Chapter 15

Rethinking Global Citizenship Education: A Critical Perspective

Abdeljalil Akkari and Kathrine Maleq

Abstract In this concluding chapter, we first consider some common obstacles to achieving the implementation of global citizenship education (GCE) identified in the different national contexts presented in the book and reiterate how different contexts call for diverse designs and operating strategies. Second, we examine why GCE has become a highly contested concept, subject to multiple interpretations and in which a wide range of conceptions and objectives coexist. Third, we present considerations for implementing GCE in educational policies and suggest operationalizing GCE within three distinct fields: (a) education for sustainable development (ESD); (b) inter/multicultural education; (c) citizenship education. We argue that this strategy could help link these fields and broaden students' understanding of the interconnections between issues related to citizenship, democracy, participation, identity, inter/multiculturalism, global issues and sustainable development. Finally, we synthesize current research on GCE and conclude by calling for more comparative and critical research to challenge GCE's underlying assumption of the universality of Western paradigms and worldviews to embrace multiple ways of conceiving global citizenship.

Keywords Globalization · Citizenship education · Critical approach · Education policy

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This book presents a multi-voiced examination of global citizenship education (GCE) from an international and critical perspective. The authors explore how the concept of GCE resonates in different national contexts in relation to their historical backgrounds, conceptualizations of citizenship, constructs of national identity and levels of democracy. In addressing these perspectives, some patterns emerge:

First, the concept of global citizenship takes on a particular significance in relation to national minorities' (Indigenous Peoples and ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities) citizen rights and political representation. Despite notable differences between the national contexts presented in this book, the chapters on Brazil, Paraguay, Japan, Kazakhstan, Australia/New Zealand, and Canada/U.S. address the issues of systemic discrimination in education and social injustice experienced by national minorities. Hence, the debate on national and global citizenship in these contexts must not only address the issue of national minorities' civil and political rights, but also their economic, social and cultural rights.

Second, the chapters included in the African and North African sections point out that the concept of global citizenship should be cautiously approached in these formerly colonized contexts. The ongoing search for a cohesive (postcolonial) national identity, incomplete processes of democratization, pressures of economic modernization and ineffective access to citizen rights means that the concept of citizenship resides primary in the need to build a sense of national consciousness through a national narrative and a common vision for the country. As reported by the authors, in many African countries such as Algeria, Tunisia and Niger, economic difficulties and political upheavals are creating political divides between those who wish to promote more conservative and inward-looking attitudes and those who wish to embrace globalization. These chapters, along with the chapter on West Africa, remind us of the danger that GCE is perceived to embody Western privileged perspectives and unwelcome external interference, thereby undermining its potential relevance and effective adoption.

Third, many countries facing immigration such as England, France, Switzerland, Canada and the U.S. are witnessing a crisis of citizenship resulting from two major factors: a decline in political participation and a migration crisis. Although these countries rely on immigration to provide for ageing populations and compensate for declining birth rates, nationalism and anti-immigration discourses are on the rise. In these contexts, GCE may provide an opportunity to value multiple identities within national citizenship and move away from the view that membership of a nation-state is earned through cultural assimilation rather than an acquired right.

Fourth, after considering the inherent tensions between local and global citizenship in international education, the two final chapters encourage us to open new perspectives. In the end, we cannot just think of GCE as providing solutions to global issues but we have a responsibility to educate youth to imagine creative solutions to existing problems and future challenges.

Overall, today's globalized world presents opportunities but also poses risks that can no longer be met exclusively by individual states. Active civil societies with engaged citizens are therefore required to develop new ideas and approaches that

will help create a fairer and just global society. The strength of GCE comes from the fact that it takes a long-term root cause approach to the social problems we are experiencing today and aims to enhance critical and creative thinking, develop analytical capabilities and encourage responsible participation and action at local, national and global levels. Its inherent fragility however is that, in order to be relevant, it must be connected to local needs and realities.

Global Citizenship Education: Conflicting Discourses

By combining the terms *citizenship* and *globalization*, two multidimensional and complex concepts, it is evident that the concept of global citizenship poses conceptual and practical problems.

On the one hand, citizenship traditionally refers to the membership of a nation-state and the rights and obligations that this membership entails. Considering the principle premise of citizenship is the nation-state, its transposition to a global dimension raises the obvious question of whether the concept of GCE is simply an abstraction or a legitimate framework for action (Davies 2006). As the basis of citizenship implies a principle of exclusion and the acceptance of differences in political treatment, global citizenship may be viewed as theoretically impossible (Polcar 2018).

On the other hand, globalization has not only deeply impacted societies, the world economy, information and communication technologies but also the field of education. As current challenges are rarely confined to national boundaries, schools are increasingly called upon to foster active and engaged global citizens.

The growing body of literature and ongoing debates surrounding GCE over the last decade prove its increasing relevance to contemporary educational systems. However, being a highly politicized topic, the many definitions, interpretations and frameworks have made GCE “a highly diverse conceptual arena” (Torres and Bosio 2020, p. 2).

Even though it has taken pride place in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in 2015 by the international community, the concept of GCE has not generated a consensus within the scientific community. Consequently, GCE remains a controversial concept (Gacel-Avila 2017), caught between the spirit of solidarity and global market competition (Torres 2002). Indeed, the ideological tensions that underlie GCE’s different approaches have made it a source of contestation (Richardson 2008).

As suggested by Dill (2013), there are two competing features in GCE: (i) global competencies that include skills and knowledge for economic success in global capitalism; and (ii) a global consciousness that includes an awareness of other perspectives, a vision of oneself as part of a global community, and a moral conscience to act for the common good of the world. In a simplified manner, we can distinguish two main approaches to global citizenship: instrumental and critical.

The instrumental approach is notably present in the authors who speak of the global skills or competencies necessary to be developed in twenty-first century learners. By promoting global competencies, defined as a “capacity and disposition to act and interact appropriately and effectively both individually and collaboratively when participating in an interconnected, interdependent and diverse world” (OECD 2015, p. 46), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is clearly in line with instrumental approaches to global citizenship. The OECD (2018) divides global competency into four primary dimensions (knowledge, values, attitudes and skills) and then targets four primary rationales: to live harmoniously in multicultural communities; to thrive in a changing labor market; to use media platforms effectively and responsibly; and to support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Framework for global competencies is divided in four dimensions:

- Communication and relationship management;
- Knowledge of and interest in global development;
- Challenges and trends, openness and flexibility;
- Emotional strength and resilience.

An example of an instrumental and neo-liberal approach to GCE can be seen in South Korea’s educational system in which “textbooks equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to perform as human resources capable of expanding Korea’s economic profits and socio-cultural superiority in the global marketplace” (Kim 2019, p. 182). Furthermore, in official curricula, minorities are presented “in deficient light through invisibility, exclusion and stereotyping without critically interrogating and challenging global unequal power-relations, which contributes to the reinforcing of imperial domination and subordination” (Kim 2019, p. 190). The case of South Korea is in fact representative of the larger Eastern and South-Eastern Asian contexts in which nationalist and neoliberal discourse remains dominant (Alviar-Martin and Baildon 2016). The main focus of GCE is on skills that will prepare learners to work productively in national and global economies, thus learning English is prioritized (Goren and Yemini 2017). The complex issues of human rights, religious tolerance, cultural diversity, social justice and environmental sustainability are largely disregarded (Alviar-Martin and Baildon 2016).

In this respect, many scholars contest this neoliberal instrumental conception of GCE and call for a more critical and transformative approach, which questions how education can promote global solidarity, social justice, and sustainable development rather than “serve the interest of the global corporate agenda” (Lapayese 2003, p. 494). This approach aims to encourage a sense of shared responsibility towards inequalities and injustices in the world (Misiasek 2019).

It is compellingly evident that Paulo Freire is often cited in relation to critical approaches to GCE in reference to what he considered the highest value of education: critical consciousness. In his writings, the way to emancipation is described as becoming critically aware of social injustices and the contexts which create and maintain them (Freire 1970, 2018). In this respect, the role of education is defined

as enabling learners to understand the world and empowering them to transform it through a denunciation and annunciation dynamic.

We need to be able to understand power in order to denounce it, and by denouncing it we create an interruption, a critical space in which to build counternarratives of human flourishing, annunciation, which, in turn, releases the collective determination to act for change. In this sense, critiquing the status quo opens the space to transform the present into a better future (Ledwith 2017, p. 51).

Accordingly, the critical approach to global citizenship is often constructed through a postcolonial or decolonial perspective that emphasizes justice and social transformation (Andreotti 2011; Torres 2017; Swanson 2015). Unlike neo-liberal approaches, which promote progressivism and capitalism, the postcolonial perspective on GCE seeks to:

Understand the historical and structural roots of power relations caused by colonialism and to challenge both neoliberal and Western-centered approaches to GCE that reinforce unequal power relationships as well as the reality of Western supremacy prevalent in the global society (Kim 2019, p. 179).

It could be argued that both UNESCO and the Council of Europe are midway between an instrumental and a critical approach. UNESCO (2014) defines GCE as:

Global Citizenship Education aims to empower learners to engage and assume active roles, both locally and globally, to face and resolve global challenges and ultimately to become proactive contributors to a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable world (UNESCO 2014, p. 15).

The need to build students' global citizenship competencies as well as enabling learners to understand global issues and empowering them to take action have been important features of the Council of Europe's policies over the last two decades. The Council of Europe, a pioneering organization in the field of human rights and intercultural education, have adopted a European Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) in 2010 (Tibbitts 2016). The main objective being to prepare young people to become democratic citizens and learn to live together in a multicultural society (Council of Europe 2016).

Given the European Council's long tradition of democracy and human rights advocacy, the concept of EDC/HRE is in keeping with their policy. The Council of Europe has not aligned itself to the Global Education 2030 Agenda and does not use UNESCO's terminology, nevertheless, the concept of GCE is used in the Global Education guidelines of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe.

In keeping with its chosen strategic orientation, the Council of Europe has since 2014 provided a strategic approach and a conceptual model of competences which they identified as essential to learners "if they are to participate effectively in a culture of democracy and live peacefully together with others in culturally diverse democratic societies" (Council of Europe 2016, p. 9). This model includes a list of twenty specific values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding which enable an individual to participate effectively in a culture of democracy (Council of Europe 2018).

A key feature of the Council of Europe's framework is the concept of culture of democracy that associates both democratic and intercultural dimensions.

The term "culture of democracy" rather than "democracy" is used in the present context to emphasize the fact that, while democracy cannot exist without democratic institutions and laws, such institutions and laws cannot work in practice unless they are grounded in a culture of democracy, that is, in democratic values, attitudes and practices. Among other things, these include a commitment to the rule of law and human rights, a commitment to the public sphere, a conviction that conflicts must be resolved peacefully, acknowledgement of and respect for diversity, a willingness to express one's own opinions, a willingness to listen to the opinions of others, a commitment to decisions being made by majorities, a commitment to the protection of minorities and their rights, and a willingness to engage in dialogue across cultural divides (Council of Europe 2016, p. 15).

This framework is similar to many conceptualizations of global citizenship in that it calls on individuals to act responsibly and efficiently in a democratic and diverse world as well as involving components of empathy, intercultural understanding, critical thinking and social inequality. We believe the Council of Europe's emphasis on democracy is a relevant approach, focusing on both active democratic participation in public and political life, and values of respect, freedom and dignity. This approach has the advantage of being clearly less divisive and conceptually fragile than GCE.

Implementing Global Citizenship Education in Education Policies

As previously stated, an effective and sustainable implementation of GCE needs to be consistent with local traditions, culture and history and establish effective links between global, national and regional issues. It cannot therefore be founded on a top-down approach or a standardised model (DVV International 2015). It requires drawing up local implementation plans, considering local political and geopolitical contexts, specific challenges and requirements and different conceptions of citizenship.

Besides the need for tailor-made models, the Education Above All (2012) has identified certain requirements that contribute to successful implementation of GCE programs:

- Embedded in policy, with wide stakeholder buy-in;
- Long term and sustainable;
- Holistic, including the various sub-topics in a systematic way;
- Reinforced in each year of schooling and preferably in the wider society;
- Covering the local, national and global dimensions;
- Supported by pre-service and continuing in-service training of teachers;
- Developed and sustained in collaboration with local communities;

- Scalable with maintenance of quality;
- With feedback from monitoring and evaluation processes;
- Based on collaborative arrangements that ensure expertise over the longer term;
- With provision for periodic review and renewal (Education Above all 2012, p. 9).

A key element in this list is obviously pre-service and continuing in-service teacher training. The transmission of knowledge, values and skills related to GCE such as critical thinking, ethno-relative perspectives and respect for diversity require teachers to be trained in “transformative pedagogy¹” (Education Above All 2012).

UNESCO has established a policy framework to guide the implementation of GCE programs in national educational systems and enable them to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG) 4.7 target (see *introduction* chapter). This framework was designed to be flexible and adaptable to different national and regional contexts and is based on three dimensions: cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioral. It identifies three learner attributes: informed and critically literate; socially connected and respectful of diversity; ethically responsible and engaged (UNESCO 2015).

The European Council’s approach differs from UNESCO’s framework and focuses more on promoting an active role for democratic citizens. This approach follows the current liberal tendency aiming to empower young people and valuing entrepreneurship (Hartung 2015).

As for the implementation in school curricula, both organisations suggest three strategies: (1) transversal integration, (2) a separate course or (3) integrated within a “carrier” subject (Council of Europe 2016; UNESCO 2015). Although transversal integration offers a chance to draw links between various subjects and to build a global perspective, this strategy offers less visibility and is less likely to be integrated into syllabi than the other two strategies.

In addition, Education Above All (2012) advocates for a “spiral curricula²” as it allows for fostering values, acquiring skills and behaviors to become responsible global citizens.

In essence, the implementation of GCE in education policies requires strong involvement from education policy-makers, community members and teachers. The substantial investment required for its implementation poses a challenge to many developing countries, where increasing access to GCE for all must be without detriment to quality.

As a relatively new field, GCE still struggles to find its place in national curricula and teaching programs. This can be explained by the ‘immaturity’ of the concept and the proximity to many other related subjects such as civic education, inter/multicultural education and global education. Consequently, when considering

¹“Transformative pedagogy is defined as an activist pedagogy combining the elements of constructivist and critical pedagogy that empowers students to examine critically their beliefs, values, and knowledge with the goal of developing a reflective knowledge base, an appreciation for multiple perspectives, and a sense of critical consciousness and agency” (Ukpokodu 2009).

²In which students will see the same topics throughout their school career, with each topic increasing in complexity.

GCE as an instrument of educational change, informal education may offer interesting possibilities to engage with communities on a local and global level (Akkari and Maleq 2019).

In formal educational systems, there has been over the last decade an increase in new specializations in education such as education for health, peace, global citizenship, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, human rights and sustainable development. Despite the diversity of their themes, the competences developed within these separate fields are similar and even, in some cases, identical. The many overlaps require us to reflect on a coherent framework that explores the linkage between them.

Despite the holistic nature of GCE and its opportunity to draw connections between various education fields, the nature of these links is subject to much debate. The Maastricht Global Education Declaration³ presents GCE as an umbrella term covering a wide spectrum of education fields (North-South Centre of the Council of Europe 2012). Yet, GCE and other related fields such as inter/multicultural education and education for human rights also come under the umbrella of education for sustainable development.

Faced with this ambiguous situation, we suggest operationalizing GCE within three distinct fields: (a) education for sustainable development (ESD); (b) inter/multicultural education; (c) citizenship education. Each of these approaches can be subdivided into a further subset of approaches. ESD may include education for development and environmental education; inter/multicultural education can focus on inclusive education, social justice and equality, and promoting respect for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity; and citizenship education can cover human rights education, education for gender equality, and civic and moral education. Evidently, there are clear links between these three approaches, but we believe that this division will bring more clarity to the concept of GCE for teachers and educators.

Figure 15.1 displays the need to anchor GCE curricula not only in ESD and inter/multicultural education, but also in citizenship education that is long established in most educational systems. In this way, GCE could help link these fields and broaden students' understanding of the interconnections between issues related to citizenship, democracy, participation, identity, multiculturalism, global issues and sustainable development.

First, an integration of GCE objectives into education for sustainable development frameworks is crucial, as efforts to promote sustainable development can only be successful when combined with the promotion of global solidarity. Second, as many schools have established inter/multicultural education as part of school curricula, the input of GCE could challenge traditional conceptions of "competency" (i.e., knowledge, skills, and attitudes) and foster a critical awareness and commitment to addressing issues of social justice. Third, the implementation of GCE,

³In 2002, the Council of Europe adopted the Maastricht Global Education Declaration. This European strategy framework aimed to improve and strengthen GCE by 2015 (North-South Center of the Council of Europe 2012).

Fig. 15.1 Operationalization of global citizenship education

alongside traditional citizenship education in school curricula can introduce a new perspective to the long-standing tradition of civic and moral education, thereby providing an opportunity to value hybrid and multiple identities.

Finally, it is important to reflect on how to schools can encourage students to see themselves as global citizens. Katzarska-Miller and Reysen's (2019) study shows that global citizenship identification is related to a wide variety of positive outcomes such as intergroup empathy, valuing diversity, social justice, environmental sustainability, intergroup helping, and a sense of responsibility to act for the betterment of the world.

Research on Global Citizenship Education

Goren and Yemini (2017) have conducted a systematic review of empirical studies on GCE published over the last 10 years, providing a mapping of the current research landscape and highlighting both the dominant themes and possible lacuna in the existing body of research. One significant conclusion of this study was the identification of a gap between the increasing call from the scientific community for more critical approaches to GCE and the apparent lack of critical discourse within educational policy and empirical studies. Furthermore, the review pointed out that a large number of articles on GCE not only fail to account for the heterogeneity of society, they do not address issues of class and context within their theoretical framework.

Overall, it is clear that GCE has received unprecedented attention from academics, educators, and policymakers around the globe. A recent comparative UNESCO study gives clear indications of an increasing presence of GCE in official educational policies and curricula (Cox 2017; UNESCO 2015). However, further research is required to fill the gap in scientific knowledge about the educational implications of translating GCE's international models into classroom practice (Eidoo et al. 2011; Guo 2013; Damiani 2018).

In addition, empirical studies are needed to assess the impact of GCE programs on school climate, discrimination, prejudice towards minorities or awareness of sustainable development issues.

The cognitive impact will be relatively easy to assess through tests on the students' acquisition of certain sets of information and knowledge. The assessment of the acquisition of socio-emotional and behavioral skills and competences may require different methods that allow us to measure development and formation of certain attitudes in students, as well as mindsets and behavioral patterns as part of their development as individuals (UNESCO 2016, p. 4).

Finally, it is crucial to not only assess the level of integration of GCE in curricula and its impact but also explore how teachers conceptualize and make sense of global citizenship. Research conducted in Canada by Leduc (2013) indicates that teachers believe in the need to foster active citizenship and civic global responsibility but seem to mainly focus student's learning on the symptoms of global inequalities while ignoring global interdependence. Conclusions from this research demonstrate once again the need for more critical approaches in schools.

Drawing on the example of Australia, Reynolds et al. (2019) point out that more efforts are required to fully realize the potential of critical GCE:

To enact global citizenship education, teachers require opportunities from a curriculum. Although the Australian curriculum supports teachers to address some aspects of global citizenship, there is much more it could do to require teachers to advocate for a better world, and to address key issues such as justice and equality, and both individual and collective identities on a global scale (p. 114).

Furthermore, proving that the development of GCE can only be achieved alongside teacher training, a study carried out in the U.S. indicates that teachers struggle to teach GCE as their understanding of the concept is limited (Rapoport 2010).

A Call for Further Comparative and Critical Research

This book, consistent with other comparative research (see: Swanson and Pashby 2016; Kitamura 2017; Engel et al. 2016; Galegher et al. 2019), pinpoints that the current threats to citizenship rights, social cohesion and social inclusion, brought about by unregulated neo-liberal globalization, cannot be tackled by a universal approach to GCE. Rather, GCE must be rooted in historical legacies and processes of national citizenship building. Approaching this concept in diverse national contexts also allows us to assess and discuss the relative merits of GCE (Sharma 2020).

We believe it is equally important to counterbalance the prevailing Western discourse on GCE by welcoming new ideas and approaches from the Global South, particularly from Indigenous Peoples. As rightfully stated by Stein et al. (2019), reflecting on alternatives for building a more just world is essential to both broaden the spectrum of possibilities and prevent “the same mistakes that reproduce the colonial division of the world, the results of which now threaten all our planetary futures” (p. 295). If research on GCE does not open to alternatives voices in the years to come, the dominant discourse may serve to perpetuate ongoing legacies of colonialism and silence the call for Indigenous sovereignty (Sabzalian 2019).

We hope that going forward, GCE will seize the opportunity to challenge the underlying assumption of the universality of Western paradigms and worldviews to embrace multiple ways of conceiving education, schooling and global citizenship.

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