Embracing Global Citizenship Education in Africa: an ADEA Perspective

Introduction

Global Citizenship Education (GCED) encapsulates how education can develop the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required to promote social transformation and facilitate international cooperation for a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable world. GCED recognizes the relevance of education in understanding and resolving global issues in their social, political, cultural, economic and environmental dimensions (UNESCO, 2014).

For Africa, the GCED concept is reflected more visibly in terms of peacebuilding, civic education, life skills and human rights education. The challenges facing the continent call for greater focus in comprehensively entrenching GCED inside and outside the formal education and training system. These challenges, which include conflicts and growing radicalization and violence, largely arise from poverty, illiteracy, weak governance and accountability systems as well as skewed resource distribution.

Relevance of GCED to Africa’s current and future developmental needs: key issues

**Nation-building:** The modern African state is a colonial creation. Its borders, official language and administration/organization are artificial as they are not from indigenous inspiration. Moreover, its inhabitants are more often than not from different historical, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Since gaining independence in the 1960s, African countries have been dogged by the challenge of transforming the inherited colonial states into nations characterized by the following attributes: sharing the same history, traditions, or language and living in a particular geographical area under one legitimate government (adapted from Merriam-Webster dictionary online). In many instances, and with varying degrees of success, education and training systems have been harnessed to serve the goal of nation-building.

**Identity tension:** Among GCED’s common elements is support for a ‘collective identity’ transcending national identities, individual cultural, religious, ethnic or other differences and social skills such as empathy and conflict resolution. For Africa, achieving this requires not only a carefully crafted strategy, but also dealing with the sensitive issue of identity. The GCED technical consultative meeting in Seoul (UNESCO, 2013) noted the challenge of solidifying national identity, which can limit the promotion of a sense of global citizenship. Embracing true nationalism remains elusive for many in the continent, yet achieving globalization with localization (glocalization) may not be easy unless we inculcate the value of nationhood, an important “bridge” as many African countries still have strong ethnic and cultural ties. This means thinking of a “customized” GCED that reflects Africa’s value system.
**Radicalization and extreme violence:** Growing insecurity is eroding Africa’s progress towards becoming the rising continent of the 21st century – brought about by increased radicalization of young people and the youth, a significant number of which participate in violent extremism (e.g. through groups such as Al Shabab and Boko Haram and local youth militias). In 2010, 70% of Africa’s population was under the age of 30, (UNECA and UN Programme for the Youth, 2012). High unemployment and low skill levels are a hallmark of this constituency, a situation that breeds vulnerability. A World Bank survey in 2011 showed that about 40% of those who join rebel movements say they are motivated by a lack of jobs. A workshop in Ouagadougou (2013) noted that violent extremism is fueled by, among others, an underdeveloped sense of citizenship and national loyalty and identity. Proposed remedies included promoting inter-religious dialogue at the regional level, developing educational programs that promote a deeper understanding of national histories or identities and the usefulness of volunteerism and public service. GCED can help address this, both in schools and other teaching and learning institutions as well as outside the formal system (where the bulk of the youth are), including community involvement. An experts meeting in Ghana (WANEP, 2014) on incorporating strategies for countering violent extremism into peace education curricula called for the inclusion of cultural values, trust building and as well as games that emphasize unity in diversity rather than mere competitiveness.

**Governance and accountability:** An educated and well-informed society is most likely to make a better choice in electing its leadership and holding it to account based on the promises made at election time. However, low literacy and numeracy levels in many communities in Africa allow for manipulation in the lection process, and make it difficult to. It reduces the quality of participation of many communities in the management of learning institutions. An analysis of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) reports for Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya, South Africa, Algeria and Benin by Turianskyi (2009) highlights pressing political governance issues around separation of powers, management of elections and corruption. Gaps remain between intentions enshrined in country constitutions and the situation in reality, with many states paying lip service to the principle of separation of powers while disregarding or overriding the same in day-to-day practice. The paper observes that the executive becomes dominant, the legislature becomes less effective in providing checks and balances, and the judiciary sometimes loses its independence. This not only stifles progress, it can also exacerbate conflict over land, especially where ethnicity is involved; affect human rights, elections and decentralization programs; and encourage corruption.

**Erosion of the value system:** Infusion of values and ethics in many learning institutions (public or private) has deteriorated over the years. This limits maintaining consistency of like skills messages given to the learner from the home or family and religious environments. Educators and managers should be trained in such a manner that they are able to effectively deliver on values education in the learning environment. A study by Okore (2007) on values education in Kenyan schools reveals the complexity and sensitiveness of the subject, including intricacies of teacher beliefs and practices, and how the personality of the head
teacher is a critical success factor. The author found cases of teachers not being confident in deciding what values to promote; and resort to deploying a “survival framework” that safeguards their jobs. This framework, over and above the rational and emotional mindset, could place values in a perpetual state of construction and reconstruction. The paper calls for a holistic approach in policy with regard to teacher training, ensuring that teachers have a fine understanding of moral issues and the skills to deal with a dynamic society and training that balances academic achievement with character development. Head teachers also need to be influenced on curriculum reform and pastoral lessons included in schools as part of community integration.

**Regional integration:** Africa’s unity seems to be gathering steam with the existence of regional economic communities, largely anchored on the need to widen and deepen co-operation among member states in various fields, including harmonization of education and training systems. Among the benefits of this integration is reducing the thickness of borders. But lack of complementarities among partners and the uneven distribution of resources are among the factors hampering progress (de Melo and Tsikata, 2014), in addition to the promotion of human rights and embracing credible governance backed by regular, free and fair elections that builds confidence for economic growth (Qobo, 2007). In the final analysis, the benefits of integration far outweigh the challenges and, for Africa’s education, regional integration can be seen as supporting GCED implementation as it should, ideally, help reduce internal conflicts through greater interaction, improve leadership and governance, and strengthen nationhood.

**Competition for resources:** From land and grazing pasture to oil and minerals, competition for scarce resources is one of the factors contributing to conflicts in Africa. Over-centralization of power can negatively impact resource distribution by the state and is more likely to affect constituencies that are not part of the ruling group. Some leaders have fueled ethnic tension by deliberately favoring ethnic or religious groups with material and social resources. Resource scarcity and competition also arise from population pressures, and environmental degradation. Population movements pushed by other groups and pulled by the search for better pasture and water sources have resulted in long periods of inter-clan and inter-ethnic wars. Environmental degradation causes conflict which causes environmental degradation, creating a vicious cycle of environmental decline, tense competition for diminishing resources, increased hostility and social and political breakdown. Land tenure in Africa remains a critical issue and a ticking time bomb in many parts of the continent.

**Translating GCED into policies and strategic frameworks: ADEA’s work in Africa**

**A holistic approach:** An implicit thread running through all the key messages from ADEA’s 2012 Triennale in Ouagadougou, under the theme "Promoting critical skills for the accelerated and sustainable development of Africa", is the need for an integrated and inclusive education and training spanning all the sub-sectors, with visible phrases such as “personal development and the construction of an African identity” and “knowledge and
skills that ensure inclusion and integration into everyday life”. And each of the three core areas underpinning ADEA’s work post-Ouagadougou (common core skills, technical and vocational skills development, and science and technology innovation) has a values aspect to it. In fact, the first strategic objective under the Association’s MTSP (2013-17) – advancing policies, strategies, practices and programs that promote critical knowledge, skills and qualifications – has a specific strategic initiative of “Promoting the integration of values into the center of education and training systems”. Activities herein include supporting the Inter-Country Quality Node (ICQN) on Peace Education in advocating for the development of appropriate and relevant policies and strategies as well as supporting the provision of catalytic knowledge on best practices in implementing peace education.

**ICQNs promoting country-led policy and technical dialogue:** In line with the Seoul and Bangkok meetings’ recommendation to create forums where stakeholders debate issues around GCED (UNESCO, 2013 & 2014), and in an effort to enhance ownership of country-level initiatives, ADEA facilitated the creation of Inter-Country Quality Nodes or ICQNs. These are platforms hosted by champion countries for exchange of experiences and communities of practice that bring together country members around commonly-shared education and training challenges.

The ICQN on Peace Education has been at the forefront in championing initiatives that address issues of peace and conflict in the region. It seeks to advocate for the building of peace for sustainable development through the education sector; enable formulation, strengthening, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of peace education policies, strategies and programs; build capacities for peace education at all levels; foster strategic inter-disciplinary, inter-regional and multi-sectoral partnerships and collaboration with various stakeholders; and promote peace education through an effective communication and dissemination strategy. With a membership of over 10 African countries,¹ this ICQN participated in the Bangkok GCED forum in late 2013 and has, with support from UNESCO, UNICEF, INEE and other partners, successfully conducted two international forums that not only reiterated the commitment of Ministers in charge of education and training in the member countries to support peacebuilding efforts, but also developed a structure for the ICQN and reviewed its action plan. This is in addition to supporting Kenya in developing the first peace education policy for the country’s education and training sector. Together with other partners (e.g. UNESCO, UNICEF and USAID), the ICQN has implemented several country-level peace education advocacy activities, and is still in the process of implementing others, including countering radicalization and extreme violence, teaching respect for all, and exploring ways of monitoring and measuring the impact of peace education activities – which can greatly be enriched by the current work of the LMTF WG on GCED.

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¹ Kenya, Liberia, Burundi, Somalia, Uganda, Botswana, Mozambique, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, Cote D’Ivoire, Sudan, ...
Another active ICQN on GCED-related areas is the ICQN on Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD), with a membership of 24 African countries. Since its inception, the ICQN has held a regional meeting and a Ministerial Conference on Youth Employment (Abidjan, 2014) which came up with a three-year action plan, and an “Inter-Country Seminar on Youth Employment in Africa” (Abidjan, 2014). As has been mentioned, imparting the youth with requisite skills that prepares them for the world but also for the labor market, is a necessary strategy for conflict prevention, and hence a GCED-relevant move.

**Focus on education reconstruction:** As part of the contribution to its 2012 Triennale meeting in Ouagadougou, ADEA commissioned four country case studies on promising practices and challenges to education reconstruction in post-crisis countries. Conducted in DRC, Kenya, Liberia and Zimbabwe, the findings highlighted the value education plays in normalizing a post-conflict or crisis situation, and the variable impact it has on either consolidating peace gains or providing the grounds for further conflict. An inclusive holistic approach to education and training is taking root in the four countries studied. Where governments have prioritized internal capacity building in policy formulation, planning and management, there is a tendency for sustainable education reforms to emerge. Policy messages that are simplified and packaged in local languages are more likely to be understood and adopted by the public. New pro-poor strategies may be required to ensure some communities and districts effectively participate in education reconstruction. Sustained inclusive social dialogue on the successes and failures of policy interventions is critical for effective reconstruction and the formulation and review of new policies as part of sector reforms. Use of mobile and solar technology platforms in the management of information and payroll systems, particularly in regularizing salary payments to staff in hard-to-reach-schools and communities, was found to be a promising practice. This is in addition to the need to embrace skills development, beyond formal TVET, to address the needs of the bulk of the youth outside the formal education system.

Much progress has been made since the national validation of the study outcomes, with DRC developing a national education and training sector peace education policy and plan of action, Kenya developing a peace education policy for its education sector in line with the country’s 2010 Constitution, Liberia refining its national TVET policy to reflect more strongly the aspect of skills development, and Zimbabwe holding a high level youth skills and entrepreneurship forum.

**But much work on GCED remains for Africa**

**Skills development:** Case studies conducted in four African countries (ADEA, 2012) on the promising practices for education in post-crisis reconstruction noted that poor, unskilled and unemployed youth were easily influenced to act in a manner not conforming to societies’ expectations. The case studies suggest that education and training are critical for conflict prevention and sustainable peace building. The use of mobile and solar technology platforms in the management of information and payroll systems, particularly in regularizing salary payments to staff in hard-to-reach-schools and communities, was found to be a promising practice. This is in addition to the need to embrace skills development, beyond formal TVET, to address the needs of the bulk of the youth outside the formal education system.

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1. Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, DRC, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Morocco, Mauritius, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Republic Of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Senegal, South Africa
expectations. They were at the beck and call of politicians due to their inability to engage in meaningful economic activity. These are the youth that are easily bought, radicalized and converted into deadly militias politically and/or seemingly through religious indoctrination. The need to implement policies that encourage alternative education pathways, as the majority is outside the formal system, and strategies for skills provision for the world of work, is crucial. A World Bank report (2014) on Youth employment in Sub-Saharan Africa notes that raising earning potential among Africa’s growing youth population is a major priority for the region that will require strong action on multiple fronts. ADEA has done significant work in this area through its Inter-Country Quality Node on Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD) but much more needs to be done to support African countries.

**Improving integration of Islamic Schooling:** ADEA’s study on Qur’anic schools in Kenya in 2011 found that these schools, widespread and growing in numbers, provide education to the poor and less-privileged children, particularly in the marginalized areas. The schools are also a means of ensuring the spiritual and good moral upbringing of learners in the Islamic religion. Despite girls’ access to these schools being on the rise, given the negative attitudes of some of the related communities towards educating girls means they often do not complete secondary levels. Among the challenges highlighted are include conflicting values such as in dressing and on issues of sexuality – when compared to formal or integrated systems. The need to introduce critical thinking in the school system, that applies to the relevance of time, especially to avoid merely reciting the Qur'an, is essential in addressing the perceived tension currently being experienced, especially with regards to indoctrination – an area of interest for GCED.

**Education and Countering Violent extremism:** A roundtable discussion in New York (Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation and Hedayah, 2013) on “Role of Education in Countering Violent Extremism” observed that quality education in itself can play a critical role in helping young people distance themselves from extremism and resist the ‘pull factors,’ that may drive them to recruitment. However, quality education alone is not sufficient; there are cases where highly educated individuals have gone on to commit acts of violent extremism. Thus, education policies and interventions should also focused on communities where youth are vulnerable to violent extremism and specifically tailored to fit the local context. The meeting further proposed the following interventions:

- **Developing targeted and evidence-based education policies:** While some educational concepts are universal and transferable, it is crucial that policies are targeted, context-specific, and based on detailed research rather than assumptions. For instance, it is dangerous to conflate religious education with radical ideologies and violent extremism.
- **Creating inclusive, well-designed policies:** Approaches to countering violence extremism in education should be need-based and the development of curricula,
policies, and procedures should be based on the interests of youths rather than the priorities of policymakers or practitioners.

- **Focusing on the fundamentals first:** Equip teachers and staff to teach effectively, make learning institutions safe for students and teachers.

- **Enhancing of logic, problem solving, and critical thinking skills of young people** (one of the key messages from the 2012 ADEA Triennale) through integrating programs that support critical thinking skills into educational curricula in primary school—introducing these skills in secondary school or at the university level was too late.

- **Promoting cultural initiatives:** Cultural learning enhances self-awareness and identity while also opening the mind to different customs, practices, and traditions, and promotes comparative analysis. Allowing students access to translated religious texts would help deepen the understanding of their religion and empower them to challenge extremist narratives that use religious rhetoric to justify violence.

- **Promoting and sustaining collaboration among students, families, and communities:** Develop educational programs that go beyond the school day to reach and involve families and communities. Programs that facilitate sustained collaboration and teamwork with inter-faith or community engagement as an attendant benefit should be prioritized.

**Conclusion**

Considering the progress Africa is making towards being a unified continent and the continent of the 21st century, and the challenges slowing down such progress, fully embracing GCED is key for the continent. Going beyond the grey areas of GCED and focusing more on the practice rather than the theory, most of the continent’s member states, backed by other stakeholders, are already addressing many of the key components of GCED; what remains is to initiate mechanisms that can tackle the existing gap areas. ADEA has the conviction that, if properly facilitated and supported, such mechanisms can help eliminate the barriers to Africa’s march towards being a great continent in the global arena.