

WALTER PARKER

Globalizing the Social Studies Curriculum

Citizenship education remains the central focus of the social studies curriculum, and two related developments are strengthening that focus. One is a redoubled effort to implement a potent social studies curriculum in all thirteen grades; the other is the attempt to infuse that curriculum with a global perspective.

Advocating. Many social studies leaders are concerned that social studies has been left in the wake of the commotion surrounding math, reading, and science achievement. Because the preparation of informed, democratic citizens is critical to a free society, and because social studies is the only discipline with this as the central aim, anything less than a thorough social studies curriculum taught every day in every grade is considered alarming. Accordingly, the National Council for the Social Studies and its state affiliates are taking various steps to promote the critical role of social studies. A recent publication urges social studies educators to "rise to the occasion . . . to become articulate advocates of social studies to students, parents, colleagues, building and central administrators, school boards, and legislators."¹

Globalizing. As the effort to secure an adequate amount of social studies in the thirteen grades intensifies, so does the effort to increase its global content. This concern stems from the realization that the world has changed dramatically since current social studies practices became the norm. The world is, in the words of the Carnegie report, a "more crowded, more interconnected, more volatile place." *A Nation At Risk* describes it as "indeed one global village." Yet, as Secretary Bell recently told a global education conference, the U.S. population remains one of "the most undereducated in global matters of any nation in the world."

Just what is a global perspective? Robert Hanvey's influential publication from the New York-based Global Perspectives in Education defines five dimensions:

- Perspectives consciousness—the awareness that one's own view of the world is not shared universally and is often shaped unconsciously;
- "State of the planet" awareness—understanding prevailing world conditions and developments;
- Cross-cultural awareness—recognition of similar and different practices and ideas of human societies around the world;
- Knowledge of global dynamics—understanding key traits and mechanisms of the world system; and
- Awareness of human choices—understanding the dilemmas that confront individuals and societies as knowledge expands and the globe shrinks.²

Many social studies educators who have long considered a nationalistic definition of citizenship anachronistic are urging that curriculum reform efforts focus on a broader definition, one that encompasses this global perspective. In her presidential address to the 1984 National Council for the Social Studies annual meeting, Carole Hahn presaged the challenge of implementing this reform:

As we insist on this broader definition of citizenship and of preparation for it, we will have to confront some widely accepted beliefs. We will have to convince people that national loyalty and national identity will not be sacrificed . . . Clearly, being a global citizen does not make me unAmerican, and it will not have that effect on my students either. You and I may have to say that to our school boards and legislators.³

A number of organizations have developed resources to help social studies teachers cultivate a global perspective among their students. Among them are the Center for Teaching International Relations (CTIR), Global Perspectives in Education, and the

Mershon Center.⁴ The classroom activities developed by these organizations engage students in decision making and inquiry involving complex and often controversial issues. CTIR's model inservice programs help teachers cultivate their own global perspectives as they plan global education activities for their students. The Mershon Center's classroom materials bring a global perspective to community life and existing courses like American history and government, economics, geography, and world history.

This trend does not suggest merely implementing units and courses on non-Western cultures and international issues. More than this, it is a comprehensive effort to permeate the entire curriculum with a global, transnational point of view. Clearly not valueless, pretending no disinterested neutrality, this trend is founded on a resilient commitment to social justice and peace.

¹Walter Parker and John Jarolimek, *Citizenship and the Critical Role of the Social Studies* (Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies, Social Science Education Consortium, ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, 1984).

²Robert G. Hanvey, *An Attainable Global Perspective*, available for \$2.00 from Global Perspectives in Education, 218 E. 18th Street, New York, NY 10003.

³Carole L. Hahn, "Promise and Paradox: Challenges to Global Citizenship," *Social Education* 48, 4 (April 1984): 240-43, 297-99.

⁴For information about resources and programs, contact: Ron Schukar, CTIR, Graduate School of International Studies, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208; Andrew Smith, Global Perspectives in Education, address in note 2; Richard Remy, Citizenship Development and Global Education Program, Mershon Center, Ohio State University, 199 West 10th Avenue, Columbus, OH 43201.

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