Manitoba

In Manitoba, where a new curriculum is slowly replacing one that is 20 years old, there is currently considerable tension between planners and educators about the prospects for global education.

Formally, the new Social Studies curriculum in Manitoba promotes a holistic and child-centred pedagogical model and introduces global citizenship themes from kindergarten to Senior 4 (Grade 12). Manitoba's approach, which includes introducing kindergarten children to the idea of belonging to a global community, sets the province at the forefront of global education innovations. The integration of global education themes across the grades and subject areas is also supported in the new curriculum, making it highly adaptable for whole-class and whole-school approaches to global education.

However, at the time of our research in the fall of 2005, the impact of Manitoba's exciting new curriculum seemed to be quite limited at the school level, where teachers and administrators expressed considerable frustration at the level of support they were receiving for implementation. Opportunities for professional development and interaction on global education teaching appeared extremely limited, and charitable fundraising appeared to be the most common form of global education activity.

**Background**

Manitoba is one of the most ethnically diverse provinces in Canada, with more than 100 languages spoken. Table 4.1 offers key demographic details to set the socioeconomic and political context of global education in the province.

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| Population | 1,177,600 (2005) |
| Major Ethnic Groups | Aboriginal; Métis; Francophone; Ukrainian; German |
| GDP | 41,933 million (CDN$) (2005) |
| Major Economic Sectors | Manufacturing; Agriculture |
| Dominant Political Parties at the Provincial Level | New Democratic Party (NDP); Conservative (formerly “Progressive Conservative” party) |
| Premier | The Honourable Gary Doer (NDP) |
As in other Canadian provinces, the 1990s saw important efforts at educational reform in Manitoba focusing on the amalgamation of schools boards, the introduction of standardized assessments and programs of parental school choice. However, reforms in Manitoba have been implemented in a more gradual and less dramatic fashion than in other jurisdictions (Young & Levin, 1999). In its recent policy document “Education Agenda for Student Success: 2002-2006,” the ministry sets out six priorities for the educational system, beginning with a focus on improving outcomes for less successful learners. It also includes stronger links between schools, families and communities; better school planning; improved professional learning opportunities; and a greater focus on using evidence and research to guide change. In the ministry’s view, a successful school is one that demonstrates “shared leadership and fosters creative problem solving involving parents and community” (p. 7).

Public schools in Manitoba are English or French Immersion (for students whose home language is English), Français (for students whose home language is French), and Heritage Languages Bilingual programs, e.g. in Ukrainian, German, and Hebrew (with 50 per cent of the school day in the heritage language). At the time of this study, there were 38 school divisions in Manitoba. In 2003/04, there were 13,078 teachers, with a total student enrollment of 186,668 (Manitoba Text Book Bureau, 2005). Specifically at the elementary level, in 2002/03 there were 376 schools enrolling 112,483 students (Manitoba Department of Education Citizenship and Youth, 2004b).

In Manitoba we collected and analyzed provincial-level curriculum and interviewed four provincial-level staff members. We also interviewed two staff members at an urban school division, and conducted research in two schools in the same district. Figure 4.1 shows the sampling structure for the Manitoba research.
Global Education at the Provincial Level

Global education in the Manitoba curriculum

In Manitoba, as in Alberta, the development of a new curriculum for kindergarten through Senior 4 (Grade 12), has been a major preoccupation in recent years. Learning outcomes related to global education in this new curriculum exist mainly in the Social Studies stream. Ministry officials suggested that the formal curriculum is the main conduit carrying information to the district and school levels.

We conducted four interviews at the provincial level in Manitoba, where curriculum policy and guidelines are made. Two interviews were conducted with Social Studies curriculum development staff in the Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth; we also had the opportunity to speak with two senior officials in the department, including one in the International Education Branch.

Generally speaking, provincial staff viewed global education as important in raising awareness of global issues in the classroom. In their conceptualization of global education, they also saw the importance of encouraging international exchange programs and infusing international perspectives into the curriculum, at all levels of the education system.

The four participants we spoke with at the Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth variously described problems, including:

- The length of the development process for the new Social Studies curriculum (10 years and counting by some estimates)
- The fact that other subjects are revised more frequently (suggesting that Social Studies may have a lower priority within the department)
- Difficulties in coordinating implementation, which were attributed to delays in the release of implementation guides for teachers

Each of the provincial level participants emphasized that the process of developing the new Social Studies curriculum has been a collaborative one, with stakeholders including:

- K-12 educators (from English, Français and French Immersion programs)
- Aboriginal educators
- University advisors
- Subject specialists
- The “Manitoba Cultural Advisory Team,” consisting of representatives from fifteen ethno-cultural groups

Department of Education officials stressed the shift in the new curriculum away from content knowledge, and towards more child-centred and active pedagogy. Thus, the Kindergarten to Grade 8 Social Studies: Manitoba curriculum framework of outcomes states:

The “sage on the stage” model is giving way to a more flexible model - one in which teachers facilitate the learning process, and students make decisions and assume responsibility for their learning. (Manitoba Department of Education and Youth, 2003, p.15)
**How does the Manitoba curriculum compare to the global education “ideal type”?**

The new Manitoba Social Studies curriculum uses “citizenship” as a central concept. Among the aspects of the global education “ideal type” included in the new curriculum are: an emphasis on local-national-global interconnections, equity and social justice, respect for ethno-cultural diversity and environmental stewardship (Manitoba Education and Youth, 2003). The curriculum has students explore aspects of citizenship across four broad categories: i) Active Democratic Citizenship, ii) Canadian Citizenship for the Future, iii) Citizenship in the Global Context, and iv) Environmental Citizenship. The curriculum identifies “global interdependence” as a general learning outcome linked to the idea of citizenship. Developing a global consciousness is mentioned as a key goal of the curriculum.

One of the most innovative aspects of the new curriculum is its early introduction of global citizenship themes. Thus the kindergarten curriculum suggests that “As [children] explore their social and natural environments, they become aware that they live in a country called Canada and begin to see themselves as part of a larger world” (Kindergarten Overview, p. 12).

While the curriculum formally supports the development of “active responsible citizens,” who have “informed opinions” and “think critically about issues that concern themselves and others” (Manitoba Department of Education Citizenship and Youth, 2004a); there does appear to be some tension between these goals and what the curriculum documents actually specify. For instance, at the Grade 5 level, children are expected to be able to “identify European countries that established colonial empires and locate on a world map their areas of colonization” (Manitoba Department of Education Citizenship and Youth, 2006a), without the encouragement of critical reflection on colonialism and its significance to current world events.

In keeping with our global education ideal type explained in Chapter 2, the Manitoba curriculum also endorses a child-centred and holistic approach to teaching global education. Despite the elimination of all divisional testing in Grades 3 and 6 (including Social Studies), department officials suggested that teachers continued to prioritize subjects that had been formally assessed, working against giving attention to Social Studies.

**Provincial-level curriculum supports and resources**

The most important way in which the ministry shapes the content of schooling in the province is through the development of the provincial curriculum. At the provincial level, teams of subject consultants are responsible for coordinating and facilitating curriculum development, including the production of a learning outcomes framework and the “Foundation for Implementation” guides that provide teaching strategies, background information, learning resources and student materials. Consultants also review resources and assist schools in choosing resources for their libraries.

The provincial department also provides “on-demand” workshops and in-service training for teachers as a key aspect of the implementation process for the new Social Studies curriculum. However, for smaller and more remote school divisions, workshops and in-service training is the responsibility of one Social Studies consultant who travels throughout the entire province. Larger school divisions (generally urban-based) often have their own Social Studies coordinators who supplement and complement training activities offered through the department of education. The key actors at the interface between the formal curriculum and school-level educators are these district Social Studies coordinators. These individuals are responsible for:

- Information sharing between provincial, district and school levels
- In-service teacher training
- Resource evaluation, identification and distribution
Global Education at the District Level

We had the opportunity to speak to two Social Studies and Language Arts coordinators at the district level in Manitoba. Both participants had a similar understanding of our use of the phrase “global education focused on international development issues.” Each emphasized that it meant “increasing the awareness of children” of the world – “beyond their backyard.” District-level definitions of global education emphasized the district’s role in facilitating acceptance and respect for the cultural diversity that increasingly characterizes Manitoba’s population.

Both district officials also highlighted “international” or “global” issues, speaking, for example, of “developing countries” and “poverty.” However, they made little explicit connection between international development issues and issues of poverty and inequality in Canada, Manitoba or their local community. While both mentioned fundraising for “the poor” around the world as an important component of global education, the informants did not link such fundraising to critical perspectives on unequal international power relations, income inequality and the structural causes of poverty, or Canada’s position vis-à-vis unequal systems of power and environmental exploitation. Fundraising activities, often for local food banks and other charities, were mentioned as strategies for promoting student participation and leadership in contributing to the well-being of the community.

District staff noted that critical literacy and numeracy were prioritized over Social Studies. However, each mentioned that the emphasis on critical literacy in Language Arts lent itself to the integration of global education-related reading materials for the students. They felt that they were uniquely positioned to promote cross-fertilization between Social Studies and Language Arts areas because of their divisional positions, and both expressed a strong desire to explore that potential further.

District-level supports and resources

The participants felt that the division (district) received only indirect provincial support for global education – mainly through training for Social Studies teaching. One of the Social Studies coordinators we spoke with indicated meeting “somewhat regularly with department people,” but that this was often “only when there’s something to discuss” (Manitoba District 1a). This participant felt that these meetings with department staff were not as frequent as they needed to be, but the participant lacked the power to initiate more of them.

The division also receives support through the province for global education via the Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth’s website, where lists of relevant resources can be accessed. These publications dealt mainly with “sustainable development” from Grade 5 to Senior 4 (Grade 12). There were also teacher’s resource documents for Native Studies from kindergarten to Senior 4 (Grade 12). Each of the Social Studies coordinators we spoke to identified using mostly resources received from the department. The second most popular form of accessing global education-related information was via the Internet, and in particular UNICEF and World Vision websites.

There was very limited interaction between non-governmental groups and district officials about global education-related programming. UNICEF’s Halloween fundraising drives, CODE’s “Project Love” and the Historica’s “Heritage Fairs” were the only three private group initiatives mentioned by district officials.

One district staff member highlighted the “Social Studies conference” that was on the division’s website. This is an electronic forum for the dissemination of ideas, news and concerns, that educators and administrative support staff can access. It is noteworthy that none of the four participants at the provincial level indicated awareness of such online conferences, although these would seem to have great potential for vertical and horizontal dissemination of global education-related teaching and learning materials, pedagogical innovations and various other forms of relevant resources and information.
Challenges

The Social Studies coordinators identified challenges concerning the piecemeal release of implementation guides for the new Social Studies curriculum. While the teacher’s guide is available for Grade 4, the domino effect intended by the new Social Studies curriculum is currently being jeopardized by the absence of implementation guides in Grades 5 and 6. Some of the momentum of curriculum preparation activities at the district level appears to have been lost.

Global Education at the School Level

When asked how they defined global education, educators and principals at the two schools we visited in Manitoba were rather vague and seemed uncomfortable with the question. However, issues of diversity and common human realities were reflected in their responses. Overall, participants spoke of the “basic needs” of people around the world. They often understood global education as being about raising students’ awareness of how “other” people’s needs are often not met and how fortunate Canadian students are to live in Canada. One principal we spoke with viewed global education as “having students understand that the world was greater than where they live and that there are lots of other people in the world” (Manitoba School 2a).

There was no mention of the Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth curriculum guidelines regarding global education in any of the interviews, suggesting that these guidelines had not yet reached the school level.

The interviews with teachers and principals suggested that the implementation of global education in these two schools was fragmented and informal. This conclusion was criticized by a participant, who stated:

*I think that it takes a more holistic approach. Yes, it happens in the classroom, but it [global education] has to be a priority as seen throughout the school; it has to be seen as something that is valued by everyone, and not just their classroom teacher... (Manitoba School 1c)*

A lack of time was seen as a major constraint on the ability of individuals to initiate such whole-school approaches. Participants identified a further major challenge concerning the lack of teacher knowledge and skills in global education issues and pedagogical strategies. Several educators expressed concern that standards-based education reforms have left a lasting legacy, and continue to undermine teacher creativity and innovation in subjects broached, pedagogies explored, and evaluation/assessment techniques used.

Nonetheless, several participants highlighted the ways students have taken initiative and led fundraising activities within the schools.

*I mean we're shifting towards students being able to take ownership of their learning. When they have questions and inquiries, you follow that, and your teaching is formed around that. (Manitoba School 2a)*

Educators were quick to emphasize the support and encouragement that they provided for student-led initiatives. Participants also spoke of how keen students are to learn about others, and how children were usually very curious about world events and the lives of people around the world. The idea that children are not able to grasp what are perceived to be complex global issues was challenged by participants who emphasized that, particularly at the Grade 4 and 5 levels, students often become quite engaged and even passionate about global education topics, specifically issues linked to social justice.
Across the two schools, educators emphasized that Math and Language Arts subjects were prioritized over Social Studies, yet identified Social Studies as the subject area most conducive to integrating global education-related lessons. Some educators emphasized that Language Arts is a subject in which they can and do try to incorporate discussion and readings linked to social justice concerns.

A major concern expressed by almost all the educators and principals we spoke with focused on the delayed completion and release of implementation guidelines for the new Social Studies curriculum. Such a piecemeal approach created particular problems for teachers at the Grade 6 level, where the new guidelines had not been received in time for the transition to Grade 6 of students who had been taught under the new curriculum in Grade 5.

Overall, the lived reality of global education in the schools we visited contrasted in several ways with our ideal type and in several instances with the formal curriculum’s emphases. Perhaps because of the delayed implementation of the new Social Studies curriculum, most of the educators did not mention such constructs as “active global citizenship” or the importance of tolerance, diversity and interdependence. Instead the main focus of their engagement with global education appeared to be through fundraising for the poor.

School-level supports and resources

The schools we visited had limited awareness of any resources or professional development opportunities in the area of global education. Nonetheless, several educators and both principals we spoke to emphasized the valuable in-servicing and support they had access to through the district Social Studies coordinators.

There was very little awareness of formal or informal channels for information-sharing between and within schools, districts and the Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth. A provincial-level initiative, different from the district-level online conferences noted above, is “Professional Learning Communities” that represent online opportunities for educators to come together to exchange information and learn from each other. One participant identified these virtual communities as one way for teachers to enhance their knowledge and pedagogical skills. A learning community for Social Studies was introduced in the last year or so, although this was mentioned only once by one of the principals.

In contrast to what provincial-level participants thought would be a fairly extensive use of a variety of global education-related material at the school level, the teachers and principals participating in our study identified a small set of resources, none of which were said to be used “regularly.” The majority of participants identified district Social Studies coordinators as key sources of information and guidance in their efforts to implement the new curriculum.

Of the four teachers and two principals that were interviewed, two indicated that they did not access resources outside of the formal curriculum; three said that they used books; and two mentioned the use of posters and maps as well as the Internet. One participant mentioned using “multi-media kits” that were borrowed from the division’s Media Centre. This reinforces the idea that if teachers do not have sufficient time to seek outside resources and information through non-curricular channels, then efforts should be made to strengthen the coherence and relevance of appropriate resources to support global education within the formal curriculum.

At one of the schools, the principal made reference to a “box of resources” that the Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth sends each week. However, the principal noted that being inundated with a variety of “resources” across subject areas, without the benefit of prior organization and explanation concerning what the resources can be used for, adds considerable burden to teachers and principals. One way to address this problem might be to ask district staff (and particularly Social Studies coordinators) to
first review these materials, and put forward ideas about how to use such materials to enhance global education in the schools.

One participant was skeptical of the accuracy of some of the information available on the Internet, and even highlighted UNICEF’s website in this regard. This participant thought including more references on websites offering global education-related information would go “a long way” to addressing these fears. Such concerns might reflect the plethora of sometimes contradictory or not easily verified “facts,” viewpoints, or research and analysis reports from government, non-state groups, media etc., that confront educators as soon as they wade into the deep waters of global education and international development literature and debates.

**Partnerships**

Teachers at these schools engaged in quite a bit of charitable fundraising, with some students assuming leadership roles in these initiatives. When asked about the engagement of external organizations, participants generally identified UNICEF, and in particular the “orange box” fundraising drive at Halloween. A couple of educators interviewed were not aware of any external groups that were involved with the school in any way, let alone specifically geared to global education. External groups must first obtain permission from the district to approach schools and/or teachers, who have the final discretion in accepting their initiatives.

All participants except one stated that there was no involvement of parents within the school, with respect to global education. These participants believed that constraints associated with working explained the lack of parental engagement. However, in one case, a teacher spoke of a family who had recently emigrated from a sub-Saharan African country that visited their child’s classroom and made a presentation on their country of origin. This teacher emphasized that the other students enjoyed this and were “really interested and excited to meet them [the parents]” (Manitoba School 1b). At the middle school (Grades 6-8) we visited, the principal stated that there was little involvement from parents “because at this age, kids don’t want their parents around” (Manitoba School 2a).

**Advice from educators for external partners**

At the school level, educators in Manitoba overwhelmingly emphasized that resources and programs developed by external organizations must be linked to the formal curriculum and should be “ready to use” by educators when they reach the school. It was critically important to all educators that such materials be age-appropriate, with the age/grade range clearly indicated on such resources.

Visual material, including posters, age-appropriate picture books, and videos were mentioned as important, along with the availability of guest speakers. Several educators noted that guest speakers not only stimulate student excitement, they also support teachers to address issues where the teachers feel they have little competence.

**Summary**

Despite having no formal definition of global education, Manitoba’s curriculum significantly reflects the global education ideal type we developed in Chapter 2. However, a major gap appears in provincial support for the implementation of global education. While formal curriculum documents, department-developed resource lists and “on-request” professional development activities were cited by provincial officials as the main sources of support to district and school level, the school-level educators we spoke to felt that they...
received little support from the provincial or district levels. Provincial or district-level support mechanisms and structures were rarely mentioned as providing direct support for global education. Educators expressed frustration over the delays in the release of teacher guides for the implementation of the new Social Studies curriculum.

At the school level, there was little evidence of educators encouraging or facilitating the development of critical thinking skills among students through their global education activities. There was no mention made of addressing issues concerning Canada’s role in the world or delving into issues of injustice or environmental sustainability. By and large, the global education activities identified by educators revolved around charitable fundraising. Importantly however, several participants did emphasize the need to develop students’ sense that they, as individuals with limited autonomy (as they are children) can “still make a difference” and “help others” through their actions and attitudes. As one teacher stated:

_We talk a lot about rippling effects and the small things that you can do...so what they can do to create rippling effects and how it starts with them. And even keeping peace within their own lives and their own communities, and spreading from that._ (Manitoba School 1b)

Educators suggest that to push global education forward in Manitoba, what is needed are more targeted interventions that take into account the time and knowledge constraints of educators, and that clearly connect issues with activities that teachers can easily implement. However, in our view there is also significant room in Manitoba for more and better support for global education through the following:

- Expansion of professional development opportunities and professional networks
- Encouragement of sustained linkages between different levels of education policy makers, local NGOs and international development organizations engaged in the promotion of global education

ENDNOTES:

1 Manitoba Department of Labour and Immigration (n.d.)
2 Unless otherwise noted, the data presented in this table is from Government of Manitoba. (n.d.) Province of Manitoba.
4 Manitoba Department of Education Citizenship and Youth. (n.d.) Kindergarten to Grade 12: Manitoba curriculum.