GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Issue paper n°1

Enabel

ANNONCER LA COULEUR

kruit

Global Citizenship Education Centre of Expertise

THE MANY FACES OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Cécile Giraud - GCE Centre of Expertise - Enabel

Global citizenship education (GCE) has become a widely shared education practice around the world. GCE practices are part of curricula of many education systems around the world, but GCE is also used by youth movements and by continuing education or development cooperation programmes.

GCE is widely recognised as an answer to the question: What does it mean to be a citizen in the 21st century ?[1] The assumptions of GCE are based on the belief that the world has now become incredibly interdependent and that citizenship can no longer be considered solely on the basis of a national model, which enshrines the citizenship-nationality equation, but must now take into account the fact that the challenges facing human beings transcend national boundaries and bind the destinies of all men and women as never before.

Climate change and environmental issues, migration, public health, poverty, etc. must be addressed in a comprehensive manner and global challenges must be overcome by citizens who are aware of the interdependency and ready and able to answer the question: in what shared world do we want to live? GCE can then be understood as an education that aims to prepare human beings to take on their responsibilities in building the world of tomorrow[2], a more just world of solidarity.

However, while this goal is common to all GCE programmes, the ways in which this can be achieved and therefore the content and objectives of GCE programmes vary considerably around the world. These differences are mainly caused by the diverse ways of seeing and understanding the world, which generate different currents that respond differently to the following two questions: What is globalisation? And, what does it mean to be a global citizen?

This diversity may be confusing to practitioners, complicate their work and weaken the clarity of the message of global citizenship education. By explaining the different worldviews that underlie the different answers to these two questions, this publication seeks to clarify the various objectives of GCE programmes and hopes to provide practitioners with a conceptual map to better navigate the GCE practices.

Literature broadly categorises today's GCE in four 'types' or currents: neoliberal, liberal, critical and post-critical .[3]

The neoliberal current

The neoliberal current[4] defines globalisation as the widespread expansion of the global market and liberal principles (i.e. mainly: the defence of individual rights, economic and political freedom, private property, freedom of expression, etc.). As a result, the global citizen is defined above all by this current as one who understands and accepts the globalised economy which is driven by two forces: capitalism and technological progress.

On the basis of this view on globalisation, it is therefore only natural that the neoliberal current sees education as the acquisition by learners of the skills that will enable them to become part and parcel of the economic development of societies. In this context, GCE is understood as an education aimed at acquiring comprehensive skills that are essential to the competitiveness of workers in a globalised market: mainly adaptability, openness to interculturalism, flexibility and mobility. Through GCE the neoliberal current wants to promote the transnational mobility of human beings, knowledge and skills.

---

1. Jorgenson S. and Shultz L. 2012. 'Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in Post-Secondary Institutions: What is Protected and what is Hidden under the Umbrella of GCE?', Journal of Global Citizenship & Equity Education, 2 (1)
2. See UNESCO (2014). Global citizenship education: preparing learners for the challenges of the 21st century, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000227729
3. Pashby K., da Costa M., Stein S., and Andreotti V. 2020. 'A meta-review of typologies of GCE', Comparative Education, 56 (2).
4. See, for instance: Shultz, L. 2007. 'Educating for Global Citizenship: Conflicting Agendas and Understandings." Alberta Journal of Educational Research 53 (3): 248–258. ; Gaudelli, W. 2009. "Heuristics of Global Citizenship Discourses towards Curriculum Enhancement." Journal of Curriculum Theory 25 (1): 68–85. ; Camicia, S. P., and B. M. Franklin. 2011. "What Type of Global Community and Citizenship? Tangled Discourses of Neoliberalism and Critical Democracy in Curriculum and Its Reform." Globalisation, Societies and Education 9 (3-4): 311–32

The GCE practice developed by the proponents of this current includes university exchanges, travel, volunteering abroad; i.e. experiences that promote the mobility of individuals, the learning of intercultural skills and foreign languages, knowledge of different cultures, etc. This neoloberal GCE current promotes skills-based education, as illustrated for example by the OECD's GCE vision, which assesses the 'global competence' of learners via the PISA test.[5]

The liberal current

The liberal current[6] defines globalisation as the opening of societies to each other and sees it as a chance to reach a global agreement on values considered universal such as tolerance, human rights or democracy.
For this current, global citizens transcend the barriers of their culture and nationality to open up to the world and nurture the feeling of belonging to humanity and develop moral qualities such as tolerance, empathy and understanding of otherness.

The liberal current is largely based on cosmopolitan thought, which, since antiquity, has been reflecting on one's common belonging to the world and on the universality of human nature and reason. The liberal current sees education as an emancipatory process that allows learners to develop knowledge, values, ways of being and acting that will enable them to exploit their full human potential.

Through GCE, the liberal current wants to develop openness to otherness, the ability to reason, empathy, a sense of belonging to a common humanity, respect and mutual understanding, cultural equality, dialogue. GCE practices developed by this current primarily raise awareness of learners about global issues and challenges, developing empathy for the less fortunate, listening skills and the intercultural dialogue.

This liberal GCE current promotes values-based education, as illustrated for example by UNESCO[7]'s approach and its emphasis on the socio-emotional and behavioural dimensions of GCE.

The critical current

The critical current[8], driven by postcolonial and post-structuralist studies and critical sociology, conceives globalisation as the manifestation of Western imperialism that is growing and uses its economic power to dominate the world. For this current, a global citizen therefore understands the mechanisms by which this imperialist system creates poverty and oppresses the majority of the world's population.

Global citizens make their voice heard and act to counter the action of states and companies that contribute to the marginalisation of subaltern populations. The critical current sees education as a transformative practice that must lead learners to develop critical and rational thinking, to understand the systems of domination that govern human and social relations, with a view to eliminating them.

Through GCE, the critical current wants to update and deconstruct hegemonic categories, recreate decolonized North-South relations, call for action against global institutions, especially financial institutions that are seen as the main architects of the global financial systems that produce domination. Unlike the liberal current, the GCE approach developed by the critical current is not aimed at adhering to values considered universal, but rather aims to expose the mechanisms by which these values are produced. The critical current considers the liberal and neoliberal currents of GCE and the values they promote as Euro-centred, despite their claim to universality.

This current's GCE practises develop the knowledge of global systems and relationships and critical thinking, encourage learners to engage in political spheres and advocacy, establish relations between subaltern groups in the North and South, co-create North-South knowledge, emphasise the diversity of knowledge systems (epistemologies), set up protest actions, etc.

The critical approach to GCE promotes education based on social transformation, which means that GCE must contribute to freeing learners from the mechanisms of oppression that are part of social structures, to making people think about human beings, about the conditions in which they live around the world, about social projects. GCE must therefore participate in transforming the world.

5. See OECD, PISA 2018: https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisa-2018-global-competence.html
6. See for instance: Andreotti, V. 2014. "Critical and Transnational Literacies in International Development and Global Citizenship Education." Sisyphus-Journal of Education 2 (3): 32–50. ; Schattle, H. 2008. "Education for Global Citizenship: Illustrations of Ideological Pluralism and Adaptation." Journal of Political Ideologies 13 (1): 73–94. ; Oxley, L., and P. Morris. 2013. "Global Citizenship: A Typology for Distinguishing Its Multiple Conceptions." British Journal of Educational Studies 61 (3): 301–325.
7. See UNESCO. 2015. 'Global citizenship education: topics and learning objectives', https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232993
8. See, for instance: Andreotti, V. 2006. 'Soft versus Critical Global Citizenship Education.' Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review 3: 40–45; Stein, S. 2015. 'Mapping Global Citizenship.' Journal of College and Character 16 (4): 242–252.

The post-critical current

Finally, there is the post-critical current[9] , which is based on postmodern theories and is still mostly utopian today. It is based on the idea that the world must turn its back on modernity, defined by four characteristics: the belief that makes Human beings and Nature two distinct things (Humans must master Nature); the organising of societies into nation states; the humanist thought that sees history as a long march towards progress; and the capitalist organisation of economic and social life.

This post-critical current defines globalisation as the global triumph of modernity and the four characteristics mentioned above that define it. Global citizens for this current succeed in dissociating themselves from modernity and the ideas and principles that govern it. Education is therefore perceived by this current as an emancipatory process that can bring out alternative ways of living and organising social life. T

hrough GCE, the post-critical current aims to propose and make concrete ways of living together that have escaped modernity. GCE practices developed by this school require activities that produce a break-up of the modern narrative, that bring out other models of living together, for example by drawing inspiration from modes of existence that have never been considered by modernity as desirable.

This post-critical approach to GCE promotes education based on radical political and social transformation, meaning that GCE must be used to transform our worldviews and social and political relations.

Implications for practice

After having reviewed the different GCE currents above, we must ask ourselves what the implications are of these different approaches on how practitioners approach and practice GCE.

First, it should lead us to think about the goals we aim for when we host GCE activities. How do we fit in? What kind of global citizens do we want for tomorrow? What changes do we want to see happen?

Second, it can help us look differently at the various GCE programmes we offer. For example, we can categorise programmes that target learner mobility and the acquisition of skills that can be used in the labour market as neoliberal approaches to GCE. Labelled school programmes or classroom GCE workshops instead fall under liberal approaches to GCE, since they generally aim to develop values of solidarity and empathy and to raise students' awareness of different issues such as sustainable development, welcoming migrants, North-South relations or democratic governance.

Advocacy campaigns for greater social and environmental justice, calls to boycott products or practices that violate social justice and sustainability and activities aimed at helping learners engage in the public sphere may be seen as taking a critical GCE view. And practices that aim to make learners aware of the constructed nature of the facts in which they evolve and on which their worldview is based with a view of producing in radically different ways of life can be considered to belong to the post-critical currents of GCE.

Of course, it is obvious that the boundaries between these different currents and activities are permeable and easily crossed. The same GCE activity can address ideas shared by neoliberal, liberal and critical currents, for example. However, this reflection on the different 'types' of GCE should lead us to reconsider the main directions we want to give to our activities and to the messages we want to convey to learners.

Finally, this exercise in categorising the different currents of GCE makes us aware of the diversity that is at the heart of this education and of its non-monolithic and political character. This leads us to reflect on the views of the world, of citizenship and of education that we transmit through our practices so that we can participate fully in social transformation and help learners become global citizens who can contribute positively to and in the world of tomorrow.

9. See: Bridge 4.7. 2019. Global Citizenship Education (GCE) for Unknown Futures: Mapping Past and Current Experiments and Debates, https://www.bridge47.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/bridge47_gce_for_unknown_futures_report-compressed_0.pdf