

# Global Education in Canadian Elementary Schools: An Exploratory Study

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This article reports on the implementation of global education in Canadian elementary schools. Curriculum analysis and 76 interviews at school, ministry, and district levels revealed limited coordination among ministry, district and NGO efforts and little support for curriculum development and teacher training. In schools, fundraising for international charities is often equated with global education, while other aspects of global learning are neglected. Equating global education with fundraising raises concerns for less affluent communities. We argue that more comprehensive and systematic government support for global education, and greater collaboration among ministries, NGOs, and schools is needed for Canadian children to receive an equitable, quality introduction to global citizenship.

Key words: global citizenship, non-government organizations, social studies, teacher support

Cet article fait le point sur l'implantation de l'éducation planétaire dans les écoles primaires au Canada. L'analyse des programmes scolaires et 76 entrevues menées dans des écoles, dans les ministères et dans des arrondissements scolaires ont révélé qu'il existait une coordination restreinte entre le ministère, les arrondissements scolaires et les efforts des ONG et peu de soutien pour l'élaboration de programmes scolaires et la formation des enseignants. Dans les écoles, la collecte de fonds pour des organismes de bienfaisance internationaux est souvent assimilée à l'éducation planétaire tandis que d'autres aspects de l'éducation interculturelle sont négligés. L'assimilation de l'éducation planétaire aux collectes de fonds soulève des préoccupations pour les collectivités moins fortunées. Les auteurs soutiennent qu'il faut un soutien gouvernemental plus exhaustif et systématique de l'éducation planétaire et une collaboration accrue entre les ministères, les ONG et les écoles pour que tous les enfants canadiens reçoivent une initiation de qualité à la citoyenneté mondiale.

Mots clés : citoyenneté mondiale, organisations non gouvernementales, sciences humaines, soutien aux enseignants

In Canada and around the world, the idea that schools should equip children with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for participation in a more globalized world has become a standard feature of the education policy landscape (Rauner, 1998). Since the early 1990s, there have been both impressive academic efforts at curricular innovation around what is now broadly termed global education, and new research supporting the introduction of global education at ever-earlier grade levels (Davies, 2006; Sapiro, 2004).

To date, however, there has been relatively little research on how global education is being implemented in Canada, particularly at the elementary school level. This lack of research is somewhat surprising because there has been significant interest in global education among Canadian researchers (Pike, 1996; Schweisfurth, 2006; Sears, Clarke & Hughes, 1998), non-government organizations (Canadian Council for International Co-operation, [CCIC], 1996, 2004), teachers' unions, federal bodies (e.g., Canadian International Development Agency, [CIDA], 2006; Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2005; Department of Canadian Heritage, n.d.), and Ministries of Education. A 2001 review by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), (2001) concluded that even in the context of fiscal constraints and a back-to-basics policy orientation during the 1980s and 1990s: "The most noticeable trend has been a much higher level of integration of the themes of peace, democracy, human rights, international understanding and tolerance in both formal and non-formal education programs" (p. i).

In this article, we report on an exploratory study conducted in the fall of 2005 that looked at how global education was being implemented within Canadian elementary schools, especially in grades 4 to 6 (Mundy, Manion, Masemann, & Haggerty, 2007). We designed the study reported here to investigate the current situation of global education in Canadian elementary schools as well as the nature of the support for global education by schools, districts, provincial ministries, non-government partners, and other relevant federal bodies. Based on an analysis of provincial curricula, interviews in Ministries of Education, and interviews in a small sample of diverse school districts and schools, we also sought to reveal how global education might be better supported.

The research described in this article had three key components:

1. Analysis of the literature on global education and the development of a typology of the key themes and issues presented as represent-

ative of global education. We later used this typology as a starting point to assess the extent to which global education issues and approaches appeared in both the official elementary school curricula and the everyday practices described to us by teachers and administrators.

2. A review of the history of global education and development education in Canada, using secondary and primary sources.
3. Field research in seven Canadian provinces that included a detailed analysis of the provincial elementary curricula and interviews at the ministry, district, and school levels

We describe the first two of these research steps in more detail below, before moving on to the central focus of this article: our findings and analyses of the field research component.

#### DEFINITIONS, HISTORY, AND RESEARCH DESIGN

##### *Towards a Working Definition of Global Education*

Our review of the literature suggests that global education is a contested concept, whose origins can be traced to educational movements during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s for peace education, international development education, human rights education, multicultural education, environmental education, and social justice education (Anderson & Anderson, 1977; Fujikane, 2003; Hanvey, 1976; Pike & Selby, 1988, 1999, 2000; Osler, 1994, 2002; Rauner, 1998; Richardson, Blades, Kumano, & Karaki, 2003; Zachariah, 1989). By the early 1980s, global education was a well-established field of curriculum inquiry that had generated interest and support from teachers' organizations, United Nations (UN) bodies, and international aid agencies (O'Sullivan, 1999; Pike, 1996). Increasingly, global education appeared as a goal or theme in national curricula, often modified as "global citizenship education" to amplify the philosophy of active learning and public engagement that underpins the work of global education proponents (Davies, 2006; Rauner, 1998).

Although much debate surrounds the term "global education," our review of the academic literature on global education suggests that a set of ideals are commonly described as essential for high quality global education. Drawing heavily from the work of Pike and Selby (1988, 1999, 2000), we set out these ideals as six axioms (see Figure 1).

Global education is also often conceptualized along a continuum - with recent global education ideals on the one hand and more traditional

1. A view of the world as one system, and of human life as shaped by a history of global interdependence.
2. Commitment to the idea that there are basic human rights and that these include social and economic equality as well as basic freedoms.
3. Commitment to the notion of the value of cultural diversity and the importance of intercultural understanding and tolerance for differences of opinion.
4. A belief in the efficacy of individual action.
5. A commitment to child-centered or progressive pedagogy.
6. Awareness and a commitment to planetary sustainability.

**Sources:** Anderson & Anderson, 1977; Case, 1997; Evans & Reynolds, 2004; Hanvey, 1976; Osler, 1994; Oxfam, 1997; Pike & Selby, 1988, 1999, 2000; Richardson, 1979

Figure 1: Six Common Global Education Dispositions Described in the Literature

practices in the teaching of world issues on the other (see in Table 1 below). For example, teaching about global social justice and solidarity might be located on one end of the continuum, while teaching that concentrates on national interests, economic competitiveness, or the role of charity would occur on the other.

In this study, we used the global education axioms (Figure 1) and the continuum (Table 1) as a starting point for our analysis of provincial curricula and school-level global education practices. In doing so, we did not intend to imply that either the axioms or the continuum captures completely the debates about the best or most efficacious approaches to global education. However, for an empirical study of the sort we conducted, we needed a starting point from which to assess the extent or degree to which Canadian elementary schools were introducing different global education themes and ideals. We used both the axioms and the

continuum as heuristic tools to understand and analyse practices at the district, school, and official curricular levels.

Table 1  
A Global Education Continuum

Global Education Teaches... ↔ Global Education Does Not Teach...

Global Interdependence (linking local to global)	Them/us mentality
Global Social Justice	Global Competitiveness
Solidarity	Charity
Tolerance	Chauvinism
Diversity as a positive value	Uniformity as a positive value
Cosmopolitan or post-national citizenship (all humans share same rights and responsibilities )	National citizenship (emphasizing the nation as main or sole allegiance, and national competitiveness)
Active citizenship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>transformative potential of individual and collective action</li> <li>role of international organizations in fostering global citizenship</li> </ul>	Elite forms of citizenship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sole focus on formal mechanisms of the national and international government: leadership, laws, electoral politics, etc.</li> </ul>
Environmentalism	Androcentrism
Critical thinking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>including deliberative and decision-making skills</li> </ul>	Passive or uncritical thinking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"transmission approaches to learning"</li> </ul>
Attention to sources of disagreement and conflict <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>including forms of "structural violence" and structured social exclusion</li> </ul>	Issues and cultures in ways that ignore conflictual and contested issues.
Strong sense of moral purpose - (often including a sense of outrage about injustice)	A value-neutral view of world issues

**Source:** Anderson & Anderson, 1977; Case, 1997; Evans & Reynolds, 2004; Hanvey, 1976; Osler, 1994, 2002; Oxfam, 1997; Pike & Selby, 1988, 1999, 2000; Richardson, 1976.

*The History of Global Education in Canada*

During the 1960s and 1970s Canadian volunteer teachers, returning from work in the developing world (Lyons, 1996), introduced what was then described as “development education” into Canadian schools, as did a growing number of non-government development organizations (Brodhead & Pratt, 1996; Smillie, 2004) and university faculties engaged in development education (Case, 1997; Lyons, 1996; Pike, 1996). Such efforts were supported by a variety of historical factors and changes in Canadian policies and political culture during the same period. The increasing emphasis on humane internationalism (Pratt, 1990, 1996) in Canadian foreign policies, and on multiculturalism and social equality in domestic ones (Kymlicka, 1998; Manzer 1994; Zachariah, 1989), each fed into a growing movement for international development education in Canadian schools. Curricular initiatives with a global education inflection began to receive funding from a variety of federal sources: the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, among others (Joshee, 2004; Lyons, 1996).

In the 1980s several university-based educators in Canada advocated for a more unified approach in Canadian schools to what they had begun to term “global education” (Lyons, 1996; Pike, 2000; Pike & Selby, 1988, 1999, 2000). Many non-government actors engaged in development education in Canada picked up their work, which was supported by CIDA-funded regional councils for international cooperation. However, formal curricula across Canada were slow to incorporate global education themes, despite academic and non-government efforts (CMEC, 1994). No systematic effort to introduce global issues appeared in Canadian elementary schools; instead, a wide variety of often competing curricular initiatives characterized the field.

The fiscal conservatism that swept across Canadian institutions in the 1990s heavily affected global education efforts. Funding cuts within the Canadian International Development Agency’s public engagement program eroded the development education capacities of many NGOs, while a “back-to-basics” emphasis on numeracy and literacy inside provincial ministries of education limited official interest in the teaching of citizenship and world issues. Moreover, federal and provincial concerns for increasing economic competitiveness inserted a new inflection to the study of world issues in schools (Joshee, 2004; Pike, 1996). Nonetheless, NGOs, universities, and teachers’ unions remained active advocates for

global education in this period (CMEC, 1994; Pike, 1996; Schweisfurth, 2006).

Since 2000, global education has enjoyed renewed government support (Evans, 2006). Provincial ministries of education, following international trends, now pay increasing attention to “global citizenship education,” and more often introduce global education themes in elementary school curricula (Evans, 2006; Evans & Reynolds, 2004). Funding for global education from the federal government, through the Canadian International Development Agency (2001, 2004) has been on the rise.

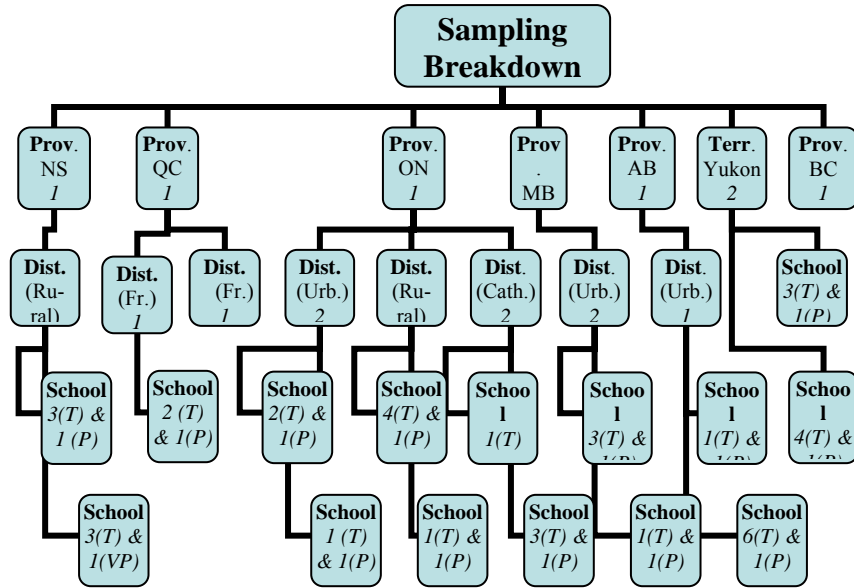
Mounting interest in, and funding for global education in Canada brings with it a growing need for more comprehensive assessments of how well global education is being supported and delivered across Canada, and how such support and practices might be improved.

#### *Field Research Design*

The core component of our study involved field research at the provincial, district, and school levels in British Columbia (provincial level only), Yukon, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia. Details of the sample breakdown are provided in Figure 2.

At the provincial level, we focused on (a) identifying global education themes within the Ministries’ elementary school curricula and student learning goals, (b) locating the sources of support for global education that the Ministry received from other provincial, federal, and non-governmental bodies, and (c) identifying any ministry-level mechanisms for supporting global education activities at the district and school level. For each provincial case, we conducted a partial analysis of the entire elementary school curricula and a full analysis of the curricula for grades 4 to 6, using a careful coding protocol. A team of researchers led by Dr. Karen Mundy conducted semi-structured interviews with one or more Ministry of Education staff, and solicited relevant policy documents.

As represented in the sampling matrix presented in Figure 2, the research team, also conducted semi-structured interviews within a small number of districts and schools.<sup>1</sup> Informants were asked to define global education “in their own words” as well as to describe what global education materials or activities they engaged with. Informants were also asked how their efforts to introduce global education at the elementary school level were being supported by officials in their ministries or districts, or by other external partners, such as NGOs; and what kinds of



Notes: All numerals refer to the number of informants. "T" = teachers; "P" = principal; "VP" = vice principal (for example, in the second row, first box, two interviews were conducted in one rural district).

Figure 2: Sampling Breakdown of Interviews by Province/Territory, District, and School

challenges they faced around global education. The goal was to provide a snapshot of the range of efforts and challenges experienced within schools, as well as to provide an overview of the kinds of organizational and policy supports provided by district and provincial educational administrations in each provincial jurisdiction.

To get our district sample, an initial short list of districts of average size within each province was created, including both Catholic (n = 1), and French boards (n = 2). We then approached a small number of districts for research permissions. Eight districts across the five provinces<sup>2</sup> ultimately agreed to participate in the study. Two of these districts were rural-based, while the remaining six districts were urban. We drew the schools in our sample from a short list of 10 schools in each district



which appeared to be of typical size for that district, and we visited at least one school identified by district staff as active in global education.

In analyzing the data that we collected in each province, we sought first to understand how teaching about global and international issues is formulated and supported. In each province we tried to uncover tensions within conceptions of global education at three key levels of implementation: provincial, district, and school. For this we looked not only at the formal curricula, but also at how the formal policies and support provided by provincial Ministries of Education were being translated into actual practices within schools. We documented other sources of support and information that affected school-level practices, asking informants to describe the kinds of non-government resources and partnerships that informed their global education activities, and to tell us how these resources and partnerships could be improved.

We also sought – quite cautiously given the variations and small size of our provincial samples – to compare these provincial experiences by looking for similarities and differences in how global education is defined, supported, and enacted at each level of implementation across the provincial cases.

#### GLOBAL EDUCATION IN PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL CURRICULA

We began this study by analyzing provincial and territorial elementary school curricula in our seven cases, identifying where and how global education-related themes and issues were presented.<sup>3</sup> We looked first at the curricular guidelines for the entire elementary school cycle, and then in more detail at curricula for grades 4 to 6, where the majority of education about global issues occurs. To facilitate cross-province comparisons, Tables 2a and 2b summarize this analysis by province

Our findings from the curriculum analysis suggest that a high degree of variation occurs across provinces in the extent to which curricular guidelines explicitly refer to global education (or “global citizenship education”) as a curricular goal. For example, “global citizenship” is mentioned in the Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon, and the Manitoba curricula. Three provinces, Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and the Yukon concentrate on global issues in a specific grade or year during the elementary school cycle. In Ontario and Quebec, global education themes appeared but were not captured as a focal point for elementary school student competencies.

Table 2a: Comparison of Global Education in Provincial Elementary Curricula

	Alberta	B. C.	Manitoba	Nova Scotia
Revision	2005	1998	2003- present	1999 -present
Which subject areas introduce global ed.?	Social studies (Cooperation, conflict resolution also appear in English, Health, Drama, Music curricula)	Social studies	Social studies	Social studies
Which grades?	Concentrated in Grade 3 introduction to "global citizenship"	"Global citizenship" concentrated in Grade 6, with other global education themes integrated Gr. 1-6	As early as Kindergarten, with global education themes integrated Gr. 1-6.	Concentrated in Grade 6 "Culture Quest" curriculum.
Central goals and concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Active and global citizenship</li> <li>•Social action learning outcomes</li> <li>•Identity</li> <li>•"Critical thinking"</li> <li>•Child-centered pedag.</li> <li>•Multiple perspectives</li> <li>•Respect for Diversity</li> <li>•Provocative issues and questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Human rights</li> <li>•Global citizenship</li> <li>•Critical thinking/ multiple perspectives</li> <li>•Aboriginal studies and multiculturalism</li> <li>•Tolerance and respect for diversity</li> <li>•Human rights</li> <li>•Global competitiveness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Citizenship and "Global citizenship"</li> <li>•Global interdependence</li> <li>•Equity/social justice</li> <li>•Respect for ethno-cultural diversity</li> <li>•Environmental stewardship</li> <li>•Systems world view</li> <li>•Thinking critically</li> <li>•Child centered pedagogy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Citizenship</li> <li>•Interrelationships</li> <li>•Critical thinking/ Application of knowledge</li> <li>•Cultural pluralism</li> <li>•Race relations</li> <li>•Human rights</li> <li>•World cultures, politics, inequality</li> </ul>

<p>Gaps or tensions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Issues framed as national or provincial (e.g., human rights &amp; environment).</li> <li>•Anthropocentric</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Global economic imperatives not related to issues of global justice</li> <li>•Anthropocentric</li> <li>•Limited opportunity for active citizenship or discussion of controversy - focus on the past</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Topics presented in ways that do not invite critical thinking (e.g., colonialism).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Critical thinking not supported in some aspects of the curriculum (immigration); issues of ethno-cultural conflict avoided.</li> <li>•Global economic imperatives not related to global justice</li> </ul>
<p>Ministry supports and views</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry is collaborative in curriculum development</li> <li>• Lead teachers and Professional Development Consortia contribute to implementation</li> <li>•Newsletters, summer institutes and online guides</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry's main role as creation of Integrated Resource Packages, occasional workshops.</li> <li>• Ministry website and newsletter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Ministry's main role =setting curriculum &amp; int'l exchange</li> <li>•No plans to evaluate social studies</li> <li>•Problems and delays in roll out of new curriculum create frustration.</li> <li>•Implementation via social studies coordinators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Ministry's main role = setting curricular standards</li> <li>•No plans to evaluate</li> <li>•Limited interest in cross-cutting opportunities for global education</li> </ul>

Sources: Alberta Education/Alberta Learning, 2003 (Validation Draft); Alberta Education, 2005; Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, 1996, 1999; British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1998; Manitoba Education and Youth, 2003; Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, n.d.; Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2003.

Table 2b: Comparison of Global Education in Provincial Elementary Curricula

	Ontario	Quebec	Yukon (using B.C. <i>curric.</i> )
Revision	2004	2001	1998
Which subject areas introduce global ed.?	Social studies (And in religious education in Catholic boards)	Social studies (To a lesser extent in Math, Science, Citizenship, and Moral Education).	Social studies
Which grades?	No explicit global ed focus - themes integrated Gr. 1-6	No explicit global ed focus - themes integrated Gr. 1-6	"Global citizenship" concentrated in Grade 6, with other global education themes integrated Gr. 1-6
Central goals and concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informed citizenship</li> <li>• Preparation for global competitiveness</li> <li>• Systems view</li> <li>• Interdependence</li> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Power and governance</li> <li>• Citizenship rights and responsibilities</li> <li>• Tolerance and respect for diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizenship rights and responsibilities</li> <li>• Social justice</li> <li>• Cultural diversity</li> <li>• Self-efficacy</li> <li>• Child-centered pedagogy</li> <li>• Action orientation</li> <li>• Env'tl awareness</li> <li>• Critical thinking</li> <li>• Cooperation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As in B.C. but with greater emphasis on First Nation's language and culture</li> <li>• Critical thinking</li> <li>• Global interdependence</li> </ul>
Gaps or tensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasizes national citizenship and interests (Canada-US relations).</li> <li>• Global economic imperatives not related to global justice</li> <li>• Co-operation in tension with competition</li> <li>• Action orientation limited</li> <li>• Critical thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No explicit links between domestic issues and global rights</li> <li>• Issues not framed as actionable problems.</li> </ul>	(As in B.C.)

	on issues like immigration avoided.		
Ministry supports and views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Ministry's main role = setting curricular standards (separate boards have considerable authority</li> <li>•Cut backs from 1990s limited professional development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Ministry's main role = setting curricular standards</li> <li>•Ministry also promotes international exchanges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Territorial board hosts Global Education Committee</li> <li>• Uses teacher-developed.</li> </ul>

Sources: British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1998; Ministère de l'Éducation du Gouvernement du Québec, 2001; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004, n.d.; Yukon Education, n.d.

Not surprisingly, social studies emerged as the curriculum area with the greatest concentration of global education-related topics and activities. Participants at the provincial/territory, district and school levels supported this initial finding; all participants identified the social studies curriculum as the subject area where most of the global education related lessons and topics were found. Only a small number of the teachers and administrators in our sample suggested that in addition to social studies other curriculum areas in the elementary school curriculum represented potential entry-points for the inclusion of global education: language arts (12 out of an n of 76), moral or religious education (3 times), science (3 times), health (1 time), mathematics (1 time), art (1 time), and music (1 time). For example, one participant (Teacher b - Quebec School 2) saw global education as a “cross-cutting issue” that could be integrated across curricular areas. A principal told us:

We certainly find global education in the social studies curriculum. Our music department fits global education into the program; in science there are certainly ties; there are connections in the language arts curriculum as well. In our art programs, we will often have teachers that take some of the ideas from global education areas. (Principal - Alberta School 3)

By and large, however, the idea that global issues should be infused across the curriculum (which many global education scholars have

advocated (e.g., Davies, 2006)) was weakly taken up in formal curriculum guidelines in the provinces we studied.

As can be seen in Tables 2a and 2b, most provinces have engaged in a fairly recent revision of their social studies curricula. As a result of these revisions, we found that elementary school-level social studies curricula across Canada emphasized many of the themes, attitudes, and dispositions valued in the literature on global education, including the importance of critical thinking, the ability to understand multiple perspectives, respect for diversity, and increasing global interdependence. Although Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon, and Manitoba explicitly refer to global citizenship as competence required at the elementary school level, the other provinces we surveyed formally link content knowledge about global issues to the development of dispositions supportive of "active citizenship" and "critical thinking." The Alberta and Manitoba curricula, in particular, stood out for their emphases on developing attitudes, skills, and knowledge necessary for what they termed active global citizenship. For example, the Alberta Ministry encourages children to "become active and responsible citizens, engaged in the democratic process and aware of their capacity to effect change in their communities, societies and world" (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 1). In Manitoba, the role of elementary school-level social studies is defined as "help[ing] students acquire the skills, knowledge, and values necessary to become active democratic citizens and contributing members of their communities, locally, nationally, and globally" (Manitoba Education and Youth, 2003, p. 1). In contrast, the Ontario Social Studies Guidelines emphasize a less activist stance, focusing on informed rather than active citizenship. The Ontario guidelines argue that students:

require the knowledge and skills gained from Social Studies and the study of history and geography in order to function as informed citizens in a culturally diverse and inter-dependent world and to participate and compete in a global economy. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 2)

Despite a rhetorical shift towards an emphasis on active citizenship, our curriculum analysis suggests that most provincial curricula tend to under-emphasize the actionable dimensions of global problems, often by focusing on non-controversial themes at the expense of more controversial ones. For example, many provinces direct students' attention to the "the value of immigration" but do not discuss "why people are forced to emigrate." They focus on historical examples of injustice or human

rights abuses, but do not link these to current international or domestic examples. Alberta stood out in this regard, for its use of provocative and open-ended questions about controversial issues as starting points for its social studies curriculum, and for its emphasis at each grade level on "social action learning outcomes." However, in Alberta as elsewhere, opportunities to draw links between domestic or local issues and international ones were rarely explored in the formal provincial curricula. All provincial social studies curricula tend to focus on national and regional identity at the expense of more cosmopolitan conceptions.

One of the main areas of tension across provincial curricula was between conceptions of global education linked to competitiveness in a global economy, and those more focused on global social justice and environmental sustainability. This tension appears quite explicitly in the goals set out for the Ontario curriculum (see quote above), and was raised as a challenge in many of our interviews with provincial and district staff as well as with teachers. We were surprised, however, at how rarely the formal elementary school curricula invited students to consider the trade-offs and dilemmas that economic expansion and globalization raised. Again, the formal curriculum seemed to avoid any area characterized by deep-seated conflicts of interest.

Our curricular analysis pointed to another interesting trend. Most Canadian provinces have moved away from the "expanding horizons" curricular philosophy during the elementary school years that emphasized moving from personal, family, local, regional, national, and world issues in cumulative fashion. Instead curricula now frequently highlight among the grades interrelationships across levels of spatial identity (e.g., between local and international). Such an approach is in keeping with much recent research on child development (Sapiro, 2004). However, such curricular reform varied significantly across provinces (see Tables 2a and 2b). For example, only a few provinces addressed the fact that children develop abstract categories and schemas of social relationships (including stereotypes, allegiances, and identities) at very young ages by introducing global education themes in the early elementary school years (Sapiro, 2004). Alberta, for example, focused its grade-3 social studies curriculum on "global citizenship." In Manitoba, the kindergarten curriculum reminded teachers 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" (Manitoba Education and Youth, 2003, p. 26).

Ultimately, the curriculum analysis stage of our study revealed that the integration of global education themes in provincial curricula varied in their timing, nature, and scope. Most provincial curricula left global education to the senior elementary school years, and most avoided the treatment of contentious issues. Although there was evidence of considerable convergence towards an inclusion of themes and dispositions related to global education, there was also a high degree of variation in the extent to which the competencies of a “global citizen” were recognized as central educational goals. This variation leads to significant differences in the kind of global education that children in Canada receive, and produces a dilemma for educators. Ensuring that global education is taught in a broadly consistent and comprehensive fashion, and that Canadian children have equal access to and training in issues of global citizenship, poses an important equity issue in its own right. Yet efforts to coordinate or even discuss provincial policies in this critical area were reported as quite limited.

#### PROVINCIAL AND DISTRICT-LEVEL SUPPORT MECHANISMS FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION

How do provincial ministries and district administrators support the greater inclusion of global education or related themes within formal elementary school curricula? Turning to our interviews with officials at these levels, we highlight a somewhat surprising finding. Despite increasingly strong inclusion of global education in the formal curricula, most officials we interviewed in education ministries and school boards across Canada viewed global education activities as an optional rather than a mandatory activity. Indeed, a significant number of the educational administrators in our sample expressed skepticism about the appropriateness of introducing global education themes at the elementary school level. Many told us that provision of pedagogical support for global education was not a top priority; they believed that it would be best to allow schools to work out their own approaches to global education through relationships developed with non-government actors.

In our interviews with Ministry staff, we were often told that their main role was to set curriculum guidelines and curricular standards. In most venues, resources for in-service training, information sharing, and cross-school learning were scarce; we were frequently reminded that global education (unlike literacy and numeracy) was not a top priority for Canadian educational systems. In many jurisdictions, a single social



studies specialist was responsible for training hundreds of teachers. Several informants drew attention to the impact of budgetary cuts during the 1990s on ministry-supported opportunities for professional development, as for example in Ontario where, "teachers were no longer able to take time off from teaching to attend to things and therefore the conferences that used to take place no longer do. . . . people hunkered down" (Ontario Provincial Official 2).

Ambivalence emerged in our interviews over the issue of whether global education themes were simply too complex for elementary students. Although formal curricula across Canada seemed to support the idea that elementary school children should be introduced to the challenges of complex interdependence in an increasingly globalized world, individual officials in Quebec, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Alberta each raised concerns about the appropriateness of global education in the elementary school years.

We were also told repeatedly during our interviews at ministry and district levels that the implementation of global education was best left "at the discretion" of individual teachers. The following comment from a Quebec official illustrates this recurrent emphasis on teacher discretion in the implementation of global education: "Pedagogical choices belong to the teacher. There are paths, but the way the teacher will use them is something else, and we no longer have the control" (Quebec Ministry Official 1).

Many administrators mentioned to us the important role they believed external partners, such as NGOs, played in the delivery of global education. However, district and provincial officials confirmed what we were told in our school-level interviews: that engagement with external partners was relatively uncoordinated and often left to the discretion of the school. Officials described the engagement of external partners in curriculum planning, development, and implementation as quite limited at both provincial and district levels. Typically such partners were consulted only at the early design stages of curricular revision, with little systematic opportunity for later engagement in the curriculum development and implementation phases. Nonetheless, several officials told us that engagement with the ministry in the curriculum development and revision process was the best way to see global education issues embedded in the curriculum.

Ministries or districts rarely attempted to guide external partnerships for global education. Many administrators told us that discretion

over partnerships with external organizations rested at the level of individual teachers and schools. In all but two cases (Ontario Catholic District, Yukon) district officials told us that they had no formal way to vet or encourage relationships with external partners beyond intermittent messages in newsletters and the circulation of materials and invitations. At the school level, we were often told that the *laissez-faire* approach that ministries and districts took to external partnerships produced an overwhelming volume of unvetted resources – difficult for most educators to assess and incorporate.

More generally, support from district and ministry staff for implementing global education was perceived as rare or absent in our school-level interviews. Teachers in our Alberta and Yukon case studies occasionally reported in-service training and networking opportunities, which our provincial-level informant in British Columbia described as readily available (although union action made it impossible for us to confirm this statement at the school level in British Columbia). However, in the majority of our school-level interviews, such support was reported as unavailable. Illustrative of comments made in our school-level interviews, one teacher told us, “We don’t get a handbook from the division saying here this is what we can do. I don’t think there’s a specific coordinator for that” (Teacher, Manitoba School 1a). Others were unclear as to what support might be available – as one teacher told us: “There could be [some support] but I’m not sure” (Teacher, Manitoba School 2a). Ministry and district efforts to support cross-school collaboration or regular networking opportunities to support global education were rarely reported, and we found little evidence of ministry and district interest in online mechanisms for sharing information and curricular materials about global education.

In no public school jurisdiction did we hear of any official plan to evaluate or assess the efficacy either of social studies education or its global education components. The Ontario Catholic school district was the only district where assessment of what students had learned factually and morally in global education by grade six was regularly carried.

The ambivalence towards global education that we captured in our interviews with educational administrators at the provincial and district levels stands in contrast to the rising attention paid to global education in formal provincial curricula. This ambivalence is reflected in how provinces and districts supported global education. By and large, provincial and district level effort across Canada to support and communicate

global education curricular goals is weak. There is an emphasis on external partnerships at the school level, but ministries and districts do little to assist in the selection and structuring of such partnerships. The absence of ministry- and district-level support opens the way to further unevenness in the implementation of global education at the school level.

#### PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES WITHIN SCHOOLS

What did our interviews with Canadian elementary school teachers and school administrators tell us about their perceptions of global education, and the challenges they face in implementing global education curricula? In this section, we present our findings from interviews at the school level. Although drawn from a small and opportunistic sample, our findings at this level provide a starting point to understand the key barriers and opportunities for better implementation of global education in Canadian schools.

All our school-level informants easily recognized the term, "global education"; it was familiar to them. We were surprised to find such widespread recognition, particularly when contrasted with a general lack of recognition of the term "development education" that NGOs used in the 1970s and 1980s to describe education about global social justice issues. Most teachers were aware that recent or impending curricular reforms demanded that they teach more about global issues.

However, both teachers and administrators in our study offered very tentative and sometimes rather vague definitions of global education. Much uncertainty was reflected in their efforts to define global education themes and practices. A typical definition comes from one Ontario informant:

I don't know if I have a very good grasp of what global education is, but I think in the sense of how we participate within the world; it's about teaching my students and myself about other places and other cultures and how we do things that influence each other both at the local community level and in the broader sense. (Ontario Rural School 2b)

In their definitions of global education, most teachers and administrators included at least some reference to global interdependence, helping others, and using multiple perspectives (35 from an n of 43). However, they rarely directly addressed the spectrum of specific issues in the research literature associated with global education, such as human

rights, global citizenship, problems of war and conflict, or environmental sustainability. School-level actors rarely mentioned two ideas central in the literature on global education – linking global and local challenges and active global citizenship (implying actions other than fundraising) – although these ideas are present to varying degrees of emphasis in provincial curriculum guides.

Instead we frequently encountered the idea that global education should teach awareness of “distant others” and encourage students to recognize how fortunate they are to be in Canada. As one teacher told us, global education is about “trying to get them [students] to see things we take for granted” (Nova Scotia, School 1d). The frequency of such comments in our school-level interviews suggests that much of what is understood as global education in Canadian schools continues to foster a “them/us” mentality that is not in keeping with the themes of global interdependence and social justice that appear as ideals in the global education literature.

Our informants mentioned time constraints as the most common impediment to introducing global education into the classroom. Educators were quick to tell us that global education at the elementary school level is not a top priority, particularly in light of heightened expectations for literacy and numeracy. A few educators we spoke with mentioned trying to infuse global education across the curriculum (Manitoba School 1c; Ontario Catholic School 1a; Ontario Rural School 1c); rather, most educators told us that there was too little time allocated in the school timetable every week for global education (Manitoba School 1c; Nova Scotia School 2b; Ontario School 2b). One principal put it this way:

I think global education is critical, but so is meeting the needs of different learners, so is teaching the kids how to read when they don't come with any readiness et cetera. I can go on and on. So when you say, how important global education is, it is critical, but so are these twenty other things. . . . Where do we fit it in? (Principal - Alberta School 2a)

As mentioned in the previous section, we noted in our interviews a lack of curricular and pedagogical support for global education as an important barrier to global education. Seventeen out of 31 teachers in our sample commented that the provincial curriculum did not provide adequate support for introducing global education, and called for more precise guidance. Thus one teacher in the Yukon told us:

There should be something mandated through the curriculum that puts something far more active in motion. . . . In Grade 6, students are asked to be a global citizen, but what is missing is their actual participation. Many issues are touched upon, but there is not enough depth. (Teacher - Yukon School 2a)

Another informant suggested that: "There are no hard or fast rules. We are not given a lot to teach the issues, and they're kind of warm and fuzzy. I would like to see harder facts, and make global education more realistic through Social Studies" (Yukon School Staff 1b).

Few teachers or school-level administrators we interviewed could identify professional development opportunities or curricular support for global education from district or ministry staff (9 of an n of 43). Teachers told us that most global education-related resources and in-service training focused on secondary education. In only two instances (Ontario Catholic district and Yukon) did teachers tell us about active district or regional networks to support global education. Several jurisdictions mentioned the impact of professional networks that collapsed after the loss of CIDA funding for global education during the 1990s (e.g., Nova Scotia, Ontario, Alberta). By and large, school staff said they received little sustained support for global education from either government or professional organizations and networks. Opportunities for school-wide learning or for collaboration among teachers, students, schools, and districts appeared quite limited in the majority of schools we visited.

#### *Partnerships for Global Education with Nongovernment Organizations*

In our interviews at the school level, informants frequently described extracurricular initiatives undertaken in partnership with non-government organizations as the core of their global education efforts. Although not a central focus of our study, we asked our informants to describe the character and scope of NGO-school partnerships to assess such partnerships both in terms of their scope and degree, and using the common themes and goals of global education described in our research design section above.

One of the most surprising findings from our study about NGO-school partnerships returns us to the question of whether Canadian children receive an equal and consistent exposure to global education. As can be seen in Table 3, our informants generated a very large list of partners.

Table 3: External Partners in Global Education

	<b>Schools</b> N=15	<b>Districts</b> N=9	<b>Provincial/ Territory</b> N= 7
Total number of partner organizations mentioned	33	22	40
Organizations mentioned by more than one informant	9	2	5
Organizations with more than one mention	CIDA (4) UNICEF (28) Kielburger (5) Red Cross (3) CODE (2) World Vision (4) Global Trek (2) Nova Scotia RCHR (4) Cd.Tchrs.Fed. (2)	UNICEF (5) Kielburger (4)	CIDA (3) UNICEF (8) Kielburger (2) Unesco (2) Global Trek (2)
Organizations Mentioned (by Category):			
Federal (Gov't) Bodies	3	2	3
Provincial (Gov't) Bodies	4	2	5
Faith-based Groups	0	2	0
National/Int'l NGOs	15	9	20
Provincial/Local NGOs	6	4	6
Teachers' Associations	4	3	5
Universities	1	0	1

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) were the most often mentioned external partners supporting global education at the elementary school

level. But, of the 33 additional partner organizations mentioned, only 8 were mentioned more than once, and few partner organizations were mentioned at more than 1 of the 15 schools we visited. As can be seen from Table 3, the organizations that schools mentioned as global education partners often had very specific regional or thematic orientations – few could be expected to provide the kind of integrated approach to global education envisaged in the global education literature. Furthermore, few schools – even those with multiple partners – described anything approaching a sustained relationship with a non-governmental organization focusing on global education. We also found that, although some schools mentioned having multiple external partners, others, particularly in more remote and rural areas, could name no external partners for global education.

We also explored the quality and character of NGO-school partnerships for global education. When we asked schools to describe their main global education activities, a majority highlighted fundraising for international charity in partnership with NGOs (30 from an n of 43). Fundraising can be complementary to global education, and many teachers described fundraising as an important opportunity for student leadership. However, we found in our interviews that students were rarely described as linking their fundraising efforts to sustained learning or advocacy efforts within schools or across schools and districts. One informant noted that children rarely got to see what happened to the money they raised. Several teachers expressed concern about fundraising efforts in schools with large disadvantaged populations. From our informants' descriptions, we concluded that fundraising activities were typically "once-off" events, linked only tangentially to what was being taught in classrooms. Even in the case of UNICEF (the most frequently mentioned partner in global education at the school level), there was a very limited link between the organization's well-known annual *Hal-low'e'en* drive and classroom or whole-school approaches to learning about global issues. The other main way that schools linked to external partners was through the receipt of curricular materials. Many schools (and districts) told us that they routinely received mailings of global education materials from a variety of governmental and non-governmental organizations, but they told us that these materials often went unused. Work pressures made it impossible for teachers to sort through materials, judge their efficacy, and relate them to curricular expectations. Teachers were also wary of the accuracy of materials offered

on websites. Not surprisingly, teachers asked for more targeted and age-appropriate materials with better visuals, more opportunities to learn from resource people about how to introduce the material, and longer-term partnerships with NGOs. One teacher told us that she knew of no materials on global education suitable for use with special-needs students.

Although based on a small sample, our study strongly suggests that the scope and quality of global education that elementary school children received depended heavily on a school's ability to engage with external partner organizations. Reliance on a small number of unevenly distributed external partnerships contributed to inter-school variation and heightened the potential within Canadian schools for uneven and unequal implementation of global education. Overall, the external partnerships focused primarily on "once-off" fundraising. Such fundraising efforts were rarely described as linking local to global issues, or supporting sustained and systematic learning about global issues inside the classroom. By and large they appeared to be reinforcing a "them/us," charity-focused perspective

#### *Innovations in Schools*

We also found evidence of considerable enthusiasm and innovation around global education during our school-level research. Despite the perceived lack of official support, of the 31 teachers we interviewed, almost half (14) told us that they had at least tried to infuse global issues across the curriculum or that they had used classroom time to introduce global issues. One Manitoba teacher told us how she tried to infuse global education in her classroom: "We talk a lot about rippling effects and the small things that you can do. So what can they do to create a rippling effect and how it starts with them" (Teacher, Manitoba School 1b). In the Yukon, where we found a particularly active global education network, a teacher told us: "We would like to portray our school as a worldly place, an inclusive place. One of our goals is to see more global education covered in the classroom" (Teacher, Yukon School 2a).

Although less common, we found that the Yukon and the one Ontario Catholic school district we visited were experimenting with systematic, school-wide efforts to link local and global issues in exciting ways in. Traces of such experimentation were also evident in the environmental program "Seeds" in Nova Scotia, in the International Baccalaureate in our Quebec case, and in the "Free the Children" programs in



one Alberta location. In another location, we found teachers drawing upon the cultural heritage of a large population of native students to introduce global issues. What these school-wide efforts in global education had in common was an ongoing link to some special program or initiative that offered teachers a mechanism for sustained professional learning and cross-school communication focusing on global education themes. Although often developed with substantially different inflections and foci, such linked-up approaches seemed to be effective in creating communities of practice, pointing to one way that schools themselves can contribute to better quality and more consistent implementation of global education.

#### DISCUSSION

Our research on global education and its implementation in Canadian elementary schools suggests that, in relation to the ideals and goals for global education established in the academic literature, the practice of global education in Canada remains constrained by piecemeal partnerships with NGOs, widespread administrative ambivalence, and its peripheral position in the formal curriculum. Despite substantial interest at the school level, and an emerging mandate for global education in formal provincial curricula, global education receives limited official support in terms of professional development activities or formal mechanisms for pedagogical exchange and collaboration.

In the absence of ministry support, external partnerships with NGOs often played a defining role in school-level global education experiences. Yet these external partnerships were uneven and were rarely linked to the curriculum development and implementation cycles of the formal school system. Their primary focus was on fundraising, and they often reproduced a charity orientation that was echoed in the "them/us" discourse we found in our interviews with educators. Because external partnerships focus on fundraising rather than sustained, cross-curricular forms of learning, they tend not to support complex understandings of global interdependence, nor the development of dispositions associated with active citizenship and critical thinking. From an equity perspective, the fact that external partnerships were distributed inequitably across schools is also worrying. The scope of global education received by elementary school children depended heavily on two things: the initiative of individual teachers and schools, and a school's ability to attract input from non-government organizations. This situation leads to substantial

inequality in the implementation of global education within Canadian schools.

How did the Canadian experience in global education become so uneven and fragmented? In the historical overview we produced for this study, we contrasted the Canadian experience with that in the United Kingdom where NGOs and teachers' associations pool resources to advocate for improved global education, and work collectively with the national Departments of Education and of International Development to establish formal, cross-curricular expectations and mechanisms to support global citizenship education (Mundy et al., 2007; Oxfam, 1997; Davies, 2006). Although we found many features of the Canadian polity among Canadian educators that lend themselves to the enthusiastic uptake of global education (including our historical commitments to humane internationalism in our foreign policies, and multiculturalism and educational equality domestically [Joshee, 2004; Kymlicka, 1998; Manzer, 1994; Pratt, 1990, 1996]), a central source of leadership and collective action in the Canadian case is clearly missing. One source of the problem is the federal division of powers: provincial jurisdiction over education has limited the ability of both federal bodies (like CIDA, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada [DFAIT], Department of Canadian Heritage) and national non-governmental organizations to mount collective efforts in this area.

Another source of difficulty appears to come from the federal level itself, where the main player, CIDA, cut funding for global education in the 1990s and continues to promote competition rather than collaboration among NGO providers of global education. A multitude of NGO-led educational initiatives - including those that espouse global citizenship principles - have thus failed to build much in the way of an integrated platform on international, global, and development issues in Canada for public education. Finally, little evidence exists of leadership on global education at the provincial level, where education policy makers have focused on literacy and numeracy and science education, often at the expense of perceived "softer" subject areas, including those related to citizenship education. Reflecting this provincial orientation, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), the body representing provincial ministries of education, has been given a limited mandate in the areas of domestic and international citizenship education. It has not been able to promote curricular coordination in this area, and even its efforts to stimulate provincial participation in the highly regarded International

Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) assessments of civics education, conducted by the IEA, have collapsed due to provincial ambivalence.

Our study found that, although Canadian educators and schools were enthusiastic about introducing global education, they could describe only a few sustained sources of support or leadership for the kind of integrated or comprehensive approach to global education achieved (to some degree) in the UK, and consistently recommended in the literature. Weak and uneven implementation in Canada may suggest one reason why, according to a recent survey, Canadian youth have only a very limited knowledge of global issues and a weak sense of efficacy around them (War Child Canada, 2006).<sup>4</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

What then is needed to move global education forward in the Canadian context? The central finding of our study is that educators need to pay much more attention to opportunities for sustained collaboration, innovation, and information sharing around global education and global citizenship education at the elementary school level where students are developing fundamental attitudes and dispositions towards political participation and engagement with the wider world. If educators wish to ensure that *every* Canadian child receives global education of the highest quality at the elementary level, mechanisms to promote more dedicated time for global education and regular and consistent pedagogical support will certainly be required.

To meet these goals, active collaboration among non-government partners (including teachers' associations and universities), and between these partners and government bodies at federal, provincial, district, and school levels, is essential. There is considerable need for federal-level networking and coordination. Although the CMEC's efforts in the fields of citizenship and social studies education have thus far failed to gain inter-provincial support, more effort could be made to build support for coordination on global issues, which are somewhat less politically sensitive within the Canadian context than national citizenship issues. External partner organizations should advocate for a national initiative to bring them together with CMEC representatives, teachers' unions, and federal departments such as the Canadian International Development Agency, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, or Heritage Canada to discuss the establish-

ment of a national-level initiative in the area of global citizenship education.

Provincial-level collaborations are also important. Such coordination should aim to allow non-government partners to engage productively and effectively in ministry-level curriculum development and revision. It would also help NGOs to deliver their support in a manner that is more evenly distributed and carefully targeted, eliminating the sense among many school-level actors that they are being overwhelmed by intermittent NGO initiatives only loosely related to formal curricular expectations.

These recommendations require leadership and substantial change in the approach to global education currently adopted in Canada at school, ministry, district, and national levels. However, our research also raises a number of suggestions for change that individual organizations can implement (particularly NGOs, teachers' associations and universities). These include: (a) ensuring that appropriate, grade-keyed global education resources are available for elementary school students (including those with differing abilities), (b) developing systematic partnerships to reach rural and less advantaged schools, and (c) linking fundraising efforts more directly to sustained learning about complex global relationships. Partner organizations should also recognize that any effort to promote collaboration among teachers, schools, and students in a sustained fashion will be more effective than single ("once-off") initiatives. Finally, individual organizations can try to address gaps or areas of tension in the formal curriculum: not by preaching correct answers, but by encouraging children to think critically and actively about dilemmas that involve conflicts in interests and values.

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#### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> In British Columbia and in Quebec, union action prevented the team from conducting district- and school-level interviews.

<sup>2</sup> There was no "school-district" per se in the territory included in our study, and therefore interviews were conducted with territory and school-level participants only.

<sup>3</sup> The elementary curriculum used in the Yukon is an adapted version of the one used in British Columbia.

<sup>4</sup> The War Child Canada study showed that a majority of respondents had not heard of the Convention on the Rights of the Child or developing country debt. More than half of the youth surveyed could not name a country in which human rights abuses occurred, nor could they name an NGO active in global issues.

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