Making My Time Count: Attempting Global Education as a Substitute Teacher in the K-12 Classroom

Jessica R. Scalzo
Independent Scholar
scalzo@ualberta.ca

Abstract

This paper explores substitute teaching as a potential site for transformational Global Education. I use autoethnography to better understand my experiences as a teacher and learner, how I became a substitute teacher, and my desire to use a critical pedagogy and Global Education framework for my teaching practice in a guest teacher context. Perceptions of substitute teachers, challenges faced by substitute teachers, possible barriers to effective teaching and learning while a temporary presence, as well as various conceptions of Global Education are explored, along with where these two seemingly disparate worlds may intersect. I investigate the limits of current research regarding substitute teachers and make recommendations for embedding Global Education in the substitute teaching practice.

Keywords: global education, substitute teaching, critical pedagogy, K-12 schools, de-colonizing education, autoethnography

> Gone are the days when a student and a teacher squared off in the little red schoolhouse and did their thing…How times have changed. Now the student must contend with a veritable army of people…If this were not enough, every so often the student is slipped a surprise. Something he did not expect and something he usually does not like. The substitute teacher.
>
> (Rundall & Terrell, 1985, p. 183)

Setting the Scene: Substitute Teaching in Context

I work as a substitute teacher in a large suburban school division west of Edmonton, the provincial capital of Alberta, which serves over 58,000 residents in an area of over 3,995 square kilometers; our division operates 21 schools and several alternate sites. There are currently 10,009 students, served by 680 teachers, and supported by 210 substitutes (Parkland School

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Division, personal communication, 2013). In 2008, there were 5,000 substitute teachers in the province of Alberta, working in more than 1,850 schools across the province (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2010). I currently substitute teach between 2-3 days a week, depending on my schedule and the other projects I am involved with. My bookings are mainly in the two high schools within the division, where I work mainly in Social Studies, English Language Arts, French as a Second Language, and Special Education classrooms (though I have also taught design studies, construction, Career and Life Management (CALM), physical education, foods, and math), and in two of the local middle schools, teaching all grades from 5-9, where I am called on to teach all subjects, and many options courses. Most of my days are with regular teachers who rely on me almost exclusively to cover their classes. As such, I am a regular guest in these rooms and have been able to develop great rapport with the students.

A typical day for many substitute teachers begins with a telephone call somewhere between 6:30am and 8:00am to be at a school for between 8:30-8:45am. Sometimes the name of the school is all you know before you show up in front of the classroom of expectant faces. The plans for the day, if there are any, are usually threadbare and basic. Most likely, you will have been given a video to watch in every block...the same 45 minutes, 7-8 times. If you're lucky, it's interesting. In the lower grades, it is most likely that you get to watch some kind of Disney animation flick. In the upper grades, it is hopefully something interesting from the National Film Board of Canada, or Michael Moore's latest social commentary. On days like these, the only real interaction with the students is during attendance.

Sometimes the plans that are left for you include supervising as the students do worksheets and read their textbook, work on group projects, or are writing a test, however, we are still expected to "keep students well behaved and "on task" with busywork" (Wertz, 2006, p. 20). Most of the time, you are not responsible for any instruction, and certainly nothing too deep. Substitute teachers are usually seen as "warm bodies" (Wyld, 1995, in Abdal-Haqq, 1997 ¶ 6), who are present as a "basic matter of honoring the dyadic contract between teacher and student by providing an adult in the classroom when the regular teacher cannot be present" (Bletzer, 2010, p. 405) and appropriate levels of supervision for the students in their classrooms, and are viewed as such by students and teachers alike.

That being said, how is it possible for substitute teaching to be a potential site for meaningful global education? When I speak about substitute teaching and global education,

most people respond with baffled expressions, and questions about how it is even feasible. How does temporary placement in a classroom provide space and opportunities for substitute teachers to experience transformational teaching and learning? How, in these limited and brief encounters, can a substitute teacher practice decolonizing education? Citizenship education? Peace education? Any meaningful education?

Literature Review

Autoethnography and the Substitute Teacher

Using an autoethnographical approach to understand my experiences as a substitute teacher, along with an examination of various constructions of Global Education (GE), I hope to explore how substitute teaching can move beyond glorified baby-sitter status and towards a site of meaning for teacher and student. This paper will use examples of scenarios from my teaching experience to suggest ways that substitute teachers can embed Global Education principles into their practice, however brief their encounters with students may be.

Global education requires a great deal of self-reflection on the parts of both the educator and the student, and this self-analysis is intended to disrupt assumptive discourses of privilege and dominance. It is for this reason that an autoethnographical approach is of high value, as it is through the search of self, through the study of the past, that knowledge becomes *"from* the past and not necessarily knowledge *about* the past" (Bochner, 2007, cited in Hamdan, 2012, p. 588). By viewing my role as a substitute teacher through the critical lens of autoethnography, I can address my sources of privilege as they relate to my role as a teacher, while teaching in way that encourages students to do the same. As Hamdan (2012) asserts, "personal autoethnography highlights how a personal identity has been shaped and constructed—a revelation that is the result of [my] decision to search within, to reflect on [my] experience, and to bring [my] findings into the present" (p. 588).

Vone`che (2001) defines autoethnography as "text that is always written from the retrospective viewpoint of a person interpreting his or her own past; its form and content largely depend upon the author's current preferences and opinions and part of its function is to preserve and remain faithful to the writer's personality" (cited in Hamdan, 2012, p. 586). Further, Reed-Danahay (1997) asserts that "autoethnography is a writing practice that consists of highly analytical, personalized accounts through which authors draw extensively from their lived

experiences to extend understanding of a particular culture, discipline, or phenomenon" (cited in Garza, 2008, p. 164). Therefore, it is necessary to explore my own journey as a learner and educator in order to understand how I make pedagogical choices as a substitute teacher. Heewon Chang (2007) states that "autoethnography emphasizes cultural analysis and interpretation of the researcher's behaviours, thoughts, and experiences in relation to others in society" and that "the reading and writing of self narrative provides a window through with self and others can be examined and understood" (cited in Hamdan, 2012, pp. 586-587). Autoethnography allows me to cast a net through my past experiences to gather insights into my present practices.

I was raised in the community where I now live and teach, though I have been fortunate enough to have travelled extensively and lived in various exciting places throughout the world. It was during one of these times abroad that I decided that teaching was my vocation; it was something I felt called to do as my own teachers have made such a profound impact on my life growing up. I had all but completed my Bachelor of Education before it had even occurred to me to question the information presented to me, let alone the perspectives I had about the world and my role within it, and I assumed that the international experiences I had under my belt suitably prepared me to go forth and enlighten all the young people soon to be in my care. In reading assignments completed throughout my undergraduate degree, as well as daily planners and personal correspondence from that time, several themes emerge – naivety, hubris, privilege, ethnocentrism, and a shameful white-saviour complex.

For my first few years of teaching, I tried very hard to play the role of the teacher – authoritative, knowledgeable, controlled and caring, yet removed from my students. I worked to make my lessons and activities interesting, and I spoke to the students in a way that reinforced the fact that I had knowledge that they needed. I built relationships with parents and students alike, and students who played their roles as passive recipients of my special knowledge well and sought traditional definitions of success were drawn to me. Those students who did not fit into the mould of being a model student remained on my periphery and continued to rest in the margins of the school. Scholastic achievements were recorded in their neat rows in my mark books, and any failures were quickly attributed to the short-comings of the students themselves. All in all, it appeared as if everything was running as it ought to. However, despite all the outward signs of success, I more often felt frustrated than unfulfilled. In fact, I discovered that I was deeply unhappy. The revealing moment came when, at the end of two years with a group of

students, I discovered that they didn't know me. In fact, they thought that I was uptight, conservative and old-fashioned, and someone who was far removed from their lives. I came to the realization that I had sacrificed who I thought was in order to be the teacher I thought was expected of me. I also realized that my unhappiness came from a place of feeling like I no longer knew who I was. Looking back on my planning book, lesson plans, and materials from that time, it becomes clear that I was not only disconnected from a sense of self, but that my teaching of the curriculum was detached from the great world around me, something that I did not have time to reflect on due to having an overwhelming work load. Global Education, something I professed to understand and believe in, was merely a small handful of charity events throughout the year and passing references to vague social injustices throughout the world, it was an add-on to the core curriculum. There was something missing from my life and my teaching practice, and I wanted to make a change.

I decided to approach my next group of students differently, and attempt to be more authentic, open, and empathetic. Having a permanent contract and job security, I felt more comfortable, taking greater risks with lesson planning, adopting different pedagogical approaches enthusiastically, and moving away from deficit thinking about my students. I had a very challenging group of students that year, but I was dedicated to doing things differently. Looking back at my planning book and through anecdotal records, it is clear to me that I was doing what Debbie Storrs (2012) refers to as "emotional pedagogy" as I "explicitly attend[ed] to the role of emotion in the classroom" (pp. 1-2), by showing my own vulnerability and creating a space for the students to do the same. Students, when reacting emotionally to classroom events (as adolescents are wont to do), were encouraged to understand why they were lashing out, rather than immediately being punished for the outburst. These personal learning opportunities were interwoven with a philosophy of project-based learning and other sound educational practices. The students and parents were happy, and I was happy. It turns out, however, that there were those amongst my teacher colleagues and my administration who were unhappy. It came as quite a surprise to me that a classroom that was working well would be viewed with suspicion and contempt and the resulting conversations were filled with accusations and personal attacks. It was immediately apparent that something I was doing was unsettling to the establishment, and I took that as my cue to leave in order to delve more deeply into understanding how the transformational work within my classroom could be seen in such a negative light.

Throughout my formative teenage years, my undergraduate degree, and the early years of my teaching career, I had vague understandings of what I perceived as injustices happening around me locally and globally. What I lacked, however, were frameworks for which to understand these issues and emotional reactions. I was aware of terms like *feminism, environmentalism, socialism*, etc., but I was not sure how they necessarily applied to my life, or how they could inform my teaching practice. I was fond of terms like *social justice* and *global education*, without having a deeper appreciation of the paradigm shift that I would have to undergo to experience transformational learning for myself, and to create better learning opportunities for my students. The negative experiences I had in my school when I attempted to teach differently highlighted both the power of shifting the teacher-student power dynamic, and how this can be viewed as threatening to the establishment. This directly contradicts the aims and goals of social justice education in the sense that it reinforces the status quo of power inequities and the privileging of certain knowledges over others. That's not to say that I was achieving social justice on my own in my classroom (my ego isn't that big), but the opportunity for students and their teacher to experience a different kind of approach to school was ended by administration before it could be fully understood as beneficial or harmful.

Conceptualizing Global Education

In order to discuss Global Education and substitute teaching, we must spend some time defining what I mean by Global Education. Please note: This paper is not intended to be a thorough review of all available conceptions and theories of Global Education. It is also not interested in parsing the nuanced and contested differences between Global Education, Citizenship Education, and Global Citizenship Education. While these are valuable discourses, this paper intends to explore my own multi-faceted approach to GE through my work as a substitute teacher. Spending time researching and writing about Global Education, and reflecting on how it applies to my both identity as an educator and my philosophy of teaching and learning, helps me to navigate my teaching assignments and interact with my teaching peers in the various schools I visit. For example, the schools I work in often have superficial understandings of Global Education, which serves to limit its practice to international service projects and pre-packaged lesson plans about sweatshops, much like my own practice in my first years of teaching. For example, it was recently We Day, led by the charity Free the Children and pseudo-

celebrity Craig Keilburger, and schools were awash in the problematic messaging of this particular paradigm. Having an understanding of GE frameworks and critical pedagogy perspectives helped me to discuss the event with the students (and some teachers) and hopefully allowed them to be critical of the experience while enjoying the "benefits" of a celebrity laden party at the Saddledome in Calgary, Alberta.

As it has been clearly demonstrated through reams of research, Global Education best practices are ones that are philosophical in nature and guide our pedagogical approaches to our students. A lack of a concise definition of GE creates space for educational practitioners to navigate the complex web of instructional practices which combine to create Global Education. With that in mind, a preliminary examination of definitions related to Global Education provides us with some general themes which are useful for this conversation and inform my practice. Broad themes within the research reveal that Global Education:

a) is transformational, and calls for structural shift (North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, 2008, p.13) while encouraging deliberation and reflection (Cousins & Fanghanel, 2012, p. 47)
b) encompasses, but is not limited to, peace education, human rights education, education for peace and conflict resolution, social justice education, intercultural education, multicultural education, diversity education, environmental education, and citizenship education (Brown & Morgan, 2008, p. 284; Maastricht Global Education Declaration, 2002; North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, 2008; Osler, 2001, p. 2; Sauvé, 1999, p. 17)
c) seeks to improve equality, justice, cooperation, solidarity, understanding, responsibility, and recognition for all peoples throughout the world, regardless of ethnicity, citizenship, language, religion, age, gender, sexual minority and gender variance, socioeconomic status, etc (North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, 2008; Osler, 2001, p. 2), with attention paid to indigenous peoples throughout the world.
d) emphasizes critical engagement, empowerment, ethical participation, and interconnectedness. (Cousins & Fanghanel, p. 49; Myers, 2010, p. 493; Oxfam, 1997, cited in Brown & Morgan, p. 284; Osler, 2011, p. 1; Sauve, 1997, p. 67), and

e) directly questions hegemony, colonialism, power structures, corporate expansion, and environmental degredation, while respecting and promoting local cultures and local knowledges (Andreotti et al. 2010, cited in Cousins & Fanghanel, 2012, pp. 40-41; Spivak 1999, cited in Cousins & Fanghanel, 2012, pp. 40-41).

My personal journey to understand the intricacies of Global Education and the academic discourse that informs it gave me tools to identify my own positioning and to better articulate issues with students in the classrooms I visit.

How I choose to conceptualize GE in my practice is heavily influenced by critical pedagogy, which focuses on

> how to create classroom spaces that challenge students to question assumptions, explicitly recognize power relationships in their analysis of situations, engage with other students in collaborative efforts to critically reflect on the embedded network of relationships, and consider alternatives for transformation of that network. (Reynolds, 1997, cited in Pishghadam & Meidani, 2012, p. 467)

Critical pedagogy originates from the "modernist perspective of the later Frankfurt School, Freirean pedagogy, postcolonial discourse, as well as postmodernism (Usher & Edwards, 1994, cited in Pishghadam & Meidani, 2012, p. 467), and is seen as an agent of "empowerment," "social emancipation" (Freire, 1970) and "social transformation" (Giroux, 1985, cited in Pishghadam & Meidani, 2012, p. 465). Freire, considered the pioneer of critical pedagogy, "argued that we should empower classroom participants to critically reflect upon the social land historical conditions that give rise to social inequalities and to question the status quo that keeps them subjugated or marginalized" (cited in Pishghadam & Meidani, 2012, p. 467). Hence, critical pedagogy is deeply interwoven with post-colonial discourses and unambiguously supports the stated goals of Global Education.

Understanding Substitute Teaching

It was both a professional and personal decision not to return to full-time teaching, and I arrived at said decision during the course of my graduate studies. While removed from the day-to-day work of classroom teaching, and immersed in an academic environment focused on critical questioning, I was forced to examine the trajectory of my career, and refine my philosophies of teaching and learning. The rigorous work of my Master's degree took place

against the backdrop of teaching a classroom management course to pre-service teachers and working as a substitute teacher. This schedule allowed time for reflection on and digestion of time spent with students in a broad cross-section of curricula, and for refinement of my skills as an educator. During this time, I noticed a shift in my approach to my students, and I began to view them not as groups of challenges who needed to be controlled, but as complex human beings with unique experiences and knowledge, who had as much to teach me as I had to teach them. Once I finished my degree, I decided to dive whole-heartedly and enthusiastically into substitute teaching, and then the opportunity arose to write a paper that would allow me to critically examine my experiences in the classroom, one that required "writing about and through [myself]…in a scholarly manner" (Ellis, 1993; Ellis & Bochner, 2000, cited in Garza, 2008, p. 164).

While research for Global Education and critical pedagogy is plentiful, research relating to substitute teachers is sadly lacking, and certainly none that explores substitute teaching as a transformational or decolonizing space could be found, creating an overall unfavourable view of both substitute teachers and students. The fact that substitute teachers are "largely absent in educational policy and reform literature" (Morrison, 1994, cited in Weems, 2003, p. 256) while playing such an important part of school life is troubling considering that some research suggests that during a student's tenure as a K-12 student, they will have spent an entire year being taught by substitute teachers (Wertz, 2006, p. 20). Despite the fact that substitute teachers spend so much cumulative time with students, much of the existing research is focused on the perception of substitute teachers as being incompetent outsiders, with an entertaining smattering of tips and tricks of the trade. For example, McKay (1991) asserts that a substitute can survive if they do three things: "inspire respect and even fear, keep the students busy, and shift responsibility from herself to the students for what happens in the classroom" (¶ 2), and suggests that misbehaviour be addressed with "a slight wave of the hand…accompanied by a look that conveys her appreciation of the student's youthful spirit but disapproval of his or her destructive antics," as much as she may "feel like bashing the fractious darling." She should avoid demonstrating animosity as "kids can out-hate anyone" (¶ 3). McKay (1991) closes the article by stating that substitute teaching is "unpleasant, unproductive, and unrewarding. One can survive, although being lost in Tierra del Fuego must appear to be preferable" (¶ 12). With descriptions of substitute teaching such as this, who would ever choose to do this work?

Weems (2003) provides a much more in-depth discussion of the perceptions of substitute teachers through three distinct categories: substitute as incompetent unqualified teacher, substitute as deviant outsider, and substitute as guerilla educators (p. 254), shades of which are expressed through pop-culture, and are experienced and/or expressed in school staffrooms. While substitutes are continually viewed as the “incompetent unqualified teacher” (Weems, 2003, p. 257), substitute teachers are in fact required to have completed a Bachelor of Education degree to work in the province of Alberta, the same requirements as a full-time classroom teacher. According to the Alberta Teachers’ Association (2013), in Alberta, “substitute teachers are fully qualified, certificated teachers employed by school boards to replace the regular classroom teacher when necessary. They are employed on a daily or short-term basis” (p. 3). This should suggest that substitutes are just as competent as the regular teacher. Secondly, substitute teachers as deviant outsiders are variously “marginalized within the school contexts in which they serve” as they are not seen to possess a “particular knowledge base, the credentials to back them up, and the economic benefits given to tenured teachers” and are therefore “discursively produced as deviant subjects” (Weems, 2003, p. 260). The deviant outsiders are in the dichotomous position of having to “consistently prove themselves as real teachers yet demonstrate deference to the other teachers” (Weems, 2003, p. 260). This dichotomous position is echoed in the reality that “school boards demand that substitute teachers be available, [yet]… they do not guarantee them work” (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2010, p. 1). Lastly, the substitute as guerilla educator relies on strong representation in popular culture that alludes to the teacher-as-hero-image, specifically referenced is the 1996 movie *The Substitute*, wherein the ex-mercenary, substitute teacher rids the school of corruption and violence. Weems (2003) asserts that this archetype “not only pit[s] substitute teachers against professional teachers,” it “cast[s] against teachers that are incompetent, burned out, or beaten down, the substitute teacher as guerilla educator [who] breaks away from traditional conventions of teaching to connect with and inspire students to reach their full potential” (p. 262). Throughout my experiences as a substitute teacher, I have encountered individuals who hold these perceptions, usually a combination of the first two simultaneously. And while I would not consider myself a guerilla educator in the dramatic sense typified in movies such as *The Substitute*, perhaps my choice to use a critical pedagogy, Global Education framework will help students “reach their full potential” (Weems, 2003, p. 262).

Discussion: Where Do Global Education and Substitute Teaching Intersect?

With these wide gaps in literature, and the convergence point between substitute teaching and Global Education unclear, how exactly does a substitute teacher 'do' Global Education? My suggestion is simple: wherever and whenever they can find the opportunity to do so. For example, I recently experienced what many would consider a scenario somewhere in the Top 5 Worst Case Scenarios for substitute teachers. I arrived at a high school for an afternoon with grade 10 CALM students. I was handed the plans at the front office for the block to begin in 10 minutes time. A quick glance revealed that I was teaching Sex Ed. SEX ED! How exciting!

With only a few minutes to think about my approach, and having never before seen the resources I would be using that day, I came to a decision rather quickly; I would take this opportunity to create an environment that was open to real discussion about the situations that students find themselves in, promote smart decision-making processes, and break the hetero-normative mold that sexual education lessons are usually taught from. This was an opportunity to talk about personal empowerment, address questions of consent and rape-culture, and normalize mature discussion of sex. I chose to approach the class in a way that acknowledged and respected the knowledge already held by the students, and to teach from a position that was open and approachable, rather than one of power and authority, preaching from the pulpit of self-righteous moral authority, which is so often the case with this subject matter (it certainly was for my own formal educational experiences).

This may seem like a tall order for a single class of Sex Ed in a high school CALM class; however, it fits directly in how I choose to conceptualize and implement a critical pedagogy, Global Education framework in my teaching practice. This scenario, while challenging and potentially embarrassing, and certainly entertaining, was the perfect opportunity to put into practice some of the more basic tenets of Global Education practice; promoting deliberate reflection, respect for the rights of others, inclusivity of all peoples. Because of my belief that GE is a pedagogical approach rather than subject matter, it was remarkably easy to teach this lesson in a way that was inclusive, cooperative, responsible, and avoided the top-down, teacher as power and authority, shame-inducing lesson path. Navigating a lesson that asked students to explore the potential positive and negative consequences of choosing to have sex or not to have sex was a perfect opportunity to use language that included people of the sexual minority and gender variance, to discuss what consent means and how it should be obtained, to talk about self-

advocacy in sex, and to talk about healthy relationships and resisting peer pressure to engage in activities that we are not ready for or are not comfortable with. Once we shifted to a discussion of sexually transmitted infections, we were able to further emphasize the importance of making informed decisions as there can be long-term consequences in our lives.

This approach to a one-time sex education lesson relates to Global Education best practices as it was intentionally counter-hegemonic in nature. By purposely including discussion of asexuality and homosexuality, it served to break the heteronormative discourse that overwhelms all aspects of society, and sought to create a space where all students felt comfortable asking questions and were represented. According to Graybill, Meyers, Varjas and Watson (2009), in their discussion of strategies to advocate for LGBT[1] youth, "emerging research suggests that supportive school personnel counteract some of the negative experiences of LGBT youth in schools" (Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer, 2006; Russell, Seif, & Truong, 2001, cited in Graybill et al., p. 570), and thereby create a more positive school climate. The authors go on to state that students who identify as a sexual minority or as gender variant experience a "negative school climate (e.g., bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, teasing) more often than their heterosexual peers" (Harris Interactive & the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network [GLSEN], 2005, cited in Graybill et al., p. 570; Williams, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2005, cited in Graybill et al., p. 570). By recognizing and acknowledging the presence of the diversity of the students before me, I taught in a way that was intentional and inclusive, and hopefully created a safe, decolonized space for the learners in my care.

In another instance where I created space for Global Education was when the teaching plans left for me included showing the film *Iron Jawed Angels*, a 2004 production starring Hilary Swank. The film, which explores the Women's Suffrage movement in the United States of America, presents a number of ideas that are congruent with the principles of Global Education. Taking time to introduce the film, rather than merely pressing play, gave me legroom to talk about the history of feminism and the women's suffrage movement, democratic participation, non-violent political action, social movements, and human rights. As this was a grade 12 social studies class, I also chose to introduce some new vocabulary; specifically *hegemony, resistance,*

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[1] The LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered) acronym is used to represent all parts of the sexual minority and gender variant rainbow, and includes but is not limited to lesbian, gay, bisexual, intersexual, trans-identified, transitioning, transgendered, two-spirited, queer, questioning, ally, and a-sexual individuals.

and, *status quo*, terms they may find useful for their standardized diploma exams. As this was during the time when the Occupy Wall Street movement was at its peak in Zuccotti Park in NYC, I asked the students to view the film and draw parallels to how society responds to those who desire radical change, and compare the violence inflicted on the Suffragettes and those of the Occupy protesters. By taking this small space for transformational teaching and learning, I extended the students' learning by giving them a lens through which to view the film, I disrupted the expectation that a substitute teacher was merely a warm body, yet I still completed exactly what was asked of me: I showed the students the movie left on the corner of the desk.

Lastly, in a grade 7 Social Studies classroom, students were to read a simplified mock-newspaper article that highlighted key vocabulary and concepts, then answer recall-based questions. The plans left by the teacher asked me to hand out the packages and have students read and answer the questions. It suggested that I correct the questions as a class if time allowed. Instead, I chose to read the article aloud with the students and expand on topics and questions as they arose, and interact with the students. Students are naturally curious about the world around them, and this method invited them to interact with the material, each other, and an adult in a way that following the prescribed plans would not have. The subject matter requires delicate navigation of complex social issues, and it was essential that, as an educator, I guided them through it to ensure understanding, and to confront assumptions and misinformation. Using a Global Education approach allowed me to delve into human rights education, historical contexts of conflict, conflict resolution, social media for social activism, as well as a chance to distinguish between Islam and terrorism, a question that their classroom teacher had not been able to answer for her students. Choosing a Global Education approach allowed me to stretch the "interpretation of the prescribed curriculum… [and included]… wider ethical concerns of general interest (Schweisfurth, 2006, p. 45)

Substitute Teaching as Potential Space for Transformational Global Education

Considering that, as a substitute teacher, I am only with students intermittently, sometimes for one day and then never again, why would substitute teaching be a suitable space for transformational teaching and learning through Global Education? As a guest teacher who appears and disappears within her flexible and ever changing schedule, I am not constrained by the same forces as a full-time classroom teacher. I do not have report cards, committee

appointments, or parent teacher interviews. I am free from the negative political atmosphere of modern schools that seeks to confine teachers to a neo-liberal, personally a-political framework for education. Perhaps it is subversive, but I recognize that any overtly counter-hegemonic, environmentally friendly, unambiguously left-feminist perspective I choose to take on the various issues presented in the classrooms I visit have little direct consequence for me, contrary to my experiences as a full-time classroom teacher. Teachers and administrators are able to "dismiss" concerns raised as I am "just" a substitute teacher.

This is not to say that I am irresponsible with my messaging, or that I am not reflective and intentional with my responses. It also does not mean that I callously throw controversial ideas into classrooms, leaving a mess for the regular teacher to clean up. What it does mean, is that being a substitute teacher has allowed me to develop a professional teacher identity that aligns with my political and philosophical identity, which was difficult as a full-time teacher. As alluded to previously, I constantly found myself at odds with school structures and societal expectations of right-as-centre, teacher-as-neutral paradigms. As an inherently political person who considers herself an activist for many issues, having to deny this part of my growing teacher-identity was one of the biggest challenges I had as a full-time classroom teacher. As someone who was encouraged to question everything, and who was asked to teach "critical thinking" skills to her students, it was challenging, to say the least, for me to be called to the principal's office every time I questioned the school direction or decisions made that impacted my practice or the learning of the students. My desire to question and provoke discussion was deemed problematic and disruptive, as well as disrespectful to the established hierarchy.

Substitute teaching has mitigated many of these struggles, as my responsibility is no longer bound to one school or institution, but rests in service to the profession as a whole. It has become a site of the subversion of traditional power-dynamics between principal and teacher, and teacher and student. It is a site of ally-ship for sexual minority and gender variant youth and adults, and a site to begin to understand "the interconnection of all forms of subordination" (Cole, 2009, p. 566). It is also a site for feminist perspectives of historical and current events, and a site for calling for ecologically sustainable practices. As a substitute teacher, I have been able to carve a space that asks students to consider their own agency for challenging colonial ideas that pervade our society, and deconstruct the many binaries that bind the lives of people living in modern society. I can introduce discussions that are centred on GE's principles of

transformational equality, cooperation and recognition. Students are asked to look at their own privilege and how it shapes how they move through the world. If these are indeed the goals of critical pedagogy and Global Education, then students “must be exposed to a wide variety of theoretical frameworks that question and expose the benefits of privilege in a stratified society” (Waters, 2010, p. 4). Substitute teaching allows me time outside the classroom to develop as an ally for social transformation, in order to “challenge and support…to grasp the intertwined nature of cycles of privilege, power, and oppression on a cognitive and intrapersonal level before working to make meaning …multifaceted way[s]” (Waters, 2010, p. 4) for the students before me. This time is not something afforded to most classroom teachers who must balance the ever-growing demands of the classroom with their own personal responsibilities (family, wellness, outside interests, etc.), and was not something that I was available to me when I was teaching full time.

Challenges impacting Global Education Practice for the Substitute Teacher

While this may paint a rosy picture of the potential for substitute teachers to practice Global Education, there are still many factors that restrict my work and must be taken into consideration. Teachers who I substitute for on a regular basis know that I am professional, competent, and work well with the students. They know that I have broad subject knowledge, that I am willing to do extra research to better engage the students, and that I hold students to high standards for both behaviour and for work. As such, I am given wide latitude with the lesson plans left for me. They are often shared with me in the days before my assignment, often with broader curricular goals, a suggestion for direction, and permission to plan the lesson how I see fit. This implicit trust in my professional autonomy and decision-making abilities goes against the reputation of substitute teachers being incompetent outsiders in the classroom. The multiple occasions on which I am able to teach the same groups of students allows me to build rapport and trusting relationships, which serves to create safe spaces for open dialogue. It allows me to build on previous knowledge and avoid gaps in instruction, while keeping the curriculum progressing forward, and continues to allow me to build my reputation as an excellent educator.

While this is the case for the classes in which I am the go-to sub, the times when I take random bookings (morning-of phone calls from the sub placement office, or taking bookings from the online sub-board run by the division) I am often viewed through the “”warm-bodies

approach, with worksheets, movies, or exam supervision activities. In these classes, where I have not yet been able to establish relationships with the students, the presence of a substitute can be a "signal to misbehave" (Abdal-Haqq, 1997, ¶ 2), meaning my energies and time are spent managing (mis)behaviours, rather than finding opportunities for teaching and learning. It is on these days, that the challenges lie within the sub plans which may be unrelated to curriculum (such as Disney movies to kill time) or are unengaging for both teacher and students. As a full-time classroom teacher, I remember the time it took to construct meaningful plans for days when I would be away, and for substitute teachers who I did know. I remember also that these detailed plans were not always adhered to for reasons that were beyond my control in my absence. Upon reflection, I realize that in my own practice, I did succumb to a type of planning that produced plans that were boring for my substitute teacher and my students, and neither drove curriculum forward, nor engaged my students in meaningful learning. Rawson (1981) suggests that regular classroom teachers may be reluctant to leave adequate lesson plans so that substitutes will not appear to do a better job as "[i]f substitutes do a better job, the regular teacher may feel threatened" (cited in Lassmann, 2001, p. 628). This mistrust of other professionals can be keenly felt by teachers who are new to the profession, or ones that have not yet signed permanent contracts with their school divisions, though low confidence can be found at any stage of one's career.

The nature of substitute teaching is such that it is unpredictable and short term. Choosing to use Global Education frameworks in my practice as a substitute teacher has provided me with many opportunities to have meaningful conversations with students about a wide variety of topics, but I do not have the chance to follow up with students about difficult content. If students have further questions about our discussions or would like to investigate further, I am not available to reinforce the lesson or provide further engaging materials or information. I am always sure to leave notes for the regular teacher about what was covered in the day's classes, and to ensure that the teacher is not blindsided by any questions that may arise, and I ask the teacher to contact me if they have questions or concerns about what was discussed. That, however, is no guarantee that the regular teacher will be willing or about to continue the conversation for a variety of reasons, either personal or professional.

Substitute teachers who endeavour to teach Global Education face similar challenges faced by full-time teachers, including unsupportive staff and administration, constraints on time and

resources, or fear of confrontation with staff and parents (Schweisfurth, 2006, p. 48). Weems (2003) submits that "poststructural theorizing suggests that teachers are both constrained and enabled by the relations of power/knowledge embedded in discourses and institutions in which they are located" (p. 255). Indeed it was my experience that whenever I taught in a way that challenged established power structures or social and environmental norms, I was faced with push-back from staff, students, and families alike. Whether it be administration who refused to give permission to start a student-led paper recycling program in our pulp-mill town, or parents who objected to discussions about the negative environmental impact of the tar sands because their family's livelihood depended on oil and gas, outside forces sought to constrain and silence the voice of dissent. Schweisfurth (2006) refers to this as "competing imperatives," with the complexities of the work meaning teachers "constantly need to make judgements about where to spend their own energies, and the learning time of their students" (pp. 49-50). For me, the imperative was embedding environmental stewardship into middle school social studies curricula, while others view it as unnecessary and disruptive additions to the program of studies. It was, according to Schweisfurth (2006), framed by "two universals: tensions between teacher agency and the structures they work within, and the imperative of survival of our global village" (pp. 49-50).

The question of whether or not substitute teaching is a potential site for transformational Global Education in the K-12 context is a complicated one as it seems to go against the very goal of meaningful Global Education itself, to build solidarity and interconnectedness amongst peoples. As a substitute teacher, I am isolated by the very fact that I work without a contract, drift from placement to placement and can only make attempts at GE practice in fits and starts, thus it becomes very difficult to build connectedness with students and staff alike. The regular classroom teacher who views the substitute teacher as an incompetent and deviant outsider and "marginal member of the education community" (Ostapczuk, 1994; Wyld, 1995, cited in Abdal-Haqq, para. 2) who are not "full professionals who meet accepted standards of practice" (Ostapczuk, 1994; Wyld, 1995, cited in Abdal-Haqq, para. 2) will continue to leave un-engaging lesson plans during their absences. Perhaps greater than that is the need for more substantial support for Global Education practices in schools, which would allow teachers to create a different environment in their classes for substitute teachers to enter. As such, the current educational climate "questions the potential and limits of teacher agency in times of increased

accountability and more stringent curricular structures" (Schweisfurth, 2006, p. 42), thus limiting teacher ability to implement transformational GE practices.

Recommendations

Further research into how teachers are able to *do* Global Education, not just the theory, will "provide insight into how teachers find space within an increasingly prescriptive curriculum to treat global citizenship issues, to illuminate some of their motivations in doing so, and to uncover factors which facilitate this and challenge them in the process" (Schweisfurth, 2006, p. 42). This will be of benefit to substitute teachers as well, as many of us have the corresponding goal of education as a tool for positive social change.

Further recommendations for this particular question of substitute teachers and Global Education include:

- Instigating more meaningful research in the field of substitute teaching. There is a glaring lack of research available on substitute teachers, and none about substitutes as a site of transformational teaching and learning
- Including substitute teachers in meaningful Professional Development opportunities at the school, division and provincial levels (Nidds, 1994, ¶11), as it not only assists in substitutes become more effective educators, but also "also enhances their sense of professionalism and acceptance within a district" (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2010, p. 9). Further, "what we expect substitutes to be is usually what we get. If we see substitutes as substandard fill-ins, that is probably what we will get. If we see them as emergency personnel with the full responsibilities of the classroom, then we may be surprised to find that is exactly what we will get" (Shreeve, 1983, cited in Lassmann, 2001, p. 625).
- Encourage substitutes to take their roles as educators more seriously, and to create opportunities for meaningful learning where it is not always created for us, Global Education or otherwise. This can be achieved by addressing the negative perceptions held about substitute teachers, by providing substitute teachers with regular and timely feedback on their work (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2010, p. 11), and give greater recognition for the role that substitutes play in the profession, as they are "integral

members of the public education system and the teaching profession" (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2013, p. 4)

- Create space for regular teachers and substitute teachers to collaborate on planning and expectations for the classes to be covered which can serve to normalize the presence of guest teachers in schools, while raising the quality of work provided for, and done by substitutes
- Design curriculum that is imbued with the core tenets of Global Education so that implementing transformational Global Education practices is not by chance, but part of regular practice, as solidarity through global education is "insufficient if we cannot establish a sense of solidarity with others in our own communities, especially those others whom we perceive to be different from ourselves. The challenge is to accept shared responsibility for our common future and for solving our common problems" (Osler & Starkey, 2005, cited in Osler, 2011, p. 2).

Conclusions

My deeply held belief that "the survival of our global village is dependent on … economic justice, human rights, peacekeeping and conflicts, social and political movements, and ecological balance… becoming a global citizen involves a serious intellectual and moral examination of the most crucial issues facing our world" (Watt et al., 2000, cited in Schweisfurth, 2006, p. 41) has shaped my identity as an educator, and how I approach my teaching as a substitute in the schools and classrooms I visit. Within my role as a substitute teacher is a duty to create a space for students that is "safe and supportive… within which they [the students] can explore the systemic nature of inequality and subsequent effects on intergroup understanding and interaction" (Waters, 2010, p. 6). Critical pedagogy and Global Education best practices allow for the substitute teacher reach beyond the confines of strict curriculum to find meaningful ways in which teacher and learner can question inherent power-structures and seek transformational learning opportunities, regardless of the short-term nature of the teaching assignment. Teaching practice that is intentionally inclusive and promotes critical engagement is not reserved solely for the full-time classroom teacher, but is an imperative for all educators, including that reviled, incompetent and deviant outsider, the substitute teacher.

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