

The role of Education in 21st century global society - Editorial

Ruth Reynolds

We live in a world of media (including social media) influence, constant updates, confusing argument and counter argument and “fake news”. We are more aware than ever of how what we perceive to be true is not necessarily so. We know news streamed from one source may not give the same spin as news sourced from another. We know that evidence provided for a point of view or a new initiative may not be the full evidence. We are subjected to multiple points of view, advertising of products that may not be as useful as they appear to be, questioning of the role of many longstanding bulwarks of our society such as the family, the clarification of the extent to which we need to share a responsibility for peoples from all quarters of the globe, the reappraisal of the notion of work. 21st century living at a glance seems chaotic. How do we as educators respond to this? The only thing we can do is engage. We need to participate and we need to help our students participate. There is little point in corralling ourselves into “safe zones”. The notion that social media is all too difficult and so let’s ban it in our schools or just avoid it. The idea that we will only accept arguments that align with our own thinking and talk only to people who agree with us is comforting but very short sighted. Newscasts from around the world and in multiple languages (translated for us) allow a more nuanced view of what is happening in the world, what we have been “sheltered from” to some extent by receiving vision and commentary from our own cultural stance and mainstream media groups. To some extent President Trump’s war with the media has highlighted an important facet of democracy - the need for open discussion and multiple levels of scrutiny of government and our societal mores. Alternate sources of information such as Twitter and Facebook and blogs and podcasts by informed researchers adds to our repertoire leaving us less reliant on certain broadcasting giants. However we need to appraise and critique and clarify and verify. We can rebuild our sense of trust in certain institutions by providing scrutiny of how it does things and assisting students to clarify what can be seen as safe sources of information and non safe sources of information. We can check ourselves and our own predispositions to engage with our own likeminded colleagues. We can challenge ourselves to try to understand alternative world views. Social studies teachers are crucial to a well functioning society and our skills are fundamental. Keep honing them and keep acting for the good of a global and fairminded society.

If you are a Twitter fan some interesting hashtags and people to follow are: [_#suptchat](#) [#edchat](#) [#21stedchat](#) [#Global](#) [@AudreyOsler](#) [#GlobalEdChat](#) [#OECD CER I](#) [#edtech](#) [#teachers](#) [#education](#) [#PBLchat](#) [#teaching](#) [#LGBTQ](#) [#HumanRights](#) and of course [#NCSS](#) . This is only a taster.

Another amazing issue of the journal and my last edited issue. Congratulations to Dr Anatoli Rapoport from Purdue University who was chosen after quite an extensive international selection process to take over the editorship. Also congratulations to those who applied. We do have a wealth of talent out there. I have really enjoyed my role as editor, building on the sterling work of Dr Beverly Bisland from Queens College, and I am handing over the journal sure of the its continuing excellence under the stewardship of Anatoli. We have a little way to go to get it internationally recognised as the journal

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for all Social Studies educators the world over to aspire to be published in but that is our vision and we certainly are on track to succeed due to the ongoing efforts of our editors and authors. I will continue to read it with awe for our amazing researchers in Social Studies. Thanks for the opportunity.

In this issue we have seven articles, double blind peer reviewed, on a variety of issues close to Social Studies educators' hearts, as well as an important opinion piece in the International Perspectives section reviewed by Anatoli Rapoport. This piece examines the process of curriculum construction in Thailand in particular focusing on how colonial precepts are still permeating the new Thai curriculum model of Social Studies. It is so important to have a perspective on curriculum from an area much less well known to our Western readers and we thank Anatoli for his work in bringing this to us. In addition Kate Ferguson-Patrick our media reviewer has gathered some reviews associated with the film *Selma* which should be of great interest to international readers looking for children's literature. These address the theme of diversity and inclusion through the use of picture books. Websites are identified where more titles can be found. It has an Australian focus in line with the Australian focus of the editorial committee at the moment which is about to change. We welcome new perspectives and world views and look forward to these in future issues.

In this issue we have three articles that critically address national curriculum narratives, one from China, one from Russia and one from Chile. The Chinese and Russian studies address conceptions of citizenship education as expounded in these curriculum documents. Lee & Misco (2016), *Seeking moral autonomy in a Chinese context: A study of elementary moral education standards* examines the links between current "Chinese Content Standards from the Moral Education Curriculum" and views on moral autonomy developed from Western and Confucian philosophy. Although they found that there are discrepancies between overarching ideals and goals of education for children; and practices and implementation in everyday lives within these Chinese moral education curriculum standards, there were some substantial cultural perspectives that needed to be accounted for in such research before simple comparisons could be made. Similarly in Rapoport's (2016) substantial research on the nuances of civic virtues associated with the *State Program of Patriotic Education of Citizens of the Russian Federation, 2016-2020* (Gosudarstvennaya Programma, 2015) the history of the text belied teachers' interpretation of what that actually meant in implementation. In his article, *Tendencies in Civic Education in Russia: The Perception of Patriotism among Secondary School Teachers*, he pointed to the fact that teachers and other education practitioners have become a critical element of the system of government as they mediate and interpret meanings and help students, as well as other agents of education, to decode symbolic discourses. Errazuriz (2016) extensively interrogated current social studies and history curriculum documents from Chile with a focus on gender studies exploring conceptions of "Woman". She argued that curricular documents construct a historical narrative where two archetypal categories, "Pauper-Woman" and "Active-Woman", represent possible, oppressive gendered citizens with subsequent scripts for gender performance. All three studies point to the importance of the role of the teacher in assisting students to interpret such documents.

A further study by Fernekes (2016), *Global Citizenship Education and Human Rights Education: Are They Compatible with U. S. Civic Education?*, undertook a comparative study of how a number of national curricular addressed the somewhat "newer" perspectives of Global Citizenship Education and Human Rights Education in their national curriculum documents. He then clarified how the U.S. could likewise better address these perspectives although acknowledging that implementing GCE in the U.S. context faced major obstacles. Fernekes thus provided us with an alternative issue - how to insert

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new ideas into curriculum documents which of themselves rest heavily on cultural tradition, as expounded by the previous three research studies.

In our final article associated with curriculum documents for this issue we have a discourse analysis covering school textbooks to ascertain how the concept of tourism is variously portrayed in Finnish Social Science texts. Mikander and Zilliacus (2016), *A postcolonial discourse analysis of Finnish school textbooks: learning about the world from a tourist perspective*, examine the notion of tourism from a postcolonial perspective clarifying the view that images of tourism as a good economic driver do not take on board the inequity that often arises between the tourists and those that they come to observe.

Our final two articles come from Spain and the U.S and they address the teaching of social studies. Estelles & Romero (2016), *Teacher Education for Citizenship in a Globalized World: a Case Study in Spain*, clarify how teacher education is addressing the teaching of the relatively new perspective of global citizenship. They found that although teacher education can contribute to challenge pre-service teachers' perceptions of the nation state as the only locus for democracy and citizenship, the inclusion of global perspectives by the teacher educators involved had been very limited. Last but not least Fitzgerald (2016), *Pre-Planning Civic Action: An Analysis of Civic Leaders' Problem Solving Strategies*, takes us into a new field of teaching strategies by helping us clarify decision-making approaches to teaching civic action. He argued that Wineburg's work on heuristics in historical thinking and how experts thought about history could provide guidance for teachers in civics. He investigated heuristics that may arise when expert civic leaders plan for civic action. This appears to be a new and very profitable approach to teaching civics and I hope he pursues the themes further.

So in conclusion, peer reviewed papers from six different national perspectives is an amazing feat and bodes well for our international impact on the world of social studies teaching. Keep up the great work.

Ruth Reynolds