

EDUCATION FOR THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

by Carol Zinn

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We have all heard the proverb, "It takes a whole village to raise a child," and are increasingly aware of its many implications and meanings. We have grown familiar with the language of global economy, interdependence, commonalities, partnership, stewardship, and teaching/learning processes. And perhaps our approaches to formal and informal education have struggled to embrace the ideas of multiculturalism, sustainability, ecological responsibility, and postmodernism. Given these possibilities, how do we shape our understanding of the world as a global village? How can we nurture a consciousness sensitive to the planet's health, the needs of the poor, and the dreams of our children's children? How are we educating today's students for tomorrow's world?

In order to educate for tomorrow's world, we must be able to envision that world — and to understand today's global village. While technology has brought the world into our living rooms, it remains difficult to fashion a meaningful understanding of the world. Many efforts have been made to lay out the current realities of population, poverty, illiteracy, diversity, politics, and economics in a way that fosters understanding.

One summary of the world situation states: "If we could shrink Earth's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all existing human ratios remaining the same, it would look like this: there would be 57 Asians, 21 Europeans, 14 from the Western Hemisphere, including North and South America, and 8 from Africa. Fifty-one would be female, 49 male. Seventy would be non-white, 30 white. Eighty would live in substandard housing. Half would suffer from malnutrition. One would be near death, and one would be near birth. Half of the entire village's wealth would be in the hands of only six people." In such a world, how can education foster service, leadership and citizenship?



First, education must be clear about its purpose. The shift from education for economic development to education for human development continues to prompt a critique of current educational philosophies and practices, at all levels and in all settings. The shifting paradigm is marked by many elements, as articulated by Duncan S. Ferguson, president of the Association of Presbyterian Colleges and Universities: "1) it is a shift from focusing on the part to the whole; 2) it is a shift from understanding reality in terms of static structures to understanding reality in terms of dynamic processes; 3) it is a shift from an objective pursuit of truth to an epistemology that incorporates personal and intuitive knowing; 4) it is a shift from understanding knowledge in terms of building blocks to seeing reality as a connected and interdependent network; and 5) it is a shift from believing that we have absolute and final certainty to approximate understanding and an appreciation of complexity and mystery."

Second, education must engage the complexities of the emerging global community, taking into account the profile of the world as it is and as it is becoming. This demands the development of educational philosophies attentive to the diversity of species, beliefs, cultures, and ways of knowing, as well as educational practices conducive to nurturing competent, creative, and critical learning. Educating for this complexity requires principles such as the following, offered by Dr. Ferguson: "1) academic excellence, 2) integration of faith and learning, 3) freedom of inquiry, 4) stewardship, 5) service, 6) community, 7) partnership, 8) ecological perspective,

9) ethical responsibility, and 10) an integrated, interdisciplinary approach in our quest for knowledge." The emerging global community compels us to educate for a consciousness that is global, critical, holistic, responsible, and interdependent.

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As the 21st century approaches, the teaching/learning process of living, working, and relating as members of the global village must become common knowledge. To learn more about "Educating for Global Citizenship," please contact Eileen Gannon or Carol Zinn at GEA. ♦