

# *In the Context of Widespread Global Citizenship Education*

## *-- Clearly Understand Its Dilemma and Solutions*

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**Abstract:** In the 21st century, the world environment requires people to view global issues and crises from a global perspective. This places demands on global education, and global citizenship education is an educational concept advocated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to adapt to the requirements of the international environment. Under such advocacy, global citizenship education has been widely promoted and disseminated among countries worldwide. However, obvious obstacles and problems have emerged simultaneously in this process. Therefore, the research topic of this article pertains to the understanding of global citizenship identity and global citizenship education, as well as the necessity of its global promotion. It also involves analyzing the difficulties and problems encountered during its implementation and proposing appropriate solutions. The author has proposed solutions such as localizing the core concept of GCE and integrating it into local university curricula, and elaborated on the feasibility and necessity of doing so.

**Keywords:** Global citizenship Education, Global crisis, Education.

## 1. Introduction

In the contemporary world, the frequent occurrence of natural disasters and conflicts and wars on Earth can be seen. To sum up, almost all changes on Earth are primarily triggered by human activities. When confronted with global issues, humans can no longer approach them with single elements such as a country or an organization. Complex natural and human problems like the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and the Israel-Palestine conflict imply that global problems cannot be simply distinguished as good or bad. It requires critical, dialectical, and global thinking to discuss and solve them. Simultaneously, all of humanity urgently needs to address serious environmental problems. Global warming, tsunamis, wildfires, and the ozone layer hole are all marred by the shadow of human activities. Humanity has only one homeland. For the sake of our future generations and the current living environment, the processes of sustainable and green development are extremely urgent. Global citizenship education focuses on global citizenship awareness in educational activities, and through the awakening of the sense of the commonwealth and shared responsibility, it responds to the increasingly severe global risks [1]. The current global problems demand that we have a common consciousness to deal with them, and the popularization of global citizenship education is imperative.

The interpretation of the concepts of global citizenship and global citizenship education (GCE) has become increasingly rich and diverse in discussions over the past decade. Based on the framework and supplementary literature provided by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), this article discusses the author's understanding of the concepts of global citizenship and global citizenship education. At the same time, the dilemmas and pressures of global citizenship education in the process of popularization can be found through literature and personal learning experiences. These include questioning the Western democratic and liberal concepts inherent in the core idea of GCE; in the process of transnational education of GCE, private schools and transnational educational institutions impose economic screening through high fees, restricting access of GCE education to certain groups; and the influence of the unstable international environment on the popularization of GCE education. In response to these predicaments, a solution centered on the "localization" of the GCE concept to further popularize global citizenship education is proposed. Particularly, it should be further popularized in university classrooms. Young people in university classrooms have a solid knowledge base and certain logical thinking skills, enabling them to quickly absorb GCE knowledge and cultivate critical thinking and a global perspective. Moreover, they are the main force to deal with global crises and changes in the future.

## **2. Global Citizenship and Global Citizenship Education**

In 2012, the concept of global citizenship emerged for the first time in the initiative of the United Nations General Assembly. In the Global Education First initiative proposed by then UN Secretary-General, it was held that apart from expanding the scale of education and enhancing the quality of education, it was also necessary to cultivate and strengthen global citizenship awareness in education [1]. Subsequently, global citizenship education became part of Goal 4 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which was adopted at the United Nations General Assembly in New York in 2015, making global citizenship education a normative educational model [1].

According to UNESCO, global citizenship is a sense of belonging to a global community. It emphasizes the inextricable political, economic, social and cultural interactions between the region, the nation and the globe [1]. It also emphasizes the corresponding obligations and rights that individuals should undertake. Under the connection of this sense of belonging, different people, regions, countries and organizations in the world cooperate for a common ideal and vision and release the power of the human community to deal with global crises such as global warming, poverty, violence and war.

Global citizenship education is considered a new, comprehensive, and appropriate educational model for the current global environment. GCE aims to enable learners to critically think and evaluate from multiple perspectives based on different races, regions, countries, and global relationships, while positioning and thinking about individual rights, responsibilities, belonging, and participation in the community from a multi-dimensional perspective based on an understanding of citizenship [2]. The most important goal is to cultivate learners' critical awareness of global crises and inequality and make them problem-solvers and predictors. Sustainable development of education is also an inherent goal of global citizenship education.

## **3. The Necessity of Universal Global Citizenship Education**

In the 21st century, mankind is faced with many serious threats: global warming, nuclear proliferation, racism, national hatred, terrorist attacks, hegemonism and so on. The seriousness, complexity and globality of these problems require us to stand on a global perspective and solve problems [3]. For young people in the 21st century, they are destined to live in an interconnected and interdependent world. Global citizenship education is also to help young people again. Shaping the morality of young

people through global citizenship education. GCE advocates for learners to become more tolerant, compassionate and critical people who love peace and justice, and promotes learners to actively participate in global affairs and become contributors to maintaining world peace, equality and security [4]. In the world, with the advocacy of UNESCO, the global citizenship education popularization action jointly carried out by various non-political organizations and educational institutions can also solve poverty and problems to a certain extent. When people look at problems from a global perspective, we can clearly know that human activities have brought indelible damage to the earth, and natural disasters occur frequently all over the world. Human beings are also a members of the global ecosystem. For the sake of future generations and for people to live together, it is necessary to promote the root education [5]. Nowadays, with the understanding of "human community" and "can" becoming more and more popular, countries are also actively taking action. At the same time, the increasingly prosperous global culture also requires people to look at it with more tolerance and equality. When carrying out cross-cultural exchanges or transnational actions, it also requires people to actively understand and learn different cultural knowledge and respect different cultural histories and beliefs. This is also an educational reform that adapts to the times compared with education [6].

## **4. The Dilemma of Promoting Global Citizenship Education**

### **4.1. Core Concepts of GCE Are Being Questioned**

The core concept of global citizenship education is being questioned. Global citizenship education was initially constructed with Western concepts such as democracy and freedom as its core. Up to now, despite the continuous development and reform, there are still scholars criticizing the influence of the Western core viewpoints contained therein on educated students, especially in Southeast Asian countries. Citizenship in the West was centered on political aspects, like rights and duties between the state and its citizens. However, when it comes to citizenship in the East, where Confucian principles have a big impact, harmonious connections with others are valued more than individual freedom. The rights, freedoms, and responsibilities that are emphasized in global citizenship education are also questioned as a Western democratic political ideology being imposed on other non-democratic countries [7]. Additionally, the interpretation of the concept of global citizenship education, while UNESCO provides a framework, is limited in different countries and regions due to the involvement of different interests. Especially for countries such as China and North Korea, which place a greater emphasis on individual loyalty to the state, the emphasis on individual rights and responsibility to the earth in global citizenship education may conflict with their values.

### **4.2. The Population for Learning GCE Is Limited**

With the marketization of education, the promotion of global citizenship education will involve many interests and further promote the inequality of global education. Among them, there are many vested interests. At the same time, some scholars point out that global citizenship education is a form of elitism, which is to screen learners through high economic conditions [8]. Most schools around the world that offer global citizenship education courses charge a certain fee. Taking the IB course as an example, the International Baccalaureate (IB) is a two-year high school program that exists globally in private schools. Especially in Southeast Asian countries, most IB schools are private schools with high fees. Global citizenship education is an important subject included in the IB curriculum. First of all, IB has gradually become an academic monopoly. Families with strong academic strength use IB diplomas to consolidate their academic capital and ensure their educational advantages [9]. Based on the aforementioned results, it can be ascertained that in the majority of Southeast Asian nations and a significant proportion of developing countries, global citizenship education is only provided in private or international schools. It is not offered in regular public schools and is not regarded as a

fundamental or compulsory course within the educational framework. More frequently, it is perceived as an emblem of internationalization by families with superior economic circumstances. Nevertheless, it is indeterminable whether the small number of children receiving this education identify with the core content of GCE. Simultaneously, it can also be gleaned from educational institutions that many international online courses incorporate the component of global citizenship education, yet a certain sum of money is still necessary for participation. In the global education market, a large proportion of students have been excluded through economic screening [9].

### **4.3. The Unstable Global Environment Puts Pressure on the Transnational Process of GCE**

In today's world, there are still extreme poverty and countries in conflict. Like South Africa or Palestine. When a person's basic livelihood and well-being are not guaranteed, he cannot be asked to behave as required in global citizenship education. They may be more in need of a profitable trade or a secure place to live. At the same time, frequent armed competition is also a waste of talent and resources.

When it comes to the biggest crisis the world has seen in recent years, is the COVID-19 pandemic. It had a great impact on world education. A large number of schools were closed, for many children, were missing important stages of learning. According to the data given by UNESCO, between March 2020 and February 2022, schools around the world were completely or partially closed for an average of 41 weeks, and children around the world missed out on about 2 trillion hours of face-to-face teaching [10]. The pandemic has also widened educational inequalities in different regions, especially in developing countries. To prevent the epidemic from causing greater losses, countries and international organizations have increased investment in public health prevention and control and the reduction of educational aid in countries around the world makes it difficult to ensure that the poor and special groups continue to receive education.

## **5. Solution on Promoting Global Citizenship Education**

In addressing the aforementioned predicaments, the author contends that during the introduction of the GCE concept, the curriculum should be "localized" through macro-level guidance from each country. Firstly, given the differences among the basic education systems of various nations and their significance to each country, there is no need to be confined to establishing specific GCE compulsory courses or conducting large-scale mandatory promotion at all educational stages. It is feasible to add elective courses to university curricula or incorporate supplementary literature on GCE in compulsory foreign language courses [7]. The aim is to prevent restricting the GCE learning population solely to private schools or educational institutions. Secondly, simplify the classroom teaching content of GCE. Based on the circumstances of the countries where the courses are offered, select the values and principles of GCE that are widely accepted worldwide for instruction, particularly focusing on nurturing students' critical thinking when confronted with global issues. All countries are within the wave of globalization. In the face of global changes and crises, contemporary young people need to understand the world pattern, cultivate an international perspective, and foster the concept of sustainable development. Through promotion in universities, GCE can rapidly come into the purview of students and parents, cease to be an inaccessible international course, and also avoid GCE becoming the private interests of certain capital elites. Finally, the fundamental condition for educational development remains a peaceful environment. The complex political, economic, environmental, religious, racial, war, and other issues worldwide are not easily resolvable. They require joint communication and resolution among countries, global organizations, and insightful individuals.

## 6. Conclusion

"Global citizenship education" is a bold reform of education and an important product of adapting to the times and needs. Through the existing articles and practice, it can still be found that global citizenship education plays a positive role in solving global crises and global problems. Education is the foundation of solving global problems. Under the innovative construction of education, individuals, society and countries need to share with it. At the same time, while expanding and modernizing the idea of global citizenship education. In this paper, only a plan for promoting GCE on a national-level basis is proposed, but the training of GCE teachers in specific countries and how GCE knowledge can be taught to integrate with the current students' knowledge framework remain issues that need further exploration. It should be acknowledged that the core of education is still that students should not neglect to investigate how to connect this new educational conduct with students' subjectivity. Furthermore, as the process of further promotion proceeds, we should also consider whether it is necessary to include GCE-related exams in university final evaluations and how the examination process for GCE should be set up. So, in the process of transnational global citizenship education, there are still face many pressures and problems to be solved urgently. It still has a lot of space to explore on the road of global education.

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