

Educating the World: Teachers and their Work as Defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

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In our times globalization and cosmopolitanism are terms that speak to the intensification of border-crossing, and in connection to education, to the global conditions and possibilities that are directing change in learning and teaching. Much of this change demands a rethinking of the identity of the teacher and a revisioning of the work of teaching (Luke, 2004, Tierney, 2006). This paper looks to one intergovernmental, transnational site, already heavily involved in international relations, where this rethinking might find productive ground: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In a critical examination of key public documents, it is evident that in some instances UNESCO seems to be moving toward a notion of “teacher” framed not by national interests supported by the global community—the more traditional role taken by the UN and UNESCO—but, by global interests and initiatives with regard to world citizens. This is critical, and if what we are seeing is indeed real, it represents a shift towards a more cosmopolitan identity for 21st century educators.

Globalization is characterized by the extensive movement or flow of information, ideas, images, capital and people across increasingly permeable political borders due to economic and technological change (Castles, 2004; Luke & Carrington, 2001). The speed, durability, flexibility and mutability of these transnational flows and networks affect every aspect of local and national life, albeit unevenly, to the effect that the local and the global are not experienced as polarities but more often as combined and mutually implicating phenomena (Beck, 2002). Globalization is transforming or at the very least influencing the social, economic and political life within the nation-state. What is evident is that increasingly “cultural homogeneity and cultural heterogeneity are appearing simultaneously in the same cultural landscape” (Burbles & Torres, 2000) and that, “21st century forms of life and identities are ethically and culturally simultaneously global and local” (Beck, 2002, p. 36; see also Apple, Kenway, Singh, 2005). Thus, it is possible that one is both local resident and a global worker, a national citizen and global citizen, a consumer of local products and of international goods. One’s identifications, commitments, and affiliations could be local but also global. This shifting amalgam of life patterns, identities, commitments and affiliations includes those associated with and produced in formal and informal educational sites.

There is considerable discussion and increasing scholarship devoted to the effects of globalization on formal education. We know that globalization is increasing the diversity in our classrooms, altering the nature and role of technology in the classroom, as well as changing the nature of work and of community life in which our students are engaged or will be engaged. In these “New Times” teaching and the teacher need to be redefined (Luke & Elkins, 1998). Allan Luke (2004, 2002) has called for a re-envisioning of education that moves beyond the nation state to consider the contemporary cosmopolitan, transcultural, transnational contexts and conditions of students and teachers in the 21st century. He argues for teaching as “cosmopolitan work” and asks, “What if

we envisioned as part of our rethinking of democratic education a reconstruction of teachers and students as world citizens, thinkers, intellectuals and critics and within this context as national and community-based subjects?" (2004, pp. 1429-1431). Luke suggest a perspective that frames local and national pedagogical identities within a larger international perspective. In doing so he privileges "cosmopolitanism" as the overarching frame for teachers, students, their work and their identities.

Cosmopolitanism is not a new term. In ancient Greek philosophy cosmopolitans were "citizens of the world," and many of the Enlightenment philosophers, in response to volatile local and religious sectarianism, wrote in some detail about the possibilities of world citizenship (see Kymlicka, 2001; Kant, 1795/1996). In response to globalization and its backlash, an aggressive resurgence of nationalism, cosmopolitanism has returned to academic discourse (Benhabib, 2006; Appiah, 2006; Hayden, 2005; Beck, 2002, 2000; Nussbaum, 1996), and to educational discourse (Goldstein, 2007; Tierney, 2006; Rizvi, 2005; Luke 2004, 2002). Cosmopolitanism is thus a sensibility that is required of diversity brought about by intensified globalization (Todd, 2009). While there are various definitions of cosmopolitanism, this article focuses on the experience of living at the interface of the local and the global. Ideally, this experience creates greater global awareness, numerous global affiliations and the development of sensibilities that support global citizenship as it is lived locally. At the same time cosmopolitanism means that the local is never lost. Thus it combines "an ethos of macro-interdependencies with an acute consciousness of the inescapabilities and particularities of place, characters, historical trajectories and fate" (Paul Rabinow in Beck 2002, p. 18). As part of this local-global ethos, educational philosopher David Hansen (2008) names a cosmopolitan sensibility as "a sustained readiness to learn from the new and different while being heedful of the known and familiar" (p. 289). For Hansen, cosmopolitanism names a sensibility that promotes an openness, indeed a desire, to expand awareness of what and who lies within and beyond the circle of the local and familiar, to listen and engage creatively and productively with such knowledge, and to be not only informed but formed by this new knowledge, while remaining ever mindful of one's knowledge and loyalties to local knowledge. Cosmopolitanism would seem to name both a circumstance and a sensibility. What does this mean for the cosmopolitan teacher and where can we find such a teacher? Students in the 21st century will need an education informed by a cosmopolitan sensibility to prepare them for global participation.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

As many readers are no doubt aware, the United Nations Organization (UN) includes a General Assembly currently representing 193 member nation states from around the globe. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialized agency of the UN. UNESCO represents one of the outstanding non-governmental organizations working to address issues of global improvements in a wide array of areas related to education. As such, it is appropriate to draw from their extensive body of work in education for this analysis. UNESCO has a long history of initiatives, but at the present time its work in education is organized into seven themes: early childhood, primary education, secondary education, technical and science education; higher education; literacy; HIV/AIDS education; and teacher education. At this time, the major priority of UNESCO is "Education for All" (EFA) which involves the provision of free, compulsory primary education to everyone by 2015. This follows the UN Millennium Development Goals (see also [The Final Report of the World Education Forum: Dakar, UNESCO, 2008a](#)). As stated directly on its website: "UNESCO believes that education is key to social and economic development. We work for a sustainable world with just societies that value knowledge, promote a culture of peace, celebrate diversity and defend human rights, achieved by providing Education for All (EFA)"(Retrieved April 23, 2008 from <http://www.unesco.org>)

In this paper we will trace the implicit and explicit naming of the teacher and the work of teachers in these UNESCO documents. Specifically we will be examining public, online documents produced in the last ten years, with particular attention to how teaching and the teacher is articulated by the UNESCO, sometimes in partnership with other UN agencies and funds (e.g. UNICEF: The United Nations Children's Fund, ILO: International Labor Organization, World Bank) and in relation to recent scholarship on globalization and the development of the cosmopolitan teacher. We conclude with how the policies and initiatives of the UN, along with recent scholarship on the cosmopolitan teacher, can be used to reformulate teacher education beyond the nation state.

The UNESCO Teacher

The UNESCO website includes a great deal of information on its education initiatives. We focused on the website information and various publications found in the Teacher Education section, the Teacher Status Section, and in various documents concerning 'Education for All', including "The Final Report of the World Education Forum: Dakar" (UNESCO, 2008a) and "A Human Rights-based Approach to Education for All" (UNICEF/UNESCO, 2007). We also looked at specific issue documents, statement positions and reports including, among others: "Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education" (2007); "Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future" from the 48th conference of the International Conference on Education, (ICE): (Geneva, 2008b); "A Decade of Education for Sustainable Development Quarterly Update" (July, 2008c); "Impact of Women Teachers on Girls' Education: Policy Brief" (2006a) and "The Contribution of Early Childhood Education to a Sustainable Society" (2008d).

Within the parameters of this search, we found no single site or published document that referenced the 'global' or 'cosmopolitan' teacher, although the nature of teaching and the role of the teacher was addressed or implied in the statements and descriptions found in various documents. This is not surprising. The term 'cosmopolitan teacher' is new to educational discourse. Moreover the work of the UN and UNESCO has dealt largely with *national* governments and the role that national leadership can play in securing conditions for educational opportunity, including building capacity for teacher development. This means a focus on turning UN/UNESCO initiatives into national initiatives with the support of the 193 member states. This work is aligned with liberal internationalism, which has dominated much of the 20th century, rather than with cosmopolitanism per se (Hayden, 2006). The former is focused on how *nation states* work together on issues of freedom, equality, peace, progress, democracy, etc; whereas the latter is focused on the development of global sensibilities and the establishment of supranational organizations, structures, and legal systems that protect the interests of *individuals* regardless of where they reside. Despite the fact that there are no references to a global or cosmopolitan teacher, there are instances in the UNESCO documents where commonly agreed upon notions of the teacher and teachers' work are described. We argue that these descriptions simply and indeed in some recent cases, formalize an identity for the cosmopolitan teacher.

Teacher as Professional

The publication that most completely focused on naming the teacher is the ILO/UNESCO "Recommendations Concerning the Status of Teachers" (UNESCO, 1966), which determined and defined the rights and responsibilities of teachers, international standards for their initial preparation and further education, recruitment, employment and as advocated for safe teaching and learning conditions. Although it is a dated document, it is cited on the UNESCO website and in several more recently produced documents, including a report that examines the progress made on implementing the 1966 recommendations: the ILO/UNESCO 2003 Report

from the Committee of Experts on the Application of Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel. The recommendations from the "Status of Teachers" document aimed to elevate the status of teachers and establish international guidelines for the work of teachers to insure that regardless of where they teach, teachers are trained professionals, and acknowledged as such. Unfortunately, there has not been significant progress on many of the recommendations suggested, but nonetheless these documents and many others serve to set a standard for the profession: "teaching should be regarded as a profession: it is a form of public service which requires of teachers expert knowledge and specialized skills, acquired and maintained through rigorous and continuing study; it also calls for a sense of personal and corporate responsibility for the education and welfare of the pupils in their charge" (UNESCO Recommendations for Teachers 1966, p. 6; see also ILO/UNESCO Report from the Committee of Experts on the Application of Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel, 2003). The details concerning the teaching practices of the cosmopolitan teacher are well-articulated in the joint UNESCO/ UNICEF documents discussed below.

Teachers are recognized in the UNESCO documents as having the most direct impact on the day-to-day educational experiences of children because it is "their task to translate national policies into practical action in each school" (UNICEF/UNESCO, 2007, p. 93). Yet, despite the centrality of the teacher to realizing UNESCO goals expressed through national initiatives, she is conspicuously absent from many locales for reasons ranging from safety issues for female teachers, to lack of teacher education, to conflict and displacement. This shortage of teachers and the shortage of trained professional teachers in particular, is a severe limit to the advancement of education locally and globally:

The most serious issue facing the teaching profession today is the acute or impending shortages of qualified teachers. The growing demand for teachers caused by Education for All, combined with an aging teacher population in developed countries, will create shortages of at least 15 million teachers in the next decade. (ILO/UNESCO 2003. p. v).

Formalized through UNESCO documents, the global identity of the teacher functions as a universal yardstick against which the local teachers and schools can define themselves. Future research should focus on how teachers and schools name themselves in relation to the UNESCO documents, especially those schools operating under the UNESCO flag (e.g.; ASPNET schools). For many individuals UNESCO offers an impractical identity since it does not recognize them as teachers nor would it be easy to attain the credentials required. As indicated by UNESCO, the attainment of professional status may require considerable 'capacity-building' in countries that cannot yet meet this standard. In support of increasing capacity building, UNESCO offers a number of initiatives and several specific publications; for example "Capacity Building of Teacher Training Institutions in Sub Sahara Africa" (2005a); and "Teacher Professional Development: An International Review of the Literature" (2003). Without stating it directly, UNESCO works to offer a standard global identity of the 'professional' teacher and intends to provide some means or support to secure such an identity.

Teacher as Border-Crossers

As evident in the development of the 2005 UNESCO document "Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education" the need for global or international standards, guidelines and transnational or supranational organizational structures concerning teachers and education is increasing. In the case of cross-border higher education, the UNESCO document indicates

that since the 1980s, the mobility of students, teachers, programs and institutions has grown considerably, together with new delivery modes and cross-border providers, such as campuses abroad, electronic delivery of higher education and for-profit providers. This creates challenges concerning quality control and accreditation that cannot be met by national frameworks, if indeed such frameworks exist (UNESCO, 2005b; p. 8). Moreover even if national frameworks for cross-border education do exist, they may not be easily translated into the qualifications and quality standards of the growing number of countries receiving cross-border education. Cross-border teaching speaks to the need for a more robust frame of cosmopolitanism to better address circumstances of 21st century teaching and learning.

The guidelines offered in the UNESCO document speak to, among other things, the development of international governing agencies and professional networks to ensure populations are not left vulnerable to poor quality cross-border educators and education. Implicit in these guidelines is the notion that the teacher will be subject to and defined by the supranational organizations and structures that would determine accreditation, quality practices, and fair credentialing. UNESCO does not exclude national governance but forwards international initiatives in this area.

Teacher as Purveyor of Human Rights

The nature and specific work of the global/cosmopolitan teacher, although not referenced as such, is evident in the UNESCO/UNICEF documents on EFA, most notably in UNICEF's *A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education for All* (2007). Following previous UNESCO documents, this UNICEF document names the teacher as a professional with specific "rights" and particular responsibilities in relation to the teaching of human rights. Rights of the teacher are named explicitly, "Teachers are entitled to respect, remuneration and appropriate training and support, and they cannot fulfill their obligations to children unless these rights are realized." (UNICEF, 2007, p. 72) These are understood as the rights of a professional, which aligns with documents on the status of the teacher, cited earlier.

Perhaps most importantly, the teacher in this document is also seen as a purveyor of human rights and the rights of all children in particular. The UNESCO teacher implied in several documents, and directly stated in the text "Human Rights-based Approach to Education For All" (UNICEF/UNESCO 2007) is defined as someone who teaches universal human rights and insures that human rights are respected (p.xii). The attention to universal human rights, the specific rights of children, along with a focus on the rights of the teacher, speaks to the welfare of the individual regardless of what nation state in which they reside or work. It is an indication of a global or cosmopolitan emphasis. As described by Patrick Hayden, (2005), the contemporary idea of human rights has from the outset been universal in aspiration and global in its scope, and "is perhaps the most powerful expression of cosmopolitanism in the realm of global politics" (Hayden, 2005, p.38).

As part of the emphasis on education as a right of the child, inclusion is an important theme in the UNESCO documents. According to UNESCO's Guidelines for Inclusion, inclusion is seen as:

...a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children. (UNESCO, 2008b, p. 8)

Although all stakeholders need to be supporting inclusion, teachers are ultimately the ones who bear the burden of this responsibility: “effective inclusion involves implementation both in school and in society at large. However, it is only rarely that such a symbiosis exists between the school and society. Thus, it is the regular teacher who has the utmost responsibility for the pupils and their day-to-day learning” (UNESCO, 2008b, p. 12). Although UNESCO indicates that countries need to define principles and practical ideas with regard to inclusion, “the principles of inclusion that are set out in various international declarations can be used as a foundation. These then can be interpreted and adapted to the context of individual countries” (UNESCO/UNICEF, 2007, p. 65). The country and ultimately the teacher are working from a foundation set by UNESCO and its member states. A teacher’s work is local but also strongly global or cosmopolitan in nature in relation to the rights of children and as part of that, the articulation of inclusive education.

Working in the context of rights-based education, the local teacher is to ensure that educational practice is:

child-centered, respectful of all children, that the school and classroom culture ensures no discrimination of individuals or groups of individuals in respect of admission procedures, treatment in the classroom, opportunities for learning, access to examinations, opportunities to participate in particular activities, such as music or drama, or marking of work... Teachers need to take active measures to involve girls on an equal basis with boys. (UNICEF/UNESCO, 2007, p. 95).

Redefining Teacher Education

Yet, in order to achieve these goals, UNICEF/UNESCO indicates teacher education needs to be redefined. Teachers must become skilled in not only content, but also in context if child-centered, rights-based education is to be realized. Within the framework of a human rights-based education, teachers, children and parents are to be involved in developing policies to ensure a school culture of respect and inclusion. Moreover teachers are encouraged to ensure local engagement with schools and that schools that are responsive to local contexts. “Within a framework of core standards and principles, individual schools should be able to adapt to the needs of the local community and provide a relevant curriculum that takes account of local concerns and priorities” (UNICEF/UNESCO, 2007, p. 96). The teacher is specifically named in relation to the work she is to undertake and the training she will need at the local level. She is to be responsive and engaged in the local context yet in doing so simultaneously meeting the UNESCO global initiatives.

We have discussed the ways in which UNESCO names the teacher who works locally as a global professional and as a purveyor of rights, both her own and for the children she instructs.

We turn now to another facet of the UNESCO teacher, which is to promote and practice sustainable development (UNESCO, 2005c; 2005d). In 2005, the United Nations declared a Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014, DESD) for which UNESCO serves as the lead agency. This declaration defined Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as providing students with the learning opportunities that involve learning and respecting past global achievements while caring for and preserving our resources for the well being of all world citizens. It emphasizes the need to educate children to be caring citizens who exercise their rights and responsibilities locally, nationally and globally.

UNESCO documents on ESD link it inextricably with issues such as human rights, poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods, climate change, gender equality, corporate social responsibility, and the protection of indigenous cultures. In doing so, it also names the teacher as someone who engages in a holistic, humanistic approach to both curriculum and world-view. In *The Contribution of Early Childhood Education to a Sustainable Society*, (UNESCO, 2008d) delegates from sixteen countries discussed barriers and opportunities for sustainable development. They concluded that in order to meet the decade's goals, ESD must start in early childhood and with early childhood educators. The delegates recommended that early childhood teachers move beyond environmental education focusing on "nature walks" and instead provide children with an opportunity to:

...engage in intellectual dialogue regarding sustainability, and in concrete actions in favour of the environment. In addition, it should incorporate learning to be compassionate and respect differences, equality and fairness as the world is increasingly interdependent and inter-connected. It was suggested that, instead of talking about the 3Rs: reading, writing and arithmetic, one should refer to the 7Rs for education for sustainable development: reduce, reuse, recycle, respect, repair, reflect and refuse. (UNESCO, 2008d)

While the documents referring to education for sustainable development may not be as numerous as those dealing with teacher education or human rights, they provide a focal aspect of the role of the teacher and education in UNESCO's world-view that is no less compelling. *A Decade of Education for Sustainable Development Quarterly Update* (July, 2008) states emphatically the role of ESD: "it constitutes a comprehensive approach to quality education and learning. By dealing with the problems faced by humanity in a globalized world, ESD will shape the purposes and content of all education in the period ahead; ESD is, indeed, education for the future" (p. 1).

The Cosmopolitan Teacher

This is a preliminary study and certainly further inquiry is needed to determine UNESCO's various positions with regard to the nature of teaching, the role of the teacher, and the ways in which UNESCO's work might forward the redefinition of teaching and teacher through a cosmopolitan, transnational frame. Nonetheless, we have some provisional comments, observations and conclusions from this brief study. First, of some surprise to us was the enormous body of work that has been produced by UNESCO and its partners on education; and, for us, working in the United States, how little attention this work seems to be garnering. We suspect that the quality and quantity of the UNESCO initiatives, along with the contexts and conditions of 21st century students and their teachers may change that. Secondly, we were surprised by the specificity of some documents in articulating teacher practices and curriculum in relation to UNESCO policies, position statements, and projects. Specific classroom practices are outlined in several of the documents we read. As an example, the specific focus on human rights education and education for sustainable development was detailed and offered specific curricular direction, thus UNESCO does more than articulate general statements and goals.

In naming teachers and teachers' work we were surprised that at least in the most recent documents, economic development was not highlighted more. It was present in the documents we reviewed but not as prominent as previous scholarship had led us to expect (see in particular Weber, 2007). In the documents we examined, the press for EFA, rights-based education, inclusive education, environmental education and cross-border education guidelines with local and national

involvement, framed within UNESCO initiatives, speak directly to the naming and development of the cosmopolitan teacher. In our estimation, based on our reading of the documents, UNESCO seems to be moving to a notion of “teacher” framed not by national interests agreed to by the international community, but by global (or at least UNESCO-based) interests and initiatives. This view in regard to world citizens (individuals in their local/global contexts) would ideally be supported by national governments and adapted to by local communities. This is critical, and if the observed trend is indeed real, it is a shift towards a more cosmopolitan identity for educators.

Perhaps more recognition of the creative, productive, and difficult tensions in living one’s ‘everyday’ identity simultaneously as local and global is needed, particularly in the area of education. In addition, while the UNESCO documents provide increasing support for the work of the local teacher, framed and supported by global contexts, there seems limited space for local teachers to effectively respond back to national and international agendas, however supportive they might be of them. What this responsive space might look like, and what capabilities and knowledge a ‘reflexive’ cosmopolitan educator might need to live at the interface of the local and global in her classroom and in her community, will be the basis of our next study.

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