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Globalization as Continuing Colonialism: Critical Global Citizenship Education in an Unequal World

In an unequal world, education about global inequality can be seen as a controversial but necessary topic for social science to deal with. Even though the world no longer consists of colonies and colonial powers, many aspects of the global economy follow the same patterns as during colonial times, with widening gaps between the world's richest and the world's poorest. An analysis of Finnish textbook texts includes practical examples of how globalization is portrayed within basic education. It reveals that the textbooks vary in their interpretations of the relationship between colonialism and globalization. The people of the North are rarely portrayed as responsible for the poverty in the South. Globalization is not described as a politically implicated phenomenon. The article also presents the critical global citizenship education initiative as an approach to the topic. It suggests that students can learn to challenge common assumptions that conceal the historical and structural roots of power relations. Teaching about privilege can be seen as another supplementary method to help students understand their position in the world.

Keywords:

Social science, global inequality, social studies, Finland, history, geography, critical global citizenship education, critical literacy, textbook research

1 Introduction

When discussed within education, the concepts of globalization and the global economy are often seen as something fatalistic that simply takes place before our eyes. There is a need to rethink this and recognize globalization as "historically constituted, politically implicated and culturally calibrated" (Popkewitz & Rizvi, 2009, p.1). Even though the world no longer consists of colonies and colonial powers, there are structures that affect people in the same way. For example, the International Monetary Fund, which has become a global center of power (Harvey, 2006), can be seen to impose global coloniality (Grosfoguel, 2008). The IMF is under the control of the US and Europe, with the US having veto rights. Two European nations have more voting power in the IMF than all the African nations combined (Monbiot, 2012). The gap between the world's rich (often, but not always situated in the West) and the world's poor (mostly situated outside the West) seems to be bigger today than it was during colonial times, even though poorer countries have caught up with richer ones (Lindert & Williamson, 2003; Beddoes, 2012; BBC, 2015; World income equality, n.d.). As of today, half of the world's wealth is in the hands of the richest one percent. Sixty-two people own as much wealth as half of the world's population. This has been called a major risk to human progress, in both rich and poor countries (Oxfam, 2016). Apart from economics, the rule of the West is also seen in the proliferation of informal imperial networks of legal, cultural, media, security and military relations of power (Tully, 2005). Placing colonialism in the past, or ignoring it, makes us think that it does not affect the construction of the present situation (Andreotti, 2007).

However, a range of international issues, from the division of labor and manufacturing of clothes to international weapons trade, migration, refugee crises and tourism, can be understood as rooted in the past, in colonial settings. Still, discussing the roots of global inequality is not on the top of the agenda for education. In the words of Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014), we are living in a time when even the most repulsive social injustices do not bring about enough political will to effectively fight the injustices.

Teaching about global issues such as global inequality is in itself a controversial matter, and should be recognized as such (Peterson & Warwick, 2015). The disjunction between learning to recognize and oppose injustices and learning how to compete in the global economy can be seen as radical (Richardson & Abbot, 2009). Fathoming global inequality and its consequences involves a crisis in learning which creates a space for epistemic and ontological disorientation. The challenge of the educator is to pedagogically provoke and sustain this moment (ibid). This pedagogic intervention could perhaps be seen as opposed to the first core principle of the Beutelsbach Consensus ("Prohibition against overwhelming the pupil") (Baden-Württemberg State Centre for Civic Education, 2015). The controversial and potentially shocking nature of teaching about global injustice is apparent. That does not imply, however, that it should be avoided, since students might not understand how deeply questions of global inequality are embedded in their everyday lives if the topic is not presented in a way that truly affects them. In the students' everyday lives, they are not asked to question the origins of their clothes or other consumption items, and questions of global inequality are not debated in the media on a regular basis. It is possible to live a life without encountering these questions, but in school they can be seen as controversial issues that form a part of democratic education (Hess & Avery, 2008). Still, there is evidence that teachers, especially those with less experience, are afraid to tackle such controversial issues. They might be worried about their own lack of knowledge on the subject, about the structural constraint in schools, or about what parents or the community might think about the controversial discussion (Hess & Avery, 2008; Torney-Purta

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et al., 2001; Humes, 2012). In Finland, Löfström has called for the introduction of moral and political issues in the curriculum in order to encourage teachers and textbook authors to bring up controversial issues (2013).

Analyzing Finnish school textbooks, this article discusses education about global injustice as a controversial issue in social science teaching. The article presents the global citizenship education initiative, particularly the critical version of it, as an approach to it. The textbook analysis includes practical examples of how textbooks refer to the relations between “us” and “them” in the process of decolonialization and within today’s global economy. The aim of the article is to explore the idea of globalization as the continuation of colonialism within the context of Finnish basic education. What world views are portrayed in the textbooks and how can they be challenged within critical global citizenship education?

2 Perspectives on globalization and colonial legacy in Finnish education

Finland is currently about to get a new curriculum for basic education (Finnish National Board of Education, FNBE, 2014), which will be implemented in schools from August 2016. The current curriculum (FNBE, 2004) lists human rights, equality and democracy as some of the underlying values of basic education. To a large extent, the core values of the coming curriculum continue on the same basis. The new curriculum stresses, for example, that education should support students in their search for peace and justice. Basic education should be seen as giving a basis for global citizenship, respecting human rights and calling for positive change. Before the creating of the coming curriculum, the Finnish National Board of Education implemented a global education development project together with schools and other participants. In an official policy document reporting on the project, the postcolonial interpretation of globalization, which is based on criticism of modernity, is emphasized as of particular interest for the project (Jääskeläinen, 2011).

Earlier research shows that Finnish social studies textbooks have presented questions of the economy from the perspective of economic growth and international economic competition, while geography textbooks have presented global issues from the viewpoint of sustainable development, more accurately echoing the core values of the curriculum (Ahonen, 2000). There have been academic concerns that education in social studies in Finland has had a weak position in schools (Suutarinen, 2000b), and that its division between the economy and politics has depoliticized the economy, featuring citizens as competitive individuals in a network of mutual relations of exchange (Löfström & van den Berg, 2013).

Even if Finland has not been considered a colonial power, it can be seen to share an epistemic construction of Western supremacy with the rest of Europe. This construction has been part of education, culture and politics over hundreds of years and can be called colonial complicity, referring to participation in colonialism as a crime, through shared hegemonic discourses (Vuorela, 2009). Something that can be seen as typical for the

Nordic countries (Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012), including Finland (Rastas, 2012), is the reluctance of society to grasp the extent of this legacy. The construction of Western supremacy, prevalent in society at large during the 20th century, was introduced and confirmed in school textbooks, although statements of blatant racism began to fade from the 1960s onwards (Marsden, 2001; Graves, 1996). In Finland, a geography textbook in 1968 was the first one to dismiss the theory of human races (Paasi, 1998). Yet even without overtly offensive statements, prejudices and stereotypes have prevailed in school textbooks. As an example from Sweden, Kamali (2005) shows how Swedish textbooks tend to take on a perspective of “us” Westerners and portray other peoples selectively as the opposites of progressive, civilized Europeans. In descriptions of what the concept of European means, the focus is on positive elements such as the Renaissance, revolutions and democracy, and not on wars, colonialism, slavery or genocide. Europe is portrayed as the most important continent while the rest of the world is introduced only in relation to Western Europe (Nordgren, 2006). In Finland, even an optional upper secondary course in history, specifically specializing in cultures outside Europe, is offered textbooks that focus mainly on the contacts between these cultures and Europe (Löfström, 2014).

Studying globalization calls for less Eurocentric teaching (Lösch, 2011). In Finland, Jokisalo (2009) emphasizes the need to forego Eurocentrism in history teaching. He suggests adding new perspectives to and critically studying the dominant understandings of history. As in Holocaust teaching, which has been fairly limited in Finnish education, but which could potentially provide space for wider narratives about human atrocities (see Gullberg, 2011; Dervin, 2015), the teaching of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, for instance, could be used as an educational moment for critical reflection. However, as Arja Virta’s (2008, p.117) material shows, the role of the slave trade in history might be seen (as one of her student teachers said when reflecting on his/her own previous teaching) as simply “one small vice alongside progress and the common good; almost as mandatory business for the benefit of the greater good.” A more critical approach to the role of the West in colonial practices and their effects on today’s global economy could contest the Eurocentric view. This would be important also in light of concerns voiced by researchers that attitudes reflected in textbooks can lead to negative attitudes towards minority groups and even racism (Pudas, 2013; Suutarinen, 2000a).

3 Textbook descriptions of the legacy of colonialism and its impact on today’s economy

This analysis is part of a research project based on a total of 76 Finnish textbooks in geography, history and social studies for grades 5 to 9 (11- to 16-year-olds). The research covers all the textbooks published in these subjects in Finnish and Swedish by the six major publishing companies in Finland between 2005 and 2010.

Textbooks reveal what narrative a society wishes to convey to the next generation, which means that an analysis of textbooks can be used to capture the social and political parameters of society (Schissler & Soysal, 2005). The aim of schoolbooks is to synthesize and represent information into pieces of information that are generally regarded as useful and objective (Loftsdóttir, 2010). Discussing objectivity in the context of social science teaching is particularly problematic, however, since there can be different understandings of what is seen as objective. There is a need to see textbooks as part of society (Apple, 2004; Crawford, 2003). They are in society, come from society, but also influence society by creating a version of what can be seen as objective knowledge. In Laclau's and Mouffe's (1985/2001) version of discourse analysis, the world should not be seen as a reality existing out there, needing to be uncovered in order to be understood (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Instead, they see everyone as constantly creating an understanding of what is real and true through talk, text and actions. They consider this creating objectivity.

Laclau and Mouffe include the concept of nodal points in their version of discourse analysis. Nodal points can be seen as privileged signs around which other signs are ordered (Winther, Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). In the context of an educational policy debate, global citizenship education can actually be seen as an example of a nodal point itself since different discourses attempt to fill it with meaning (Mannion, Biesta, Priestley & Ross, 2011). In the process of analyzing the textbooks for this study, certain concepts or themes emerged as nodal points since they could be seen as more actively taking part in the "fixing of meaning" (Laclau & Mouffe 2001, p. 113). These include concepts such as war (Mikander, 2012), migration and population questions (Mikander & Holm, 2014), "Western values" (Mikander, 2015b) and colonialist "discoveries" (Mikander, 2015a).

This article analyzes the articulations that relate to globalization and decolonization. This means that textbooks that included descriptions of decolonial struggles and current economic relations between Western countries and others were further analyzed. These topics were brought up in history, geography and social studies textbooks. The passages that focused on the topics in question were re-examined and analyzed. This article includes quotes from ten textbooks. These ten have been chosen because they illustrate different ways of approaching the controversial topics that are in focus. Two are history textbooks, three are geography textbooks and five are textbooks in social studies. The reason for including history, geography and social studies textbooks is that they approach the topic of global inequality from different angles, even if the main idea is not to make any comparisons between the perspectives of the subjects in general. History textbooks construct an understanding of the relations between the former colonies and the former colonial powers around the time of the liberation. Geography textbooks discuss the role of colonialism in the economic reality of different countries today, especially in relation to Africa. In their

descriptions of the current global economy, most grade 9 social studies textbooks also make references to colonial times. Thus, there is a need for an analysis of how the links between colonialism and today's global economy are presented in all these textbooks, since no single school subject can be seen to have a monopoly on this question. This is the focus of the following analysis.

4 Decolonization and global power relations in history textbooks

In history textbooks, the descriptions of what happened when the former colonies became independent countries vary. Some, such as the following, are critical towards the role of the colonial powers:

The colonial rule finally came to an end after the UN general assembly demanded freedom for the people of the colonies in 1960. The old reasoning about the right of the Western countries to rule and civilize the rest of the world lost its significance. During the "year of Africa", 1960, no less than 20 African states became independent. The independence spread like a wave during the 1960s. The independence process did not take place without problems. The old colonial powers meddled with the affairs of their former colonies in order to maintain their economic privileges... The colonies were suppressed to serve the economic needs of the colonial power. Often, the colony produced only a few raw materials for the industrial use of the colonial power. Several African countries still produce only raw materials or agricultural products, because there has been very little industrialization of the continent. After independence, the riches of the continent have no longer benefitted the colonial powers, but instead, the big companies of the West (Aikalainen 8, pp. 166-167).¹

The role of colonialism in today's global economy and the responsibility of the former colonial powers are spelled out, particularly in the last sentence. Big companies are said to have taken the role of the former colonial powers. This can be interpreted as a description of globalization as continuing colonialism. The reader is encouraged to empathize with the people of the colonies during the decolonization process. However, the following quote from another grade 8 history textbook offers a different perspective concerning the independence of former African colonies. The text clearly takes the side of the colonial powers:

The liberation process of black Africa started in Ghana, which became independent in 1957. This inspired the other states, and suddenly, they all wanted independence... When the superpowers realized how strong the African independence movements were, they tried to meet the demands of their colonies with various political reforms. France created consultative bodies in its colonies and let the colonies send representatives to the French national assembly. Great Britain reformed the constitutions of its colonies and made contacts with



the leading circles in the colonies. But both France and Great Britain were surprised by the fast pace at which the colonies liberated themselves. Without education and without preparation, they threw themselves into independence, and the consequences were destructive for the new countries. The only exception was Ghana, where the blacks had governed before independence (Horisont, p. 322-323).

According to the text, the responsibility for destruction in the post-independence colonies should be placed in the hands of the people of the former colonies for demanding independence too hastily. It states that France and Great Britain tried to accommodate the needs of the people of the colonies, but that this was not enough. The text includes descriptions of the colonized peoples which can be interpreted as patronizing, such as the suggestion that "suddenly they all wanted independence." The readers are not encouraged to understand their situation. The reasoning of this textbook quote brings to mind Sepúlveda's [16th century] argument that Europe's belief in its own superior culture leads to the idea that the victims of colonization are themselves responsible for their victimization (Dussel & Mendieta, 1996). The page also includes a drawing in the form of a cartoon. It is titled "The former and the new lords" and shows two pictures. One is a "before" picture, in which naked black Africans wearing something only around their waists are offering a basket of fruit to a white man in a shirt, shorts and a hat. He is sitting in an armchair, smoking and drinking a glass [of gin?]. In the second, "after" picture, the setting is the same, but white men in suits are offering bags of money to a black man sitting in a leopard-clad armchair. He is dressed in traditional African clothing, and smoking and drinking. The point of the drawing seems to be to illustrate how the balance of power has turned after the independence movements. Instead of the colonized people offering goods to the colonial lord, European politicians or businessmen are now offering goods to the native African leader. To suggest that the "tables turned", so that European businessmen or political leaders would have been in the same position as the colonized peoples after independence, can be seen to suggest that the power relations in the postcolonial world are opposite of those at play during colonial times. This shows a lack of analysis of postcolonial power structures.

5 Geography textbooks and reasons for poverty

In the geography textbooks, descriptions of global inequality are particularly interesting in the case of Africa. The continent is often described mainly as poor; however, this is rarely shown to be related to colonialism. One geography textbook (Jäljillä 6, pp. 90-91) lists general reasons for poverty in Africa, such as a lack of pure natural resources, unequally distributed natural resources, consequences of war, and natural disasters. In a separate passage, it mentions that one background factor for the poverty of some countries may be their colonial history. It then explains that during those times,

European states took over the natural resources of the country, inhibiting its own production from developing. By limiting the actions of the European states to a particular colonial period, and by focusing on only natural resources, current unjust global policies that maintain these structures are left obscure. Another geography textbook, however, includes a passage titled "Colonialism left eternal scars on Africa." It describes in detail how the "white conquerors" built plantations and an infrastructure that only benefitted their own interests, and how the borders that were drawn led to wars and consequently to refugees (Koulun biologia ja maantieto 5, 2006, p. 73). The chapter ties the colonial past to the subsequent wars and refugee situations.

The following textbook quote describes the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo:

The Democratic Republic of Congo has more natural riches than many other countries in Africa. The copper mines are perhaps the richest in the world and copper is exported, even though the export of diamonds is more important still. ... Despite the rich mines, Congo is still a poor country with big debts to other countries. This is because so much money is used for wars and fighting within the country (Biologi och geografi för år 6, p. 96).

In the analysis of the textbook quotes such as the one above, it is necessary to look not only at what is being made explicit, but also at what is being excluded. A text which discusses the Democratic Republic of Congo without any reference to its history, such as its exploitation by Belgium's King Leopold (which took place in fairly recent history), fails at describing the situation. In the passage above, wars and fighting are suggested as the reasons for money being wasted. However, the text does not encourage the students to ask critical questions about the underlying factors of the wars or the debts.

6 Social studies textbooks explaining global inequality

In Finland, social studies is studied in grade 9, the last year of basic education. The social studies textbooks provide one more angle on the relation between colonialism and globalization in their descriptions of today's global economy. Some social studies textbooks refer to colonialism as at least part of the reason for the West's current wealth:

Europe is a continent with a small population but great wealth. In part, its prosperity grew as a result of centuries of suppressing other peoples, for example, in Africa and Asia (Kaleidoskooppi 9, p. 11).

Even though the colonies later achieved their independence, the structure of trade is still the same, with the consequence that poor countries become even poorer and the rich get richer. The gap between them keeps growing. Additionally, the developing countries are badly indebted to the rich countries (Aikalainen 9, p. 117).

The second quote is exceptionally clear in spelling out the link between colonialism and globalization. It says



that “the structure” is the same. One textbook (Yhteiskunta NYT 9, p. 155) that discusses the same phenomena even suggests that this phenomenon is called *neocolonialism*. On the other hand, the textbooks do not portray the current globalization as politically implicated. It can be seen as typical for social studies textbooks to portray globalization as more of a force of nature than as the result of a political process. In one social studies textbook, globalization is described as providing plenty of opportunities for the development and welfare of the whole world. The textbook, however, mentions a problem connected with globalization, which is that: “international human rights agreements are binding only to states, not to multinational companies, which are the central actors of globalization” (Yhteiskunnan tuulet 9, p. 239). A statement like this, however accurate, might deflate the reader, since it obscures the possibility for change through a political process. Several textbooks ask the students to reflect on globalization, but mostly simply in terms of in what ways the phenomenon is “good” or “bad”, for Finland and for other countries. Asking students to reflect upon the benefits and drawbacks of phenomena such as globalization is not necessarily a bad thing, however, it could be argued that the reflections could go deeper and be more critical. One social studies textbook (Ungdom och samhälle, p. 167), refers to 380 people owning as much as half the world’s population and asks the students how this situation has emerged and whether this is good or bad. The same book includes the following rhetorical question that is not answered or open up further in the book:

Big multinational companies produce goods cheaply in countries where labor does not cost that much per hour. It is not uncommon to have offers in our shops where three shirts are sold for a total of less than 10 euros. One can wonder what the textile worker in Malaysia finds in his/her wallet after an hour of work (Ungdom och samhälle, p. 156-157)?

In the discussion about global labor arbitrage, the social studies textbooks tend to portray the phenomenon in a depoliticized light. The following statement can be seen as an example of this:

The production is transferred to so-called cheap countries, since the taxation, the environmental legislation and the laws determining workers’ rights there are so primitive that the company can ignore them (Aikalainen 9, p. 116).

The descriptions of global inequalities might leave the students with questions concerning what can be done to improve the situation. The most common answer to this, in the textbooks, is through consumer choices. The responsibility of students for making a better world is thus not only individualized, but also linked to economical choices, rather than for instance political engagement.

In their descriptions about the trade relations between poorer and richer countries, the role of the “West” or the

“industrialized countries” is portrayed slightly differently in different social studies textbooks. The following textbook quote describes Africa as a victim of global trade:

Global trade is dictated mainly by the industrialized countries. Most African countries are still producers of one raw material, and their share of the world trade is very small. The numerous wars and ethnic conflicts have kept investors away from Africa (Kaleidoskooppi 9, p. 206).

Here, the “industrialized countries” are described as the ones dictating global trade. The political side of globalization is specified more in this quote than in the previous one. However, in addition to perhaps being somewhat outdated, since many of the fastest growing economies today are in Africa (Holodny, 2015), texts such as the one above could benefit from a more critical analysis that further elaborate on the interrelated nature of trade, raw materials, wars and investors. The wars and conflicts in Africa are described as reasons for investors staying away from Africa, but there is no discussion about the role of investors in the often dubious extraction of rare materials or the effects this has on the instability of the region. Instead, the image portrayed is that well-intentioned investors would like to come in and help if the African ethnic groups only stopped fighting. In other textbooks, the role of richer countries is described as more dubious:

In order to reduce the gap in the standard of living, the structure of the world trade should be altered so that the developing countries would receive a decent price for their products. Then they would be able to develop their economies and raise their standard of living. This is something that the rich industrialized countries are not willing to do (Yhteiskunta NYT 9, p. 156).

A simplified version of the same message is included in another textbook (Ungdom och samhälle, p. 165), stating that the Western world “became rich through free trade, now that we are rich we do not allow the poor countries to sell freely.” These statements are more explicit about the role of political decision-making in the development of globalization and global inequalities. They criticize the inequality of the current global economy, however, they do not encourage the students to challenge the principles or global power relations.

7 Critical global citizenship education from a privileged position

In the education about globalization and global inequality, there is room for new approaches to teaching. The Global Citizenship Education initiative calls on teachers to help their students “develop the knowledge, skills and values needed for securing a just and sustainable world in which all may fulfill their potential” (Oxfam, 2006). Children and young people are encouraged to “develop empathy and an active concern” for other people on the planet. This requires knowledge and



understanding of concepts such as social justice, equity, globalization, interdependence, peace and conflict. It also requires skills such as critical thinking and the ability to challenge injustice, as well as values and attitudes such as a commitment to social justice and the belief that people can make a difference (Oxfam, 2006). During the last decade, the educational literature on Global Citizenship Education (GCE) has grown exponentially (Andreotti & Pashby, 2013). One strand of GCE is called critical global citizenship. Its advocates suggest that conventional pedagogical GCE initiatives are too often produced in particular Northern or Western contexts, and tend to turn a blind eye to historical power inequalities that are embedded in today's global issues and relations (de Oliveira & de Souza, 2012; Andreotti & Pashby, 2013). They state that material relationships are often presented as if they were not historical or structural, but the result of fortune (Andreotti, Jefferess, Pashby, Rowe, Tarc & Taylor, 2010). The fact that students in Finnish schools are often told that being born in Finland is like "winning the lottery" could serve as an example of such lack of analysis.

Instead of telling students how "lucky" they should feel, as in the example of Finnish students "having won the lottery", de Oliveira & Pashby (2013) urge educators to focus on questions such as "What creates poverty? [What creates wealth?] How do different lives have different value? How are these two things connected? What are the relationships between social groups that are over-exploited and social groups that are over-exploiting? How are these relationships maintained? How do people justify inequalities? What are the roles of schooling in the reproduction and contestation of inequalities in society? What possibilities and problems are created by different stories about what is real and ideal in society?" (p. 423-424). In the search for answers to questions such as these, students can learn to relate their material reality, such as the food they eat and the clothes they wear, to a historical, structural and material analysis.

As an example, the previously mentioned geography textbook about the Democratic Republic of Congo (p. 9), which was portrayed as remaining a poor country despite of its rich mines, because of so much money wasted on wars and fighting, could be approached through questions such as: How is it possible for a country with rich mines to have such a big population of poor people? What is the origin of the large debts? What lies behind the wars? What is the role of the current global weapons trade? Who benefits and how? Asking questions such as these can be used in order to promote critical literacy, a method that can be used within critical global citizenship. Critical literacy can be seen to provide space for students to reflect on their own context and assumptions. It starts from the assumption that all knowledge is constructed in particular contexts and cultures. With this in mind, learners can begin to learn from other cultures and contexts, or to think *otherwise* (Andreotti, 2006). The focus in critical literacy should be on challenging knowledge that has reached hegemonic status and

questioning power relations, discourses and identities (Shor, 1999; Peterson & Warwick, 2015).

Teaching about global inequality brings challenges to educators in the West. When even educational materials with good intentions run the risk of maintaining the idea of the self as normal, superior or altruistic (Ideland & Malmberg, 2014; Layne & Alemanji, 2015), teachers are left with a demanding task. One more way to approach the topic of global injustice is through the concept of privilege (Case, 2013). Privilege can be seen as the upside of oppression. Studying privilege, or systemic unearned advantage, can change the analysis of social systems altogether (McIntosh, 2013). If students were taught to question the dominant explanation of meritocracy, which suggests that a country like Finland has advantages only because it has "earned" its position, they could also start questioning the idea of the global economy as a race (Wise & Case, 2013). Teaching about privilege means refraining from personal guilt and shame, but also from consolation. The privileged position could be seen as having a bank account to withdraw from. "Just as a hammer can be used to build a home or commit a violent assault, privilege can be used for constructive or destructive purposes" (Wise & Case, 2013, p. 30). Teaching about privilege is a way to empower, not deflate, students from privileged positions in a global setting. Together with the methods of critical literacy, teaching about privilege can be a way to effectively help learners understand the world and their position in it.

8 Concluding remarks

Hess & Avery (2008) see a problem with the typical definition of teaching something controversial as simply ensuring that students understand a range of views and the arguments for them. This is seen to presuppose that there is an agreement about whether the different views are normatively consistent with the larger purposes of education. Their example is racism; as a question, it is settled: its wrongfulness is considered undeniable, but what governments should do about it is up for discussion. Finding the line between controversial and settled is the key question. What kind of topics should be up for discussion? Teachers should be explicit about what criteria determine controversial and settled issues, even though these might be different over time. The statement by Oulton, Dillon & Grace (2004) on how teachers should relate to controversial issues is worth quoting at length:

While supporting the need to avoid indoctrination, our concern is that the requirement to maintain balance is unhelpful as perfect balance is probably impossible to achieve. Teachers have to make subjective views about what information to present... Even if the teacher thinks they have presented matters as fairly as possible, others with a different worldview may still judge the presentation as biased. An alternative ... is to be open about the fact that balance can never be fully achieved but counter this by developing in students a critical awareness of bias and make this one of the central learning objectives of the work (p. 416-417).

Developing a critical awareness of bias can be seen to go well with the critical global citizenship education, critical literacy and the study of privilege.

The aim of this article has been to discuss the education of questions concerning global injustice and the roots of this within Finnish education. The critical global citizenship education initiative and the critical literacy method, as well as teaching about privilege, have been suggested as available approaches to the concept of global inequality. The analysis of textbooks shows that the topic of global injustice is touched upon in textbooks in history, geography and social studies. Different textbooks within the same subject might take different perspectives even though they follow the same curriculum. This was the case in history textbook descriptions of liberation movements in the former colonies, or in geography textbook descriptions of the colonial legacy and its consequences for the economy of African countries today. Among social studies textbooks, there is a tendency to portray globalization more as a “natural force” than as something politically constituted. The suggested educational approaches - critical global citizenship, critical literacy and the deconstructing of privilege – would challenge Eurocentric world views and bring opportunities for more analytical learning. By these approaches, students could learn to question their own role and the role of their own society, including the contents of their education, in the reproduction of inequalities. The controversial nature of education about global inequality and the role of the West are clarified in this article. There is a need to tackle the questions, even if they might make students uneasy. The idea is not to deflate students or to bring about guilt; instead, the aim is to point at the politically constructed and contingent nature of the forces of globalization. By learning to ask critical questions, students can begin to challenge the ruling assumptions of global inequality as something necessarily static. Teaching about global inequality from a critical point of view can be challenging for educators, especially when the educational material, such as some of the textbooks quoted in this article, itself discourages critical thinking.

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Endnote

ⁱ All quotes were translated by the author and language checked by a professional translator.

