Global Citizenship Education: 
Pedagogy for Social Transformation

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ABSTRACT: Global citizenship has progressively become a goal of educational institutions involved with expanding students’ understandings of what it means to be a citizen in a globalized world. However, what this multi-dimensional concept means precisely has been the subject of much debate and discussion in the research literature on this topic. Building on a ‘critical-transformative dimension’ of global citizenship education this article examines the different ways of conceptualizing the notion of global citizenship and discusses implications for global awareness at both the theoretical and practical levels.

1. INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, there is a necessity for transformative pedagogy that empowers learners to resolve assiduous challenges related to sustainable development and peace that concern all humanity (Torres, 2017). These include conflict, poverty, climate change, energy, security, unequal population distribution, and all forms of inequality and injustice, which feature the need for cooperation among countries (Gaudelli, 2016).

In this context, there is growing interest in Global Citizenship Education (GCE). GCE gives rise to the actions and activities that shape the direction of
society over time. In particular, it can provide the conditioning context that supports learners to reframe events, wherever they may occur, through a shared human angle, and to foster action and cohesion (Gaudelli, 2013). Through education for global citizenship, learners have the chance to gain the experience of seeing the world through the eyes of others, discovering and clarifying what is necessary in order to build a society where we can all live together; and cooperate to give birth to spaces of security in their immediate surroundings (Noddings, 2005).

The concept of GCE has lately gained prominence in international development discourse with the adopted Global Education First Initiative (GEFI), launched by the former secretary of the United Nations (UN) Ban Ki-moon in September 2012. In inaugurating this initiative, the former UN Secretary General has set three priorities (UNESCO, 2014).

First, *putting every child in school*. UNESCO’s movement pledged to achieve universal primary education by 2015. The recent Incheon meeting indicated that this goal has not been achieved yet, and new developmental goals have been set for the period 2015–2030 within the so-called Incheon Declaration. In this spirit, UNESCO stressed the need to make all the required investments to ensure that every child has equal access to schooling (Torres, 2017).

Second, *improving the quality of learning*. Access to education is critical but it is not enough. Learners should acquire appropriate skills to participate effectively in today’s knowledge-based society. The quality of education that children, youths and adults receive is vital in attaining the goal of access to quality learning (Tarozzi & Torres, 2016). The third priority set by GEFI is the focus of this article, *fostering global citizenship*. Education has the power to shape a sustainable future and a better world. Education policies should endorse peace, mutual respect and environmental care – thus GCE (Reimers, 2009b).

Building on Larsen (2004) ‘critical-dimension’ of global citizenship (GC) and the UNESCO’s (2014) transformative model of GCE this article examines the
different ways of intellectualizing the notion of GC from a moral perspective – rather than a formal one, and discusses propositions for global awareness at both the theoretical and practical levels. The author hopes to encourage a renewed emphasis on universal and moral values such as peace, human rights, justice and respect for diversity, as well as a focus on a holistic education and a type of instruction dedicated to developing learners’ personality and certain ‘global competencies’ that graduates need in an increasing globalized world.

2. GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP – A MULTIFACETED TERM

The notion of global citizenship (GC) and its educational extension – GCE, however, remain quite multilayered, if not contested, and consequently difficult to operationalize. There are two possible reasons for this. First, the notion of ‘global citizenship’ does not imply a legal status. From a purely legal perspective then, and the despite the way in which globalization is affecting traditional conceptions of citizenship within the contours of the nation-state, the notion of ‘global citizenship’ remains a metaphor (Rizvi, 2009).

Nonetheless, GC will be conceptualized in this article as a feeling and an educational practice (Schattle, 2008) and not so much a static identity, rather as a process that engages students while developing their moral dimension and certain knowledge, skills and attitudes/values that should support them in making a difference in the lives of those who are not as privileged as themselves (Reimers, 2009a). In line with this view, Appiah (2008) suggests that we must identify with our fellow human beings and act in a manner that acknowledges our interdependence. The concept of GC – as examined in this article – does not signal therefore a requirement to detach oneself from one’s own national identity or loyalties. Quite the opposite, as argued by Appiah, respect and loyalty to humankind does not deprive us of the capability to care for people closer by.
Appiah’s discussion about GC is important to the current global debate on GC because it reinforces two key interconnected points; first, that GC concerns the global and thus shifts the perspective from the local and immediate to a broader plane; and second that, through the idea of citizenship, it evokes a sense of practical responsibility towards others regardless of their location in terms of geography, class, gender or ethnicity. In this view, GC remains a powerful notion, and as author and lecturer engaged with the higher education (HE) sector, I believe GC has profound meaning for instruction.

Secondly, when applied to education, the notion of GC implies a certain degree of confusion (Reimers, 2006). What is ‘GCE’ (or ‘education for global citizenship’) exactly? A variety of definitions of GCE exist, and some of them will be mentioned in this article; however, Oxley & Morris (2013) has observed that implementing the idea of GC is codified in educational curriculum with a little reference on what knowledge, skills, values/attitudes ‘globally competent graduates’ should develop in order to cultivate a sense of social responsibility both at a local and global level (Hunter, 2004); thus, this article will sketch some possible themes – specifically, as they relate to the UNESCO’s framework – based on a systematic examination of the existing literature on GCE.

Though GC is a highly contested and multifaceted term, three key dimensions, at least within the existing literature (Noddings, 2005; Reimers, 2009a; Larsen, 2014; Gaudelli, 2016; Torres, 2017), are now commonly accepted; social responsibility – concern for others, for society at large, and for the environment, civic engagement – active engagement with local, regional, national and global community issues and global awareness – understanding and appreciation of one’s self in the world and of world issues; while social responsibility and civic engagement are extremely important and perhaps will be examined in further publications, a moral dimension of global awareness is the focus of this analysis in this article.
3. THE MORAL DIMENSION OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

The debate about the nature of citizenship – the belief that we need to view world affairs from our perspective as global citizens – has been a strand through the writing of important scholars. It was central to the thinking of Enlightenment philosophers such as the German Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), who spoke of an individuals’ membership in a universal community as a basis for global peace (Kant, 1983). It even shaped the thought of European philosophers during the Age of Empire. For instance, the Italian thinker Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872) wrote at length about an individual’s duties to humanity and the fact that individuals’ loyalty cannot be determined by their nationality alone, while the ‘Declaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen’ from 1789 distinguished between a citizen who actively engages with society (‘le citoyen’) and the man (‘l’homme’) who assumes a passive attitude in society (Tanner, 2007).

The term citizenship therefore, not only refers to the legal relationship between citizen and state, which comprises rights and obligations, but also expectations regarding various forms of social participations. While, the legal relationship between citizen and state is sometimes also referred to as ‘the formal dimension of citizenship’ (Tonkin, 2011), the participation dimension is ‘the moral dimension of citizenship’ (Tiessen, 2008).

The moral dimension targets the moral obligations that citizens worldwide have towards each other. This dimension focuses on the individual contributions citizens make to create a better world. People have rights and obligations towards each other irrespective of any political authority (Torres, 2008). The absence of political authority does not have to stand in the way of (voluntary) civil action at a global level (Tiessen, 2012).

There are a number of aspects that play a role in the moral dimension of global citizenship. One prerequisite is awareness of what is going on outside one’s
own direct environment (Bamber & Hankin, 2011); a worldview where one feels committed to and responsible for others in this world (Nussbaum, 2007). In addition, citizens need to convert this awareness and responsibility into a willingness to take action in order to achieve social justice, equality or ecological sustainability (Shultz, 2011).

The moral dimension of GC then, relates to awareness, responsibility, behavior, or at least a willingness to take action, and a notion of equality. The question is what the relevant focus areas are. Focus areas have been defined in various ways. This article focuses on Larsen (2014) and the UNESCO’s framework.

4. CRITICAL AWARENESS IN GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Larsen (2004) proposes a Critical GC (CGC) dual framework consisting of two main strings: Awareness/Analysis (Figure 1) and Engagement/Action (Figure 2). The first component, Awareness/Analysis, includes four dimensions: critical awareness and analysis of difference; the Self; the Global; and Responsibility. These dimensions are connected and inter-related with one another.

Figure. 1 Critical Global Citizenship: Awareness/Analysis Component (Larsen, 2004)
4.1 Difference Awareness. According to Larsen (2004), a critical global citizen acknowledges differences in cultural values, beliefs and practices that may contradict one’s own. Likewise, a critical global citizen recognizes the creation of a set of dualistic ideas (civilized/uncivilized, advanced/primitive) to validate notions of the global-north as superior and the global-south as inferior. In this view, a critical global citizen can analyze the historical roots of contemporary, prejudiced and racist views about difference (Shultz, 2007).

4.2 Self-Awareness. A critical global citizen develops mindfulness of one’s own personality and comprehend that identities are capable of change. This involves awareness that one’s knowledge of the world is continually twisted within specific contexts, by conscious opinions and ideas, as well as hidden influences, values and assumptions that often escape conscious detection. In addition, a critical global citizen analytically reflects about one’s own privileges being able to use this knowledge about one’s interpretation of the world and privileges within it to interact, communicate and work effectively outside of one’s own coziness (Gaudelli, 2013).

4.3 Global Awareness. A critical global citizen understands contemporary leading issues that are played out in local settings throughout the world, including issues related to inequalities based on gender, race/ethnicity, social class, and other forms of difference and the political-economic and socio-cultural roots of inequalities in power/wealth globally and locally, including contemporary effects of neoliberal policies and longstanding legacies of imperialism (Shultz, 2011).

4.4 Responsibility Awareness. A critical global citizen feels a sense of responsibility towards understanding and changing the world. The critically responsible person tries to create an ethic of social service to address local and
global discriminations (Noddings, 2005).

There are three other related dimensions that compose the second component of CGC, *Engagement/Action*, Self-Action, Civic Action, and Social Justice Action.

![Figure. 2 Critical Global Citizenship: Engagement/Action Component (Larsen, 2004)](image)

**4.5 Self-Action.** How critical global citizens take actions in their day-to-day life with respect to one’s self and one’s daily life or the ordinary ways in which individuals transform themselves into global citizens. These can be simple, for instance engaging in positive interactions with others, demonstrating respect and care for others, and the improvement and continuance of relationships with those who may have hitherto been viewed as the “Other” (Larsen, 2014).

**4.6 Civic Action.** In this view a critical global citizen is a participatory citizen, who dynamically contributes in the community structures in order to resolve social problems and improve society. This is what has been referred to as the ‘justice-oriented citizen’ who questions and works to change established systems and structures, which have reproduced patterns of injustice over time (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). The critical global citizen strives to remove him/herself from the “center” and constructs a new relationship based on openness and dialogue rather than dominance and oppression.
As we conceptualized it therefore, the critical dimension of GC can be defined as a conduct that adheres to certain principles. Critical global citizens not only have a certain attitude towards, or knowledge of, the world, but also convert that into behavior. Merely possessing knowledge of global issues, or assuming a certain attitude, does not directly and automatically lead to behavior that helps to create a fair and sustainable world. GC is therefore basically a behavioral expression, albeit that this behavior must be motivated by the principles of equality, shared responsibility and mutual dependency.

Similar conceptual frameworks, perhaps less theoretical and more practical, but still focused on developing a critical view of GC in education – thus GCE, often originated from the discourse of international organizations such as the UNESCO (2014) examined in the next section.

5. THE UNESCO FRAMEWORK OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION


Figure 3. Global Citizenship Education UNESCO (Gaudelli, 2016)
UNESCO’s notion is expressed in a broad and inclusive manner such that justice, peace, tolerance, inclusivity, security and sustainability are explicit. The modes propose attitudes, like empathy, caring and openness while the foundations note topics like human rights, diversity and democracy as core elements of GCE. A key element of UNESCO’s articulation is the idea of producing social action and engagement (Gaudelli, 2016).

Also, the revised Sustainable Development Goals agreed in September, 2015 for 2015–2030 articulate a commitment to educational quality, not only educational access. By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development (Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 4).

In the UNESCO’s view therefore, GCE aims to be “transformative, building the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that learners need to be able to contribute to a more inclusive, just and peaceful world.” (UNESCO 2014, p. 46). It also aims to enable learners to:

- Develop an understanding of global governance structures, rights and responsibilities, global issues and connections between global, national and local systems and processes;
- Recognize and appreciate difference and multiple identities, e.g. culture, language, religion, gender and our common humanity, and develop skills for living in an increasingly diverse world;
- Develop and apply critical skills for civic literacy, e.g. critical inquiry, information technology, media literacy, critical thinking, decision-making, problem solving, negotiation, peace building and personal and social responsibility;
• Recognize and examine beliefs and values and how they influence political and social decision-making, perceptions about social justice and civic engagement;
• Develop attitudes of care and empathy for others and the environment and respect for diversity.
• Develop values of fairness and social justice, and skills to critically analyze inequalities based on gender, socio-economic status, culture, religion, age and other issues.
• Participate in, and contribute to, contemporary global issues at local, national and global levels as informed, engaged, responsible and responsive global citizens.

5.1 Global Citizenship Education Learning Domains—Cognitive, Socio-emotional and Behavioral

The UNESCO’s framework conceptualizes GCE as a tool to develop learners’ three core domains of learning: Cognitive, Socio-emotional and Behavioral. Such dimensions can serve as the basis for defining GCE goals, learning objectives and competencies, as well as priorities for assessing and evaluating learning. These are interconnected and outlined below, each signifying the domain of learning they focus on most in the learning process:

1. Cognitive: To acquire knowledge, understanding and critical thinking about global, regional, national and local issues and the interconnectedness and interdependency of different countries and populations.
2. Socio-emotional: To have a sense of belonging to a common humanity, sharing values and responsibilities, empathy, solidarity and respect for differences and diversity.
3. Behavioral: To act effectively and responsibly at local, national and global levels for a more peaceful and sustainable world.

(UNESCO, 2014)

5.2 Global Citizenship Education Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes describe the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that learners can obtain and exhibit as a result of GCE. Corresponding to the three domains of learning mentioned above (cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioral), UNESCO (2014) identifies the following set of key learning outcomes:

1. Cognitive:
   • Learners acquire knowledge and understanding of local, national and global issues and the interconnectedness and interdependency of different countries and populations.
   • Learners develop skills for critical thinking and analysis.

2. Socio-Emotional
   • Learners experience a sense of belonging to a common humanity, sharing values and responsibilities, based on human rights.
   • Learners develop attitudes of empathy, solidarity and respect for differences and diversity.

3. Behavioral
   • Learners act effectively and responsibly at local, national and global levels for a more peaceful and sustainable world.
   • Learners develop motivation and willingness to take necessary actions.
5.3 Global Citizenship Education Learners Features

The UNESCO’s guidance identifies three learner features in relation to GCE, which refer to the traits and qualities that GCE aims to develop in learners and correspond to the key learning outcomes mentioned earlier. These are the informed and critically learners, socially connected and respectful learners and ethically responsible and engaged learners. The three learners’ attributes draw on a review of the literature and of citizenship education conceptual frameworks, a review of methodologies and curricula, as well as procedural consultations and recent work by UNESCO on GCE.

The informed and critically learners have a knowledge of global governance systems, structures and issues; they have also an understanding of the interdependence and connections between global and local concerns, while developing knowledge and skills required for civic literacy, such as critical inquiry and analysis with an emphasis on active engagement in learning. They understand the rights and responsibilities of individuals and groups (for example, women’s and children’s rights, indigenous rights, corporate social responsibility); and, recognize the interconnectedness of local, national and global issues, structures and processes (UNESCO, 2014).

Learners with such characteristics develop the skills of critical inquiry (for example, where to find information and how to analyze and use evidence), media literacy and an understanding of how information is mediated and communicated. Eventually, they develop their ability to inquire into global themes and issues – for example, globalization, interdependence, migration, peace and conflict, sustainable development – by planning investigations, analyzing data and communicating their findings (Hunter, 2004).

The socially connected and respectful learners understand diverse identities, shared values and common humanity; he or she develops an appreciation of, and
respect for, differences as well as the complex relationship between diversity and
community. The socially connected and respectful learners learn also about their
identities and how they are situated within multiple relationships – for example,
family, friends, school, local community, country, as a basis for understanding the
global dimension of citizenship (UNESCO, 2014). They develop an understanding
of difference and diversity, for example, culture, language, gender, sexuality,
religion, of how beliefs and values influence people’s views about those who are
different, and of the reasons for, and impact of, inequality and discrimination
(Nussbaum, 2007).

Eventually, the ethically responsible and engaged learners explore their own
beliefs and values and those of others. They understand how beliefs and values
inform social and political decision making at local, national, regional and global
levels, and the challenges for governance of contrasting and conflicting beliefs
and values. Ethically responsible and engaged learners also develop their
understanding of social justice issues in local, national, regional and global
contexts and how these are interconnected (UNESCO, 2014). Ethical issues, for
example, relating to climate change, consumerism, economic globalization, fair
trade, migration, poverty and wealth, sustainable development, terrorism, war are
also addressed. In addition, ethically responsible and engaged learners reflect on
ethical conflicts related to social and political responsibilities and the wider impact
of their choices and decisions, while developing the knowledge, skills, values and
attitudes to care for others and the environment and to engage in civic action
(Shultz, 2007; 2011).

6. CONCLUSION

While the idea of GC and its educational extension – GCE remain quite
multifaceted and disputed, it is imperative to advance a critical-transformative
pedagogy that empowers learners to tackle constant challenges related to sustainable development and peace that concern all humanity. GCE represents a conceptual shift in that it recognizes the relevance of education in understanding and resolving global issues in their social, political, cultural, economic and environmental dimensions (UNESCO, 2014). GCE seems also accommodating the role of education in moving beyond the development of knowledge and cognitive skills to build values and attitudes among learners that can facilitate international cooperation and promote social transformation (Reimers, 2009).

Such values and attitudes range from learners developing difference awareness, for instance the appreciation of differences in cultural values, beliefs and practices that may contradict one’s own, to self-awareness, thus mindfulness of one’s own personality and understanding that identities are capable of change or global awareness, for example the appreciation of contemporary leading issues that are played out in local settings throughout the world, including issues related to inequalities based on longstanding legacies of imperialism (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003), and responsibility awareness, therefore a sense of accountability towards understanding and changing the world (Larsen, 2014). The UNESCO’s framework defines graduates who develop such characteristics informed and critically learners.

Moreover, self-action, for example how learners take actions in their day-to-day life with respect to themselves, and civic action or the extent to which learners dynamically contributes in the community structures in order to resolve social problems and improve society (Larsen, 2014an), are all features that the UNESCO’s (2014) attribute to socially connected and respectful learners making them participatory citizens, who are able to dynamically contribute in the community structures in order to resolve social problems and improve society, closer to resembling to the UNESCO’s ethically responsible and engaged learners.

In closing, there is no single approach to implementing GCE, although this
article suggests that certain factors indicate to its successful delivery. The learners’ attributes above cited draw on a review of the literature and of citizenship education conceptual frameworks, particularly Larsen (2014), a review of approaches and curricula, as well as technical consultations and recent work by UNESCO on GCE.

References


