



Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Responsibility

a Philosophical Approach

The climate change negotiations in Paris (COP21), 2015, represent a sea change in thinking and language, if not political action, that characterises the moral imperative to act responsibly and collectively.

Universalism plus Difference

Cosmopolitanism is a particular tradition of talking about global citizenship with two strands. The first is the idea that we are all collectively responsible for each other and that we are a kind of single moral community, an idea shared by many. What distinguishes global citizens is that while we all belong to a moral community, we are entitled to different ways of life.¹ That is universalism plus difference.

Universalism assumes a position that a universal ethic applies to all, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, nationality or any other distinguishing feature.²

Global citizens do not expect everybody to become the same.³ The fact that there are disagreements around the world should not make us think that we can't live together.

At the individual level, a recent BBC World Service Poll tells us that more and more people are identifying as global citizens. What global citizenship means to those people varies and includes the ability to communicate, travel, gain economic power and "tackle the world's problems in a spirit of togetherness".⁴

Togetherness is the operative word, it is not about "us and them", but "we" and that is not to suggest any loss of national, cultural or indigenous identity. This may go some way to answering questions around some of the tensions between cosmopolitanism and patriotism and the suggestion of "either/or" belonging or identity. Viewing from afar in no way minimises responsibility in day to day practices at home, it is a complex environment with rapidly developing opportunities and challenges.

Global and Local

Globalisation homogenises and threatens diversity, at least commercially, distancing personal and societal responsibility from local activity. A hybrid term has been coined, *glocalisation* - "the simultaneous occurrence of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies in contemporary social, political, and economic systems...it points to the interconnectedness of the global and local levels...Thus, globalization entails neither the end of geography nor declining heterogeneity"⁵ In the UK Oxfam's *Curriculum for Global Citizenship* a global citizen "participates in and contributes to the community at a range of levels from the local to the global".⁶

¹ Appiah, Kwame Anthony, 'Cosmopolitanism', *Philosophy Bites*, (Edmonds and Warburton) Oxford University Press, 2010, p.47.

² http://www.philosophybasics.com/branch_moral_universalism.html

³ Appiah, Kwame Anthony, 'Cosmopolitanism', *Philosophy Bites*, (Edmonds and Warburton) Oxford University Press, 2010, p.48.

⁴ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-36139904>

⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/glocalization>

⁶ <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/global-citizenship/global-citizenship-guides>



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Global citizenship education (GCED) assists with understanding and acting on local issues in a global context, integrated with global drivers for responsibility such as the Paris Agreement, SDG's, corporate responsibility, Environmental Rule of Law.

This philosophical approach is intended to move beyond an either/or framework to a recognition that local issues are necessarily impacted by global systems. For example a food grower being impacted by drought who is without knowledge of climate change, may fail to implement adaptive management and thus have the risk of ongoing crop failure.

This understanding is helpful for seeing that indigenous interests can be aligned with global citizenship education. Global citizenship accommodates indigenous people's views and their land-based systems of governance, knowledge, traditions, spirituality etc. Indeed, ideas of guardianship, connectedness and responsibility to preserve the earth and all that lives on it are the embodiment of global citizenship. It is necessary to build these principles into practices of global citizenship education while respecting the integrity of indigenous systems and world views.

If we are defined as citizens according to the rights privileges and duties vested in us by a state⁷, then, in the absence of global polity or a meta sovereign, no one of us can claim to be citizens of the world. It is the character and behaviour, in terms of duties and responsibilities, of an individual member of a society⁸, that gives legitimacy to the notion of belonging to a region or community not bound by the borders of a nation-state.

Principles of Universal Responsibility⁹

Global citizenship education links directly to the principles of universal responsibility because it is behavioural responsibility that defines and legitimises citizenship of the world. Therefore, *the exercise of one's responsibilities is the expression of one's freedom and dignity as a citizen of the world community*. GCED teaches and enables individuals to exercise their freedom and dignity responsibly.

GCED is interdisciplinary and embedded in the ethos of the teaching, learning and pastoral care of a school or other educational institution, thus engendering empathy with close and distant communities at the same time as drawing connections between the learning areas that traditionally stand alone. Giving equal weight to developing good character and critical thinking skills fosters connectedness with knowledge and common goods. Students understand that it is their responsibility to seek the truth and to act upon it and not to assume the validity of information presented to them.

The recognition of the importance of and the implementation of GCED, draws attention to the responsibility of institutions, public, private, local or international to ensure that all people are free to participate as active global citizens for the greater good.

Gaining an understanding of concepts around global governance and common goods is essential to understanding the responsibilities that go with possession and enjoyment of natural resources allowing them to be managed in a way that is likely to promote and respect peace, diversity, rights, equality, and the environment.

GCED is whole education not limited to schools and universities. The community, local bodies and civil can take responsibility for delivering GCED.

Understanding concepts around the freedoms of individuals to participate politically provides the ability to recognise or reject the exercise of power according to whether it acts in the interest of the planet and its population.

⁷ <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/citizenship>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ As set out in the *Charter of Human Responsibilities*, Alliance for Responsible and Sustainable Societies, Fondation Charles Léopold Mayer,



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Critical thinking, values and principles required by GCED leave no room for ignorance of the wants and needs of others. People educated as global citizens will recognise the essential role of empathy in human flourishing.

The Purpose, Practice, and Aspirations of Global Citizenship Education

Global Citizenship Education marks a rapidly changing shift in education to meet the needs of the globalised, interdependent environment of the 21st century. GCED is consistent with the requirements and aspirations of the Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁰

One of the major goals of global citizenship education is to help learners to attain a sense of identity (individual, national, regional and global) so that they will be able to participate actively and responsibly with the creation of opportunities as well as the solutions to problems such as human rights abuses, conflict, pandemics and environmental degradation. To develop responsible leadership of the world. “A world where we reduce inequalities and create sustainable cities and communities and where we consume responsibly and no longer behave in ways that change the climate or harm life on this planet. A world where we honour and protect life underwater and on land. A world of peace and justice for all. “These are the sustainable development goals (SDGs) as adopted by the United Nations in 2015. Goal 4 – *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*. Target 4.7:

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.

The SDGs officially came into force on 1 January 2016. All countries are expected to establish frameworks to achieve the goals and governments are responsible for following up and reviewing the progress of the goals and meeting of targets.

Global Citizenship Education provides a framework for states to meet their educational expectations and responsibilities. GCED is more than an idealistic aspiration, it is a requirement.

Global Citizenship Education does not sit within one learning area; it crosses over all areas of school life – academic, co-curricular, and pastoral care.

Global Citizenship Education provides a framework that links all of the work and programmes within a school community to do with human rights, cultural diversity, peace, justice, sustainable development, and environmental protection.

Seek knowledge and insight

Global citizenship education helps us to understand our own identity and our place in the world. Seek knowledge and insight from a variety of viewpoints and, using reasoned argument, exploring different cultural perspectives.¹¹

Make ethical decisions

Responsible global citizenship requires ethical decision making. Students ask whether morality is culturally relative or whether there are universal truths. Students learn frameworks for ethical decision making and are able to apply them in day to day life and careers.¹²

¹⁰ <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>

¹¹ Adapted from ‘Rationale’ *Philosophy Teaching and Learning Guidelines*, <http://seniorsecondary.tki.org.nz/Social-sciences/Philosophy/Rationale>



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Think critically

At a time when young people are developing their own views on how things work and what matters, GCED provides opportunity for students to analyse and critique big ideas.

By participating in the reasoned exchange of ideas in the classroom, students develop greater tolerance of and respect for others.¹³

Build personal confidence

The skills and qualities that students develop through their learning in global citizenship education will build personal confidence, support good judgment, and encourage participation as responsible citizens in civil society.¹⁴

Broaden career horizons

The highly transferable skills and attributes that can be acquired by education for global citizenship can be applied in a wide range of career options. Global citizenship education opens doors into fields as diverse as strategic management, research and planning, systems analysis, legal and medical professions, education, political analysis, ethics, social policy, design, international relations and global governance.¹⁵

Libby Giles

Global Citizenship Education Director

gced@nzcgs.org.nz

NZ Centre for Global Studies

16 Queens Drive, Waiheke Island, 1081, Aotearoa New Zealand

www.nzcgs.org.nz

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid