Lifelong Learning and GCED: The Perfect Combination for Future Global Citizens

By: Mr. Mai Hong-Quan
        Deputy Manager of Research and Training
        SEAMEO CELLL

Abstract

In an era when the horizon has widened and country borders have blurred, global citizenship is a much-mentioned phrase. However, becoming a global citizen requires not only great courage to explore the world, but also a knowledge-rich mind and consummate skills, along with the willingness to learn lifelong, as we all encounter new issues in the ever-changing world. In this regard, lifelong learning will play an important role in equipping future international residents with the necessary skills and knowledge. This article aims to present an overview of GCED and lifelong learning and their roles in today's world and how they can be combined to make every person a truly global citizen.

Introduction

Although the concept of global citizenship has been existent for several millennia, it has only now increasingly been used in daily life despite contentions with regard to its definition. In fact, a widely agreed-upon definition of global citizenship has yet to be developed. Some claim global citizenship refers to "citizenship beyond borders" or "citizenship beyond a nation-state." Others noted that "cosmopolitanism" as a term may be broader in scope and thus more inclusive than global citizenship. Still others opt to use "planetary citizenship," which focuses on the global community's responsibility to preserve Earth. In all cases, however, global citizenship does not entail legal status. It refers more to a sense of belonging to the global community and common humanity, with its members presumably expressing solidarity and having a collective identity and sense of responsibility at the global level. Global citizenship can be seen as a metaphor rather than a formal membership. As a psychosocial framework for collectiveness, global citizenship can and is expected to generate actions and engagement amongst, and for, its members through civic actions in the public domain to promote a better world and future. And it is necessarily based on and respects the universal values of human rights, democracy, justice, non-discrimination, diversity, and sustainability, amongst others.

Global citizenship is one of the most important consequences of today's more open and borderless world. Dramatic advances in ICT allow people to connect and interact with one another from anywhere and at any time. This has contributed to the intensified perception and reality of being interconnected and living beyond local perimeters, even if it only happens virtually. People have also become more interdependent. Participation in sub-regional, regional, and international governance bodies and structures in all sectors, including private enterprises and social organisations, has created new stakeholders that reach beyond national borders who are required to think and act globally and locally at the same time. Moreover, increased trans-national migration is making communities inevitably more heterogeneous or "globalised," making the necessity of learning to live together more acute. The expansion of democracy to a global level has led to the accompanying citizen demand for civic and other rights at the national level.

On the other hand, this also entailed tensions and conflicts amongst populations that have resulted from and result in effects beyond national boundaries. Challenges such as sustainable development, including climate change, are demonstrating the need for cooperation and collaboration far beyond national boundaries. Continuing global challenges call for collective action at the global and local levels.

To effectively handle social, political, cultural, and global issues, global citizens must thus be equipped with relevant values, attitudes, and communication skills to complement their cognitive knowledge and skills so they can support peace, human rights, equity, acceptance of diversity, and sustainable development, also known as the missions of GCED.

Global Citizenship Education

DOMAINS OF LEARNING

COGNITIVE **SOCIO-EMOTIONAL** **BEHAVIOURAL**

KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

COGNITIVE	SOCIO-EMOTIONAL	BEHAVIOURAL
• 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	• Learners experience a sense of belonging to a common humanity, sharing values and responsibilitiess, based on human rights • Learners develop attitudes of empathy, solidarity and respect for differences and diversity	• 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

KEY LEARNER ATTRIBUTES

Informed and critically literate	Socially connected and respectful of diversity	Ethically responsible and engaged
• Know about local, national and global issues, governance systems and structures • Understand the interdependence and connections of global and local concerns • Develop skills for critical inquiry and analysis	• Cultivate and manage identities, relationships and feeling of belongingness • Share values and responsibilities based on human rights • Develop attitudes to appreciate and respect differences and diversity	• Enact appropriate skills, values, beliefs and attitudes • Demonstrate personal and social responsibility for a peaceful and sustainable world • Develop motivation and willingness to care for the common good

TOPICS

1. Local, national and global systems and structures 2. Issues affecting interaction and connectedness of communities at local, national and global levels 3. Underlying assumptions and power dynamics	4. Different levels of identity 5. Different communities people belong to and how these are connected 6. Difference and respect for diversity	7. Actions that can be taken individually and collectively 8. Ethically responsible behaviour 9. Getting engaged and taking action

LEARNING OBJECTIVES BY AGE/LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Pre-primary/ lower primary (5–9years)	Upper primary (9–12 years)	Lower secondary (12–15 years)	Upper secondary (15–18+ years)

Figure 18: Overview of GCED (adapted from UNESCO, 2015)

GCED

GCED is recognised in many countries as a strategy to help children and the youth prosper in their personal and professional lives and contribute to building a better world. It aims to empower learners to engage and assume an active role, both locally and globally, in facing and resolving global challenges so they can ultimately become proactive contributors to a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure, and sustainable world. GCED is transformative, as it provides learners the opportunity and competencies to realise their rights and obligations to promote a better world and future. It draws upon learning from other transformative education processes, including human rights education, ESD, education for international or inter-cultural understanding, and education for peace.

GCED is playing an increasingly important role and has been recognised by the UN and mentioned in various conventions. It has been included as one of the three priorities of the Global Education First Initiative (GEFI), which was launched in 2012 by the UN Secretary-General.

> *The world faces global challenges, which require global solutions. These interconnected global challenges call for far-reaching changes in how we think and act for the dignity of fellow human beings… Education must be transformative and bring shared values to life. It must cultivate an active care for the world and for those with whom we share it… Technological solutions, political regulations, or financial instruments alone cannot achieve sustainable development. It requires transforming the way people think and act. Education must fully assume its central role in helping people to forge more just, peaceful, tolerant, and inclusive societies. It must give people the understanding, skills, and values they need to cooperate in resolving the interconnected challenges of the 21st century.*

In 2015, the role of GCED was specified in target 4.7 of the SDGs:

> *By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, amongst others, through ESD and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, the promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.*

Within UNESCO, the "Incheon Declaration for Education 2030" states that:

> *The knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes required by citizens to lead productive lives, make informed decisions, and assume active roles locally and globally in facing and resolving global challenges can be acquired through ESD and GCED, which includes peace and human rights education as well as inter-cultural education and EIU.*

In 2017, the Learning Metrics Task Force released "Measuring GCED: A Collection of Practices and Tools" to specifically define what is required to turn young people into "citizens of the world," including competencies and learning objectives (see Figures 19–21).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES		
Cognitive	**1. Local, national, and global systems and structures** • Describe how the local environment is organized and how it relates to the wider world, and introduce the concept of citizenship. • Identify governance structures, decisionmaking processes, and dimensions of citizenship. • Discuss how global governance structures interact with national and local structures and explore global citizenship. • Critically analyze global governance systems, structures, and processes and assess implications for global citizenship.	**2. Issues affecting interaction and connectedness of communities at local, national, and global levels** • List key local, national, and global issues and explore how these may be connected. • Investigate the reasons behind major common global concerns and their impact at national and local levels. • Assess the root causes of major local, national, and global issues and the interconnectedness of local and global factors. • Critically examine local, national, and global issues, responsibilities and consequences of decisionmaking, examine and propose appropriate responses.	**3. Underlying assumptions and power dynamics** • Name different sources of information and develop basic skills for inquiry. • Differentiate between fact/opinion, reality/fiction, and different viewpoints/perspectives. • Investigate underlying assumptions and describe inequalities and power dynamics. • Critically assess the ways in which power dynamics affect voice, influence, access to resources, decisionmaking, and governance.

Figure 19: Cognitive GCED objectives (adapted from Centre for Universal Education at Brookings, 2017)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES		
Socio-emotional	**4. Different levels of identity** • Recognize how we fit into and interact with the world around us and develop intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. • Examine different levels of identity and their implications for managing relationships with others. • Distinguish between personal and collective identity and various social groups, and cultivate a sense of belonging to a common humanity. • Critically examine ways in which different levels of identity interact and live peacefully with different social groups.	**5. Different communities people belong to and how these are connected** • Illustrate differences and connections between different social groups. • Compare and contrast shared and different social, cultural, and legal norms. • Demonstrate appreciation and respect for difference and diversity, cultivate empathy and solidarity toward other individuals and social groups. • Critically assess connectedness between different groups, communities, and countries.	**6. Difference and respect for diversity** • Distinguish between sameness and difference, and recognize that everyone has rights and responsibilities. • Cultivate good relationships with diverse individuals and groups. • Debate on the benefits and challenges of difference and diversity. • Develop and apply values, attitudes, and skills to manage and engage with diverse groups and perspectives.

Figure 20: Socio-emotional GCED objectives (adapted from Centre for Universal Education at Brookings, 2017)

7. Actions that can be taken individually and collectively • Explore possible ways of taking action to improve the world we live in. • Discuss the importance of individual and collective action and engage in community work. • Examine how individuals and groups have taken action on issues of local, national, and global importance and get engaged in responses to local, national, and global issues. • Develop and apply skills for effective civic engagement.	8. Ethically responsible behavior • Discuss how our choices and actions affect other people and the planet and adopt responsible behavior. • Understand the concepts of social justice and ethical responsibility and learn how to apply them in everyday life. • Analyze the challenges and dilemmas associated with social justice and ethical responsibility and consider the implications for individual and collective action. • Critically assess issues of social justice and ethical responsibility and take action to challenge discrimination and inequality.	9. Getting engaged and taking action • Recognize the importance and benefits of civic engagement. • Identify opportunities for engagement and initiate action. • Develop and apply skills for active engagement and take action to promote common good. • Propose action for and become agents of positive change.

Figure 21: Behavioural GCED objectives (adapted from Centre for Universal Education at Brookings, 2017)

Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning, in its simplest form, refers to learning lifelong or learning "from cradle to grave." This puts emphasis on the duration and continuity of the learning process in an individual's life as well as the idea that learning can occur beyond the formal structure within an educational institution. As defined by UNESCO in 1984, lifelong learning refers to "all learning activities undertaken throughout life with the aim of improving knowledge, skills, and/or qualifications for personal, social, and/or professional reasons." Although this is quite simple and self-explanatory, lifelong learning is meant to highlight the basic human right to education throughout life, regardless of one's background, gender, or age. Furthermore, owing to the diverse living and educational backgrounds of people all over the world, lifelong learning also underlines diversity in terms of approach, as learning can happen in formal, informal, and non-formal settings.

The important role of lifelong learning is now being recognised in global education policies, most obviously by SDG 4.7—"Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." It was also reiterated by the "Incheon Declaration for Education 2030" in 2015.

The reasons as to why lifelong learning is important stem from the benefits it provides to learners. According to the Benefits of Lifelong Learning (BeLL) Project in 2013–2014, the benefits of lifelong learning include:

• Expanding one's social network

• Ensuring mental well-being

• Promoting self-efficacy

- Giving one a sense of purpose in life

- Changing one's educational experiences

- Providing work-related benefits

- Improving skills and competencies

- Providing a locus of control

- Enriching trust

- Improving physical health or encouraging healthy behaviour

- Improving one's tolerance

- Enhancing civic and social engagement or civic competence

- Providing family-related benefits

From the above, the essential role of GCED and lifelong learning in attaining SDG 4 can be obviously understood. It is also apparent that the two concepts are good companions.

Conclusion

GCED is built on a lifelong learning perspective and lifelong learning is crucial for all forms of GCED. Characterised as flexible and inclusive, lifelong learning can meet GCED's holistic requirements of "formal and informal approaches, curricular and extracurricular interventions, and conventional and unconventional pathways to participation" (UNESCO, 2014).

As everyone in the world has a right to know, do, be, and live together, GCED is not only for children and the youth, but also for adults and elders. Besides, many pedagogical approaches and techniques have been suggested and applied to support GCED such as dialogic, inquiry-based, cooperative, and engaged learning to suit the diversity of learners' interests and needs. Formally, GCED can be delivered as an integral part of an existing subject (such as ethics or citizenship education, social studies, environmental studies, geography, or culture) or an independent subject that provides insights into the concept itself from an interdisciplinary approach. Informal and non-formal learning have a great potential to boost the practice of GCED as well. In these settings, flexible and variable pedagogical approaches can be used to target populations outside the formal system and those who are likely to use new ICT tools and social media. An integrated approach is an important element that can provide opportunities for sustained engagement across the curriculum as well.

In sum, GCED and lifelong learning are closely related and mutually complementary. Their successful combination is expected to play a central role in building the capacity of modern humans to meet the needs of a modern world—ones with a wide range of knowledge, great skills, and deep passion to never stop using their abilities to strive for the betterment of the world.

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