GLOBAL CONNECTIONS: USING THE INTERNET TO SUPPORT CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

DAVID HICKS
JOSIAH TLOU
JOHN K. LEE
LINDSAY PARRY
PETER DOOLITTLE

In the closing of his presidential address at the 1999 National Council for the Social Studies Annual Conference in Orlando, Richard Theisen succinctly captured the essence of the social studies: "We have an important mission, the education of children and young adults for citizenship in this country."[1] Citizenship education, a powerful organizing principle through which individuals learn their rights, responsibilities, and duties within a civil society, is not merely a goal of American social studies educators—it is, in fact, the purpose of education for democracies around the globe. Over the last decade in both established and emerging democracies, significant efforts have been undertaken to enhance traditional notions of citizenship education by emphasizing the goal of preparing young people and adults for democratic participation. In support of this goal, the National Council of Social Studies, as well as many social studies educators, have explicitly advocated the use of information technology to support the teaching of children to actively make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good in a culturally diverse and interdependent world.[2] Specifically, we contend that the availability of the Internet provides schools with a powerful tool to revitalize the teaching of citizenship education, which in many schools currently focuses upon "the documents and procedures of republican government [that] highlight the accomplishments of our country."[3] We pose the question: How can we take full advantage of technologies such as the Internet to support conceptualizations of citizenship that stress learning the skills, knowledge, and values required of citizens to actively make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good in a culturally diverse and interdependent world? In seeking to address this question, our article specifically examines and identifies the power of the Internet to connect social studies teachers and students from around the world to activities and action projects that encourage the development of such civic ideals and practices.

12. This distinction was conveniently ignored in press reporting of the curriculum time issue. See, for example, S.Cassidy, "School Day to be Made Longer," *Times Educ Suppl*, 14 May 1999, 1–2.

13. The members of the sub-groups are listed in Appendix D of Crick.

14. This included reference to the National Curriculum Council's, *Education for Citizenship* [Curriculum Guidance 8], (York: NCC, 1990), as well as reviewing developments in the Republic of Ireland, Australia, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Germany and some US states among other places.

15. Crick paragraph 6.3.2, 37.

16. DFEE/QCA, 1999a and 1999b.

17. The Department for Education and Employment (DFEE) has recently been renamed the Department for Education and Skills (DFES).

18. D.Kerr, S. Blenkinsop and L. Darnall, *Mapping Citizenship Education Resources* [Unpublished Report] (Slough: NFER, 2000).

19. Qualifications and Curriculum Authority/Department for Education and Employment, *Citizenship at Key Stages 3 and 4: Initial Guidance for Schools* (London: QCA/DFEE, 2000a); and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority/Department for Education and Employment, *Personal Social and Health Education and Citizenship at Key Stages 1 and 2: Initial Guidance for Schools* (London: QCA/DFEE, 2000b). There are also moves to produce schemes of work for Citizenship to provide schools with suggestions as to how they should plan for citizenship education. Further details can be obtained at http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes2/ks3citizenship/

20. Crick, para 1.5,7.

21. See J. Torney-Purta, J.Schwille and J-A. Amadeo, 1999; J.Torney-Purta, R. Lehmann, H. Oswald and W. Schulz, *Citizenship and Education in Twenty-Eight Countries: Civic Knowledge and Engagement at Age Fourteen* (Amsterdam: IEA and Eburon Press, 2001); K. J. Kennedy, ed., *Citizenship Education and the Modern State* (London: Falmer Press, 1997); C. L. Hahn, *Becoming Political: Comparative Perspectives on Citizenship Education* (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998); and D. Kerr, *Citizenship Education: An International Comparison* [International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks Paper 4] (London: QCA, 1999).

22. E. Greenaway and D. Kerr, *Citizenship at Key Stage 3: A Pilot Project—Phase One Evaluation*, *Report for the Institute for Citizenship* (Slough: NFER, 2000); Kerr, Blenkinsop and Darnall, 2000; A. McKenzie, *Citizenship in Schools: A Baseline Survey of Curriculum and Practice in Sample English, Welsh and Northern Irish Education Authorities in Spring 2000* (London: UNICEF, 2000); and C. Supple, *Citizenship Education Survey in Four LEAs*, [Unpublished Report] (London: Citizenship Foundation, 2000).

23. J.Torney-Purta, J.Schwille and J-A. Amadeo, 1999; J.Torney-Purta, R. Lehmann, H. Oswald and W. Schulz, 2001; and D. Kerr, A. Lines, S. Blenkinsop and I. Schagen, *Citizenship and Education at Age 14: A Summary of the International Findings and Preliminary Results for England* (Slough: NFER, 2001).

24. D. Kerr, 1999; J.Torney-Purta, J.Schwille and J-A. Amadeo, 2000; J.Torney-Purta, R. Lehmann, H. Oswald and W. Schulz, 2001; and D. Kerr, A. Lines, S. Blenkinsop and I. Schagen, 2001.

Citizenship Education and the Internet

For Ralph Dahrendorf the concept of citizenship is complex and multifaceted. Citizenship, he notes,

is not just an attitude of mind or even a subject of political education. Citizenship is above all a set of entitlements common to all members of society... I like to think of citizenship as a set of chances—life chances—which define a free society. [This] involves basic rights, equality before the law, due process, the integrity of the person, freedom of expression and association. It also involves chances of participation, universal suffrage, of course, but equally importantly market access including labour market access, and social movement in the numerous opportunities of civil society. This is what citizenship means in the full sense of the word.[4]

Such a view of citizenship can be located within the networks of activity that form the global community. Its global focus is multi-dimensional in that it takes into account: the rights and responsibilities of the earth citizen; the right to cultural participation; the rights and responsibilities of visitors to other places; and the right to enter and live within a specific society.[5] For Dahrendorf, citizenship "provides an instrument for living with difference" in regard to how people act with and toward other citizens, societies and cultures within a global community.[6]

Cogan, Grossman, and Liu's model of the multidimensional citizen builds on Dahrendorf's ideas by providing lenses through which to conceptualize contemporary notions of citizenship.[7] The model of multidimensional citizenship "centers on the development by individual citizens of their personal civic beliefs, their capacity for joint social and public action, their ties to their localities and the world outside, and their awareness of past, present and future."[8] The multidimensional citizen: 1) views themselves as a member of a global society, 2) works cooperatively with others, 3) is prepared to take responsibility for roles and obligation in society, 4) thinks in a critical and systematic manner, 5) resolves conflict in a non-violent manner, 6) protects the environment, 7) respects and defends human rights, 8) fully participates in public life, and 9) makes full use of information technologies.[9] It is a model that not only recognizes the potential of information technologies for all citizens but challenges citizenship educators to rethink how to prepare such citizens. What is clear is that such a model will require citizenship educators to branch out from purely traditional textbook driven formats of teaching, and explore the role current and emerging technologies can play in the "process of civic learning, deliberation and action."[10]

The literature focusing on the integration of technology and social studies currently favors the Internet with its apparent unlimited range of sources of data, and its capacity to connect individuals and groups over time and space.[11] Such recognition of the potential of the Internet by social studies educators is reflected by the priority given to ongoing educational initiatives to provide Internet access to all schools. Figures released by the U.S. Department of Education reveal that approximately 89 percent of schools have the appropriate Internet access to support on-line initiatives.[12] These figures are mirrored in Becker's research who notes "schools have been rapidly acquiring access to Internet telecommunications... Over 90 percent of schools now have some sort of access to the Internet, someplace in their building."[13] Similarly, in England the government continues to invest in new technology for schools in order to build a National Grid for Learning. Recent surveys by the Department for Education and Employment (DFEE) and the British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA) show increasing numbers of schools connected to the Internet. The DFEE results show that as of April 2000, 86 percent of primary schools and 98 percent of secondary schools had Internet access, as compared to 62 percent and 93 percent respectively in 1999.[14] Similarly, the BESA survey conducted three months later suggests 88 percent of primary schools and 99 percent of secondary British schools are now on-line.[15] All of these statistics support Becker's contention that, "Along with word processing, the Internet may be the most valuable of the many computer technologies available to teachers and students."[16]

The Internet and the Role of the Teacher

Despite these encouraging statistics, it is also clear that the "success or failure of technology use in the classroom will rest with the teacher."[17] When using the Internet for instructional purposes, teachers have to make key decisions regarding how it can be incorporated within 1) the objectives and goals of their curriculum, 2) the content matter of their discipline, and 3) the instructional process. Teachers must also pay close attention to recent critiques that question the utility of the Internet as a tool for student research and inquiry. Important issues and concerns have been raised with regard to students' readiness and ability to conduct meaningful and self-regulated research on the Internet, when the tendency of many students (even college students) is to collect only the most easily accessible information via simplistic searches.[18] Even the most sophisticated Internet searches result in an assortment of reliable and unreliable full text documents and images produced by individuals and groups from very different ideological bents. This becomes problematic in itself if students are not prepared to evaluate and distinguish between the range and quality of information that is easily accessible to them on the Internet.[19] Clearly, a great deal of preparation by both the teacher and students is required if use of the Internet is to support inquiry, perspective taking, civic meaning making, and deliberation and action in the social studies classroom. For not only must teachers have ready access to the Internet, but they also need to be prepared to identify, develop, and participate in activities and projects that are considered to be "successful" in

their own and other social studies classrooms. We will now seek to contribute to the decision-making of teachers by identifying and reviewing specific Internet-based social studies activities and projects. We have chosen specific sites that, in terms of the multidimensional citizen, focus specifically on the development of children's "personal and civic beliefs," "capacity for social and public action," "ties to their localities and the world outside," and "awareness of past present and future."[20] Each of these will be discussed in turn.

The Development of Personal and Civic Beliefs

As Cogan, Grossman, and Liu note, teaching the personal dimension of citizenship, in terms of developing a "coherent moral dialogue between ourselves and the world," is a difficult task in any social studies classroom."[21] This dialogue may be supported, in part, by an examination of the capabilities of the Internet in recording and disseminating multiple perspectives on particular issues.

There are many examples of such sites on the Web. Social studies directories such as those found at Yahooligans (http://www.yahooligans.com/School_Bell/Social_Studies/), the Awesome Library (http://www.awesomelibrary.org/Classroom/Social_Studies/Social_Studies.html), and the Open Directory Project (http://dmoz.org/Reference/Education/Subjects/) can serve as gateways through which students can begin to examine and ask what it means to be a citizen within their community region and nation. Specialized sites such as Civics-Online.Org (http://civics-online.org/teachers/index.html) and Civnet.Org (http://civnet.org/) provide students and teachers with resources that may contribute to informed discussion about the personal and societal beliefs that underscore our civic activity. The importance of dialogue and discourse is particularly evident at sites such as Debate America (http://www.debateamerica.org/), Intercultural Email Classroom Connections (http://www.iecc.org/), and ePals Classroom Exchange (http://www.epals.com).

Additionally, some sites specifically seek to examine the nature and origins of information posted on the Internet while also developing an understanding of the responsibilities and consequences of participating and interacting with others on the Web. An excellent example of this can be located at the Web site of the Curry Center for Technology and Teacher Education http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/teacherlink/content/social/instructional/search/home.html. The activities at this site seek to develop on-line research skills and strategies for navigating the Web while allowing students to examine current perspectives on controversial issues within the context of the Bill of Rights. While practicing such strategies through locating current issues, students complete a matrix in order to evaluate the Web sites in terms of their authority and accuracy.

The intention is to help students fully understand the capabilities as well as the limitations of the Internet as a source of information. By providing a solid foundation for discussing the nature of the Internet, students are encouraged to become discriminating and responsible consumers of and/or producers on the Internet. As such, these particular sites may be used by social studies teachers to initiate the engagement of their students in a personal and "coherent moral dialogue" of citizenship by comparing and contrasting their values, beliefs, rights, and responsibilities with their counterparts in other states, regions, and nations.

Capacity for Social and Public Action

The Internet may be also used to encourage the political participation and literacy of students by stimulating inquiry into contrasting perspectives on contemporary issues and nurturing an understanding of social action. For instance, Web sites such as Project Vote Smart (http://www.vote-smart.org/) enable students to locate historical documents, their government representatives, and current positions of candidates running for political office on particular issues. Other sites provide valuable opportunities for students to use petitions as a means of engaging in social and public action. Three relevant examples are Petition Online (http://www.petitiononline.com/), SpeakOut.Com (http://www.speakout.com/), and Vote.com (http://www.vote.com/). In each case, students can use the site to pursue meaningful questions and act on those questions in an authentic setting.

As these particular sites are often driven by political ideology, students once again need the capacity to discriminate and interpret the value-positions and biases of information located therein. The Web site Teen Hoopla (http://www.ala.org/teenhoopla/activism.html) illustrates this point. Ideologically, the majority of the sites promoted on Teen Hoopla are progressive/liberal, featuring such activist groups as Green Peace, the American Civil Liberties Union, and Amnesty International. In fact, the only conservative site of the twenty-two sites listed is the Young Republican National Federation.

One Teen Hoopla site, Scorecard, (http://www.scorecard.org/), provides data that identifies local polluters within a community. Students can obtain a list of businesses that are "polluting the community" and get information and ideas on how to take action. Environmental Defense, a non-profit environmental advocacy group that has taken several controversial political positions, sponsors the site. If a teacher is willing to uncover the agenda of an organization such as Environmental Defense, then the use of the site may be very meaningful for students. If the political goals of the site remain a mystery some students may unknowingly lend their voice to a political position that is at odds with their ideological beliefs.

Sites such as those featured on the Teen Hoopla directory highlight how the Internet can be used to heighten students' awareness of local and global issues while providing teacher and students with avenues, ideas, and plans for social action. Although directing students to a particular Web site may be well intentioned, it should be balanced with information challenging or countering the political motives of the sponsoring group and/or individuals. When using these sites, teachers have an educative responsibility to disclose the ideological agenda of the site being investigated to their students and the school community.

Development of Ties to their Localities and the World Outside

The Internet can also provide social studies teachers with the opportunity to expose their students to multiple perspectives and contexts beyond the classroom through participation in telecollaborative projects. These can be arranged quickly and efficiently between students in different towns, states, and nations. A diverse range of projects and project archives can be found at the United Nations Cyber School Bus (http://www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/menucurr.htm), the Global School House Collaborative Learning Projects (http://www.gsn.org/), Unicef Voices of Youth Project (http://www.unicef.org/voy/), Eduplace projects (http://www.eduplace.com/projects/ssproj.html), and Discovering Democracy (http://www.curriculum.edu.au/democracy/).

One interesting Web site is the completed Culture of Peace project (http://www.cultureofpeace.org/). The project, while simple in design, serves as a powerful example of how technology can be used to encourage inquiry and enhance social interaction with schools and students around the world. The aim of the project is to empower students and teachers, encouraging them to document, share, and discuss their experiences as they participate in activities associated with a Culture of Peace. Schools are encouraged to study Culture of Peace themes through their normal school programs or through a selection of suggested activities.

Other sites such as Global Learning and Observation to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) (http://www.globe.gov/) provide students with access to a worldwide network of students, teachers, and scientists who work together to study and understand the global environment. Students and teachers from more than 5,000 schools in seventy countries collect data about the environment and issue reports through the Internet. Such projects bring together students and schools from all over the world to explore either conceptions of peaceful coexistence or explore, virtually, other countries and cultures. These Web-based projects are leading to the establishment of networks of "earth citizens" who collect data on a variety of topics such as the environment in a manner that would not be possible without the Internet.

Awareness of Past, Present, and Future

The Internet also serves as a powerful tool for enhancing future citizens' understandings of the interconnectedness of the past, present, and future. Internet technologies provide social studies teachers with the opportunity to undertake and share major local history projects that develop over a number of years. Students participate in original and authentic living history projects in which transcripts and artifacts are stored and maintained within on-line collections and virtual community museums. An exceptional example of what is possible in the social studies classroom when technology is used to support the doing of history is the Bland County Historical Archives (http://www.bland.k12.va.us/bland/rocky/gap.html) at Rocky Gap High School in southwest Virginia.

The Bland County history archives began in 1993, with students from the American history class collecting oral histories from the community that initially focused on memories of the 1930s. The local history and technology class then began to scan historical documents and photographs, save transcriptions as html, create a searchable data base, and thus create an on-line historical archive of their community. Through the use of Internet technologies the Bland County history archives has become an ongoing, durable, and organic local history project. This project currently has over 300 oral history interviews with transcripts, 80 cemetery catalogues, over 700 scanned photos, searchable databases for transcripts, cemeteries, and photos, and an actual archives room with all the materials in an accessible and organized location. The melding of technology and "history of place" at the community school level through the development of an on-line historical archive, has allowed Rocky Gap's students to learn about the issues and concerns facing their community today through paying attention to and preserving stories and evidence of their communites past.

Another excellent example that reveals the utility of technology to enhance student inquiry and the actual doing of history can be found in the work of Ligon Middle School students, located in Raleigh, NC (http://www2.ncsu.edu/ncsu/cep/ligon/about/history/intro.htm). In collaboration with professors, preservice teachers, and Ligon High School alumni, Ligon's Middle School students, referred to as "Ligon historians," began an ongoing project to document the history of Ligon High School and the surrounding, predominantly African-American, community. The process began with interviews of alumni and local residents and continued with the collection of primary documents that have now been transformed into an on-line historical collection. This collection currently includes class histories, alumni biographies, and an architectural history of the community. The Ligon historians have also been introduced to and utilize Geographic Information Systems to help represent the historical

data they have collected and analyzed (http://www2.ncsu.edu/ncsu/cep/ligon/about/history/esri/P7318.htm). This has resulted in a life map of one of the school alumni and a map that reveals how redevelopment impacted the local African-American community through time and space. Such projects highlight how technology can be utilized to encourage students to be producers rather than mere consumers of their history.

Recognizing Possibilities and Challenges

Despite the perceived potential of technology within the classroom, research continues to suggest that many social studies teachers are a long way from integrating technology in such a way that will enhance students' critical thinking skills in the preparation of participatory citizens.[22] Although more and more schools are being brought on-line, care must be taken in assuming that having access to the Internet will directly lead to a transformation of the social studies or in fact even guarantee its use within the social studies classroom. Van Fossen's research suggests that even though social studies teachers feel more comfortable with the Internet than applications such as databases, instructional simulations, and HyperStudio, "very few teachers seem to engage students in interactive, multimedia aspects of the Internet...to take students on a "virtual field-trip' of a museum site [or have] an interactive lesson that required students to use the Internet/WWW to complete some task or assignment."[23] Factors such as a lack of training in how to use computers and the Internet, concerns over easily accessible inappropriate material, problems with classroom Internet access, a lack of time, and a lack of ongoing support have all been seen as barriers to using technologies such as the Internet in ways envisioned by technology advocates.[24] While it is easy to make the call for students and teachers to master the Internet, encouraging teachers to utilize the Internet within their teaching is not easy. To break through the barriers to Internet use, teachers and students must overcome the problems inherent in searching through shifting networks of reputable and disreputable, scholarly and unscholarly sources of information. When this happens and teachers and students become familiar with the geography of the Internet, then the full impact of the Internet in social studies may be realized.

Conclusion

The impact of the use of Internet technologies to connect teachers with students from around the world is clearly a powerful notion. The Internet has a great potential as a tool for enhancing and promoting action based projects that encourage civic ideals, beliefs, and practices for students throughout the world. The Internet compared with other media is an open information tool. It is developing at a rapid pace and its utility can be applied universally. However, neither a passive acceptance of the ideology of computer integration, nor a complete refusal to explore the possibility of using technology, will move us closer to the National Council for the Social Studies' vision of powerful social studies teaching and learning. The challenge in preparing social studies teachers to use the Internet must begin with identifying why and how technology can be used to encourage inquiry, perspective taking, and meaning making. This begins with providing teachers with constant and consistent support and examples of activities and projects that are designed for and by teachers that can provide images of the possible.

NOTES

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4. R. Dahrendorf, *After 1989: Morals, Revolution and Civil Society* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997), 62–63.

5. B. van Steenbergen, ed., *The Condition of Citizenship* (London: Sage, 1994); B. Turner, ed., *Citizenship and Social Theory* (London: Sage, 1993); J. Ury, *The Tourist Gaze* (London: Sage, 1999).

6. Dahrendorf, 29.

7. Cogan, Grossman & Liu.

8. Ibid, 50.

9. Ibid, 51.

10. Ibid, 50.

11. Berson, Cruz, Duplass and Johnston; Braun and Risinger; H. Davis, W. Fernekes, and C. Hladky, "Using Internet Resources to Study the Holocaust: Reflections from the Field," *The Social Studies* (Jan/Feb 1999): 34–41; Elison; Van Fossen.

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