimers 2019).

In the United States, for example, analysis of history textbooks shows that publishing companies distribute different versions of the same history books in ways which are responsive to prevailing political views of the school boards in various states. As a result, history is taught in a way that reflects the existing political divides in the country, reproducing such divides. For instance, gun regulation is a divisive issue in American politics, whereas textbooks in California include information about the rulings on the Second Amendment to the US Constitution which have allowed for some gun regulation, textbooks in California omit this information (Goldstein 2020).

Similarly, the politicization of discussions of climate change leads teachers to teach content which deviates from the scientific consensus. A recent study of the National Center for Science Education of how teachers teach climate change in the US found that while three-quarters of the science teachers did address climate change in the curriculum, only 54% did so in ways which were aligned with the scientific consensus, whereas 10% taught incorrect knowledge, such as the ideas that recent increases in temperature are due to natural causes and to teach that it is not the case that the scientific consensus that recent global warming is primarily being caused by human release of greenhouse gases from fossil fuels; an additional 31% of the teachers sent mixed messages in their teaching, correctly teaching that the scientific consensus that recent global warming is primarily being caused by human release

of greenhouse gases from fossil fuels, but incorrectly teaching that many scientists believe that recent increases in temperature are likely due to natural causes (Plutzer et al. 2016, 16).

Tools like political mapping can be helpful in identifying and determining the interests of key stakeholder groups, and in guiding a process of coalition building, negotiation, and mobilization in favor of change. Communications is an indispensable element of a change process, as is viewing the process of designing a global education program as a negotiation that attempts to reconcile as many interests of key stakeholder groups as possible. This is the reason beginning where people are makes for good politics, as does using participatory approaches that allow various stakeholder groups to bring their interests to the process of developing a global education program. Sometimes opposition to global education change reflects lack of clarity or misinterpretation about what is expected. I have found that providing opportunities for teams to collaborate in the design of curriculum and actual lesson plans can facilitate communication, clarify misconceptions, and provide opportunities to productively negotiate various perspectives.

A study of two district-based programs of global education in North Carolina found that both relied on strong support from district leadership, including the superintendent, from communication, engagement, and mobilization of school board members, school administrators, teachers, and community members, including stakeholders planning the initiatives, and building pockets of success (Tichnor–Wagner 2019).

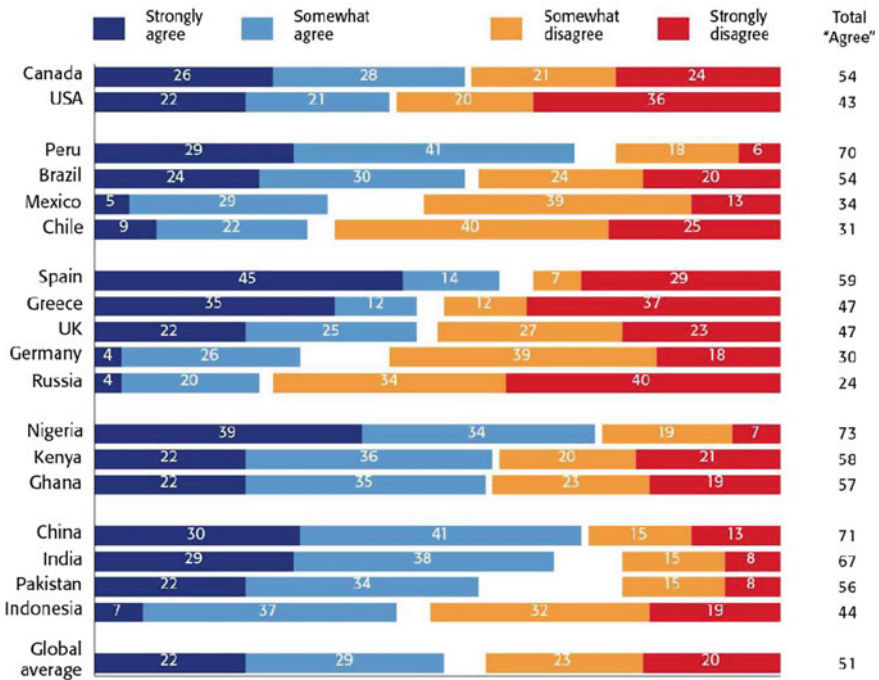
However, there may be limits to what inclusion, participation, and communication can deliver as there may be genuine interests that diverge with global education. An emerging populist nationalism, with strong xenophobic undertones, is creating veritable divides within many societies, between those who see themselves as part of a global community, with shared responsibility to address some of these challenges, and those who do not see themselves as global citizens. A survey administered by the Globescan-BBC in 2016 in a range of countries¹ shows that while the percentage of the population that sees themselves as global citizens is growing over time, there are clear splits in the population in most countries in this respect. On average, 22% of the population strongly agrees with the statement that they see themselves more as a global citizen than as a citizen of their own country, and an additional 29% agree with the statement. On the other hand, 20% strongly disagree with the statement, and an additional 23% disagree. The population is, therefore, split in the middle, with half of the population divided between two extreme views (Globescan-BBC 2016).

There are also differences among countries in the percentage of the population that sees themselves as global citizens. Whereas those who strongly agree or agree with the statement that they see themselves more as global citizens than as citizens of their own country represent 45% in Spain, 35% in Greece, 39% Nigeria, and over 20% in Canada, the US, the UK, Peru, Brazil, Kenya, Ghana, China, India, Pakistan;

¹The survey was administered in Canada, United States of America, Peru, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Spain, Greece, United Kingdom, Germany, Russia, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, China, India, Pakistan and Indonesia.

I See Myself More as a Global Citizen than a Citizen of My Country

"Agree" vs "Disagree," by Country, 2016



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The white space in this chart represents "Depends, neither agree nor disagree," and "Don't know."

Fig. 7.1 Percentage of the population who sees themselves more as global citizens than as citizens of their own country in several countries in 2016 (Globescan-BBC 2016) *Source* GlobeScan/BBC World Service Poll (2016). Reproduced by permission of GlobeScan for the GlobeScan/BBC World Service Poll (2016)

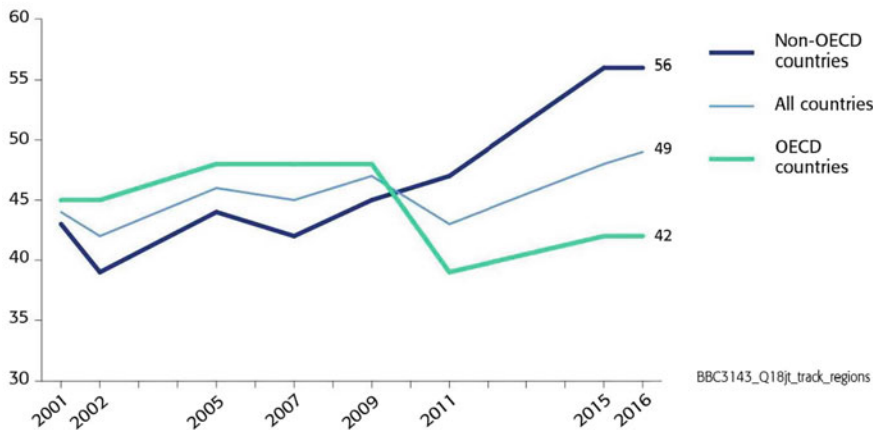
in contrast, less than 10% of the population agrees with that statement in Mexico, Chile, Germany, Russia, and Indonesia (Globescan-BBC 2016) (Fig. 7.1).

The percentage of the population who sees themselves more as global citizens than as citizens of their own country has increased considerably in Non-OECD countries, from 44% in 2001 to 56% in 2016, but has declined slightly in OECD countries, from 44% to 42% during the same period (GlobeScan-BBC 2016) (Fig. 7.2).

Some of the developments characterizing globalization, particularly in the area of communication technology, are enabling individuals to organize in unprecedented ways. This includes those with intolerant views and hate groups. It is also possible for various organizations, or states, to spread misinformation, creating "echo chambers" in which "alternative facts" are given the same credence as the truth. For

I See Myself More as a Global Citizen than a Citizen of My Country

"Agree,"* OECD vs Non-OECD Countries,** Trends, 2001–2016



**"Strongly agree" plus "Somewhat agree"

**OECD countries include Canada, Chile, Germany, Mexico, Spain, UK, and USA; Non-OECD countries include Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, and Russia.

Not all countries were asked in all years.

Fig. 7.2 Percentage of the population who sees themselves more as global citizens than as citizens of their own country in OECD and non-OECD countries over time (GlobeScan-BBC 2016). *Source* GlobeScan/BBC World Service (2016). Reproduced by permission of GlobeScan for the GlobeScan/BBC World Service Poll (2016)

example, there is emerging evidence that groups with ties to the Russian government are using social networking sites as tools to viralize information that creates racial discord and anti-immigrant sentiments in the United States (Becker 2019). Two independent reports commissioned by the US Senate demonstrate that Russian agents used social media to exacerbate racial tensions in the United States and to discourage African Americans from participating in the 2016 election (Howard et al. 2019; DiResta et al. 2019). Participation in extremely intolerant groups (hate groups or white supremacist) is increasing in some countries. In the United States, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has reported an increase in the number of reported hate crimes in recent years (a 17% increase in 2017). The most common bias categories focus on race/ethnicity/ancestry (60%), religion (21%) and sexual orientation (16%) (FBI 2017). This climate can clearly influence local communities and their support for global education.

Contention with respect to global education stems also from other priorities for schools. State mandates and state-mandated assessments reflect the prevailing views of the most powerful groups with respect to what should be emphasized in schools. Those standards and assessments are important, a reason to see them as a lever to advance global education. When they don't do so explicitly, global education needs to be negotiated within the context of those standards. A study of the implementation

of a global education program in two high schools in Massachusetts found that in an urban high school, the pressure to focus on state mandates competed with the desire to implement the program of global education:

Four teachers, including one who is also a parent, noted that while the richness of the urban high school provides students with an opportunity to be exposed to multiple perspectives and experiences, the focus on achievement in the area of basic skills remains the most important priority (Kilpatrick 2010, p. 194).

While teachers acknowledged the pressure created by the tests, particularly in the urban school, they were nonetheless supportive of them because they believed they had helped raise standards in the school. Administrators thought teachers should find a way to infuse global education within the existing standards and curriculum, even though opportunities to develop the capacity to do this were absent (Ibid, p. 200–201).

The politics of global education need not be all politics involving governments. Civil society organizations can play an important role in favor, as well as against, global education. A study of programs of professional development building the capacity of teachers to educate the whole child found that civil society organizations had the capacity to provide continuity and support, overcoming the cycles of intermittent support from government (Reimers 2018). In the United States, for example, the Asia Society has played an important role over many years supporting global education through a variety of programs, including a network to support internationally themed high schools, a program to recognize effective global education practices, and a program of publications that has produced standards, frameworks, and exemplars of good practice.

In Australia, the Australian Association for Environmental Education lobbied the Federal Government to educate effectively about climate change, which resulted in the creation of an Education for Sustainable Development program, which included curriculum and block grants to help reduce the carbon footprint of schools (UNESCO 2012, p. 13).

Similarly, professional organizations can provide support for global education. The association of social studies teachers in the United States has contributed to shape an understanding within the profession of the importance of teaching American history in the context of global events.

The Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents lobbied the state with partial success for more attention to global education in 2009, advocating for dedicated attention to global studies in the Department of Education, educating the public about global education, and funding the education and foreign language fund.

International governmental and non-governmental organizations can also provide support to government and groups advancing global education, demonstrating the cosmopolitan nature of the global education movement. The United Nations and UNESCO, for example, were created to advance human rights, and have made global education one of their longstanding priorities since the Universal Declaration was adopted in 1948 and since UNESCO was created in 1945. A cornerstone of that global advocacy is “The International Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms”, adopted by member states at

UNESCO's 18th session in 1974, which recommends that member states teach peace, human rights, international understanding, tolerance, and other humanistic values (UNESCO 1974). In the United Kingdom, Oxfam played a crucial role in advancing global citizenship curriculum, developing curriculum and advocating its adoption.

The Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education was adopted by 50 countries in 2010. Two years later 90% of the countries reported that they were promoting democratic governance through participation of students and parents in school decision-making (UNESCO 2017, p. 294).

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