The Role of Boundary Judgements in Fostering a Critical Global Education

J. Melanie Young

CIESC, 2016

Research project:

Systems Thinking and Global Education: Towards a Framework for a Transformative Global Education

(Young, 2014)

TRANSFORMATIVE GLOBAL EDUCATION

An approach to curriculum and pedagogy, situated within a systems paradigm, which aims to foster change in self, school, and world,

in the interests of

social and environmental justice
(Pike & Selby, 1988; Selby, 1999)

THE PRACTICE OF GLOBAL EDUCATION

Transformative global education?

What is happening in classrooms?
- Excluding "controversial" issues
- Lack of critique
- Lack of social activism, political focus

(Cook, 2008; Jefferess, 2012; McKenzie, 2006; Mundy et al., 2007; Young, 2003)

TRANSFORMATIVE GLOBAL EDUCATION

Critical global education: necessary to a transformative global education

- **highlights the need for and the opportunities for transformation**

SYSTEMS THEORY

- Systems are organised wholes: physical, social, conceptual

- System identity is expressed in function, behaviour, purpose

- *The whole is greater than the sum of its parts*

(Ackoff, 1974; von Bertalanffy, 1968; Georgiou, 2007)

SYSTEMS THEORY: KEY CONCEPTS

- **Living systems are open**: interact with environment; systems embedded in systems; hierarchy of systems complexity

  (von Bertalanffy, 1968; Boulding, 1956; Churchman, 1971)

- **Human systems are purposeful**: goals can be selected; elements can have conflicting goals

  (Ackoff, 1974)

SYSTEMS THEORY: KEY CONCEPTS

- **System boundaries are social constructions**: boundary setting based on individual perspectives and needs; worldviews must be taken into account (Checkland, 1981)

- **Boundary judgements must be justified:** value based, normative; judgements impact behaviours, goals, purposes

  (Flood & Jackson, 1991; Ulrich, 1991).

BOUNDARY JUDGEMENTS

- Necessary when exploring an open system

- A social construct; the normative content of the system identity

- Creates system identity: the behaviour, goal, purpose of the system

BOUNDARY JUDGEMENTS

Boundaries can be understood within the context of teachers' practice in terms of:

- Pedagogical decision making
  - How are we exploring this? Who has authority?

- Curricular decision making
  - What are we learning? How are we organizing this?

JUSTIFYING BOUNDARY JUDGEMENTS

How might teachers justify their own boundary judgements and model that behaviour in global education classrooms?

- Shift system boundaries

- Recognise system boundaries and make them transparent

- Question system boundaries

JUSTIFYING BOUNDARY JUDGEMENTS

Shifting boundaries: the system is created by the observer; recognizing multiplicity, uncertainty, ambiguity

- **Horizontally:** between different contexts in time and space; between local and global

- **Vertically:** between subject areas (hierarchy of system complexity); between local and global

- **Socially**: between boundaries of authority

JUSTIFYING BOUNDARY JUDGEMENTS

Making boundary judgements transparent: Open and thoughtful discussion of boundary decisions; Possible boundaries are multiple

- Should the assignment be in science notebook or writing notebook?

- Discuss LGBTQ issues or the justification for values education in schools?

- Where does one biome end and another begin?

JUSTIFYING BOUNDARY JUDGEMENTS

Questioning boundary judgements:
What is the goal or purpose of the system and who decides? What behaviour is created?

- To follow the rules or to respect others? (walking down school hallways)

- To encourage inclusion or to impose values? (the BC Social Justice 12 course)

- To think about the words we use or reproduce the words we hear? (using homophobic language)

JUSTIFYING BOUNDARY JUDGEMENTS

Encourages a more critical global education through

- conscious consideration of decisions around where boundaries are set AND when justification is sufficient

- recognition of power and responsibility of individuals and groups in determining system behaviours, goals, purposes

TRANSFORMATIVE GLOBAL EDUCATION

The purpose of transformative global education is greater social and environmental justice

Shifting the boundaries of classroom practice and curriculum to include the justification of boundary judgements creates the environment, the system, which encourages this

Thank you very much

References

Ackoff, R. L. (1974). The systems revolution. *Long Range Planning, 7*(6), 2-20.

von Bertalanffy, L. (1968). *General systems theory: Foundations, development, applications.* New York: George Braziller, Inc.

Boulding, K. (1956). General systems theory – The skeleton of science. *Management Science, 2*(3), 197-208.

Checkland, P. (1981). *Systems thinking, systems practice*. Chichester, England: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

References

Churchman, C.W. (1971). *The design of inquiring systems: Basic concepts of systems and organisation*. New York: Basic Books Inc.

Cook, S.A. (2008). Give peace a chance: The diminution of peace in global education in he United States, United Kingdom, and Canada. *Canadian Journal of Education 31*(4), 889-914.

Flood, R.L. & Jackson, M.C. (1991). *Critical systems thinking: Directed readings*. Chichester, England: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Georgiou, I. (2007). *Thinking through systems thinking*. London: Routledge.

References

Jefferess, D. (2012). The "Me to we" social enterprise: Global education as lifestyle brand. Critical Literacy: Theories and Practices, 6(1), 18-30.

McKenzie, M. (2006). Three portraits of resistance: The (un)making of Canadian students. *Canadian Journal of Education, 29*(1), 199-222.

Mundy, K. , Manion, C., Masemann, V. and Haggerty, M. (2007). Charting global education in Canada's elementary schools: Provincial, district and school level perspectives. Report for UNICEF Canada. Toronto: OISE, University of Toronto.

Pike, G., and Selby, D. (1988). *Global teacher, global learner*. London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton.

References

Selby, D. (1999). Global education: Towards a quantum model of environmental education. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education, 4*, 125-141.

Ulrich, W. (1991). Critical heuristics of social systems design. In R.L. Flood and M.C. Jackson (Eds.) *Critical systems thinking: Directed readings*, pp. 103-115. Chichester, England: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Young, J.M. (2003). Global education and good citizenship: An examination of student outcomes. unpublished Master's thesis, Simon Fraser University.

Young, J.M. (2014). Systems Thinking and Global Education: Towards a Framework for a Transformative Global Education Unpublished Doctoral thesis, Simon Fraser University.