Assessing Global Citizenship Attitudes with Q Methodology

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A B S T R A C T

This paper discusses the process of designing a quantitative measure of student beliefs and attitudes about social responsibility, global competence, and global civic engagement. First, it includes an overview of the development of a global citizenship Q-sort, the tool used in Q methodology, for assessment. Second, it involves an explanation of the validation process of the Q-sort in three phases to include feedback from scholars in the field, high school teachers, and high school students. Finally, it discusses implications that using this tool can have for researchers analyzing global citizenship coursework and for teachers implementing this coursework.

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Introduction

Within the social studies, global citizenship education provides students with an opportunity to gain knowledge about the world's people and problems, explore tensions that affect the world, and discover how their own identity fits in with these tensions (Hovland, 2005). This type of coursework is designed to promote social responsibility and democracy, and develop a citizenry that is active and attentive to global issues (Lima & Brown, 2007; Tarrant, 2010). Participants in this coursework should be concerned about diversity, including people representing racial, ethnic, and religious differences (Noddings, 2005). In the current global citizenship programs that are currently implanted in American high schools, there is considerable interest in the practices that promote affective elements of civic development. This includes the attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions students have about global citizenship. Researchers and educators designing global citizenship programs for high school students are showing interest in promoting the affective elements of these courses, as manifested in students' individual and collective beliefs and attitudes. These beliefs and attitudes determine the ultimate success of the course.

Programs in global citizenship are more successful if students are individually, and collectively, oriented toward a global outlook. Yet, students enter global citizenship coursework with a variety of personal values and beliefs. The individual experiences of the students will impact the way they interact with the coursework presented, and two classes of students may respond to the same curriculum and presentation completely differently. In other words, individual students' past experiences, which have shaped their current attitudes and beliefs about global citizenship, contribute to the group's norms and beliefs, which in turn influence the classroom climate and success of the course.

Therefore, evaluation of global citizenship coursework must include an assessment of attitudes for individual students and groups of students in a classroom at a given time to determine the effectiveness of global citizenship coursework. Previous measures of attitudes have generally utilized Likert scale surveys to assess beliefs and understanding, or qualitative

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case studies and observations. Existing measures and studies about global citizenship provide useful information, such as what students across the world generally believe about global citizenship and how these beliefs vary by regions and countries (Torney-Purta, 2002) using a large-scale survey, or, on the other spectrum, what a global citizenship class looks like in reality and how students and teachers perceive it, based on a careful observation, interview and focus group. Neither approach is able to quantitatively document and describe the individual attitudes and classroom dynamic at the same time, although it appears useful to do so because of the need to understand the relationship between classroom climate, norms, and practices leading to individual student learning and development.

Current study

The current research emerged after a pilot study was conducted to assess attitudes about global citizenship at an elite, independent high school for girls in the northeastern United States. The school implemented "Non-Western" coursework, where students in their junior year spent two semesters focusing their history and English curriculum on India, China, or the Middle East. During the pilot study, classroom observations, intensive interviews, and a pre- and post-survey tool were used to analyze student attitudes toward global citizenship, and the survey results showed no significant changes in student attitudes. However, the qualitative data demonstrated that the course had made a profound impact on the students, indicating that a different quantitative measure was needed to capture these results for a small sample size such as a single classroom of students. To glean a more accurate quantitative assessment of student attitudes for the small sample of a single classroom, I decided to implement Q methodology.

This paper discusses the process of designing a quantitative measure of student beliefs and attitudes about global citizenship for individual students and groups of students at the classroom level using Q methodology, the quantitative study of subjectivity. First, this paper provides an overview of the development of a global citizenship Q-sort, the tool used in Q methodology for assessment. Second, the paper explains the validation process of the Q-sort in three phases to include feedback from scholars in the field, high school teachers, and high school students. Finally, the paper discusses implications that using this tool can have for researchers analyzing global citizenship coursework and for teachers implementing this coursework.

Q methodology: an overview

Q methodology is a potential alternative to more traditional quantitative measures of attitudes at the classroom level. Q methodology has been described as an excellent means to measure attitudinal change (Freie, 1997; Cook, Scioli, & Brown, 1975), for it is the systematic and rigorous quantitative study of subjectivity (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). Subjectivity is a person's communication of his or her point of view on any matter of personal or social importance. In this case, participants are given a set of statements about global citizenship that cover a range of perspectives, but instead of rating them on a traditional Likert scale the statements are sorted according to how much they represent the participant's viewpoint. The statements are ranked on a normal distribution curve, meaning that students could only choose one statement that most strongly represented them and one statement that was least like them. Fig. 1 illustrates the curve that students were asked to rank the statements on for this study.
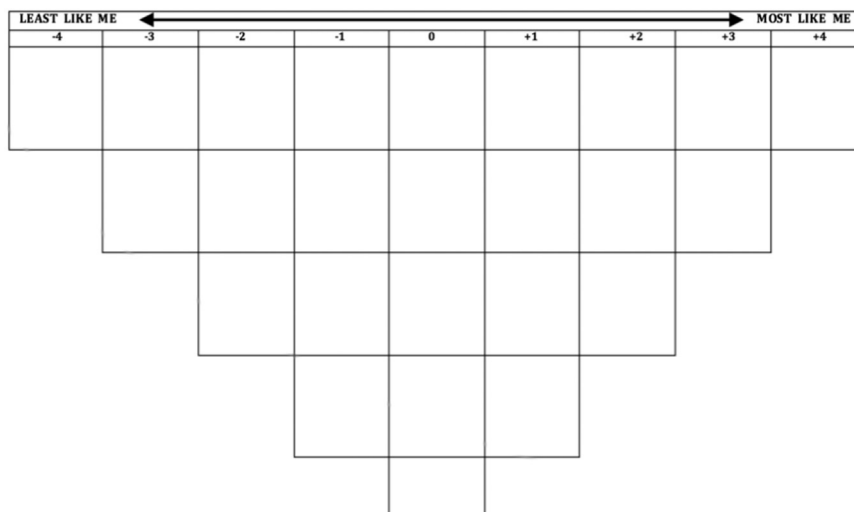

Fig. 1. Normal distribution curve.