

Concept Note

UNESCO Forum on Global Citizenship Education: Preparing learners for the challenge of the 21st Century

2-4 December 2013, Bangkok, Thailand

Background

Global citizenship education has been identified as one of the three priorities of the UN Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative (GEFI) launched in September 2012, and is being proposed as one of the strategic objectives within UNESCO's Education Programme short and mid-term planning frameworks. While the values associated with global citizenship education (GCE) are not new, GCE as a purpose and as an area of learning and teaching is relatively recent¹, with growing interest by Member States. This coincides with the emergence of a new class of global challenges which require some form of collective response to find effective solutions. These include increasingly integrated and knowledge-driven economies; greater migration between countries and from rural to urban areas; growing inequalities; more awareness of the importance of sustainable development and including concerns about climate change and environmental degradation; a large and growing youth demographic; the acceleration of globalization; and rapid developments in technology. Education systems need to respond to these emerging global challenges which require a collective response with a strategic vision that is global in character, rather than limited to the individual country level.

Aspects of GCE have already been addressed by some educational systems, and supported by various development partners. Within UNESCO, some elements have been supported through existing programmes, including education for peace, human rights and sustainable development as well as health education and the Organization's work on youth engagement. However, there is a need for greater clarification of what is meant by GCE, elaborating the necessary principles and characteristics for it to be effective, identifying more specifically how it can be introduced within educational systems in order to fulfil its perceived potential.

From Seoul to Bangkok: an emerging perspective towards an operational framework

A technical consultation on global citizenship education was organized jointly by UNESCO and the Republic of Korea on 9-10 September 2013 in Seoul. This meeting brought together thirty experts from various countries and regions and aimed to clarify the global and regionally specific contexts prompting the education sector to work in this area. It also sought conceptual clarification of global citizenship and the role of education, as well as the goal, delivery modes in terms of inputs, process and learning outcomes, measurement, latest trends and issues. Finally, missing elements in actual practices and remaining tasks and opportunities were also identified. The meeting was guided by three specific questions related to GCE, namely: 1) Why global citizenship and GCE now? 2) What is global citizenship education? and 3) What needs to be done at the global level to support and promote it? The outcome document titled, Global Citizenship Education: An Emerging Perspective, is available (website info to insert here).

¹ Tawil, Sobhi. *Education for 'Global Citizenship': A Framework for Discussion*, Education Research and Foresight Working Papers, UNESCO: Paris, August 2013.

Building on the outcomes from the Seoul meeting, an expanded meeting with a larger group of stakeholders will be held in December 2013 at the first international UNESCO Forum on Global Citizenship Education in Bangkok, Thailand. The Forum, organized in support of GEFI, will seek to ensure greater clarity to this emerging perspective on the areas of policy, research and practice, gathering constituencies from government, development partners and civil society, research and academia. Innovation and latest trends will be highlighted, discussed and documented, with opportunities facilitated for networking, the sharing of experiences and ideas, and to develop and prioritise actions for supporting greater implementation of GCE at the country level.

Objectives of the UNESCO Forum on Global Citizenship Education

- Share experiences of policies, research and practice relating to the emerging area of GCE including trends, innovations and current debates from the perspective of a range of key stakeholders
- Advance conceptual thinking, content, definitional and measurement issues and characteristics of good quality GCE that can provide leadership and support for action by the education sector's strengthened engagement
- Identify concrete actions to be taken at national, regional and global levels as well as mechanisms, networks for international cooperation and support

Participation at the Forum will include GCE experts, educational practitioners, civil society organizations, young people, media, governmental and public sector, research institutions and universities, private sector, UN agencies and other development partners,. Participation will be by invitation, and a total number of approximately 100-120 are expected.

The UNESCO Forum on Global Citizenship Education is likely to continue to take place biennially/annually, hosted in different locations, and will serve as a global platform of exchange and cooperation among stakeholders where cutting-edge information, knowledge and practices on global citizenship education are shared and debated, and the partnerships for action are developed and sustained.

Programme

The programme for the two and a half day Forum envisages four broad domains, which are: 1) Pedagogical issues and the education sector; 2) Sustainable development, including climate change, the environment, equity of access to and use of resources etc; 3) Peace, conflict and rights as well as intercultural understanding; and 4) Youth and community engagement, including participation in democratic processes and governance. For each of these domains, it is possible that depending on the topic they could be taken up as part of a plenary session, a concurrent session, or as part of a series of workshops.

Plenary presentations will be of wide interest, and may explore issues in a single presentation, panel or debate format, aiming to address, critically, the underlying assumptions, tensions, and/or challenging issues of GCE. The topics may include, but not be limited to, the opportunities and challenges facing formal education systems in addressing activism/empowerment or promoting pedagogy for transformation/participation or making one's voice heard. The debate on the purpose of GCE as one for global solidarity vs. one for global competitiveness also deserves further attention. Identifying a new dimension of GCE that can help expand both its conceptual and pedagogical horizon, beyond a form of

civic/citizenship education at the global level, may also be an issue to be dealt with in the plenary sessions.

A series of concurrent seminars and workshops will provide opportunities for more in-depth and interactive explorations of GCE, organised along the four broad domains mentioned above, including:

- How to measure and assess GCE learning outcomes
- Linkages between education for sustainable development and GCE
- How global citizenship relies on the full realisation of sexual and reproductive health and rights
- The role of GCE in peace building, conflict prevention, and the promotion of human rights, democracy and social justice, or in promoting Learning-to-Live-Together
- Innovations in GCE curriculum, teacher training and pedagogy
- Youth engagement and participation in GCE and democratic processes, with major inputs sought from the Youth Advisory Group of GEFI
- GCE and the use of ICE and the media
- Pedagogical approaches to GCE: being transformative, encouraging learners to critically analyze world problems and identify solutions creatively and innovatively; placing focus on engagement in action to bring about desired changes; being multi-dimensional, involving all stakeholders, including those in the community and in society at large.
- Competences particular to GCE: identified and considered in terms of current strengths and gaps, as well as indicators/proxies to measure the competences required for global citizenship education in monitoring and assessing the learning.
- Principles and characteristics: what elements form the basis for good quality GCE that must underpin it so that it delivers on its promise and results in learning outcomes with lasting and desired impacts.
- Youth-led engagement: movements and initiatives by and for young people as a key factor to achieve the purposes of global citizenship education.
- Social movements and the link to GCE: including examples from the Arab uprisings since 2011, social movements in Latin America and the Caribbean, youth movements, gender equality and women's empowerment, etc.
- ICT and globalization: increasing interactions through social media and creating spaces for actions beyond traditional national boundaries.
- Interface between local, national and global and multiple levels of identity; global vs. national tensions, i.e. how to reconcile global citizenship and national citizenship (patriotism, nationalism); global vs. local tensions, i.e. how to reconcile global citizenship and ethnic, religious and tribal identities; interdependency/interconnectedness and new forms of civic and political engagement beyond national boundaries; increasing role of local actors linking directly with the global level, which sometimes provokes with national sovereignty and interest (e.g. migrants, 'green' movement...).

The Forum will also offer space for networking and the exhibition of materials and resources, and will include time when this will be open to members of the public and others who may be interested in learning more about the Forum, its goal, objectives, outcomes and outputs.

A significant new publication on global citizenship education

The presentations from the plenary and the concurrent sessions, along with the discussions during the Forum and other innovative approaches and practices that will be shared, and the output document from the Seoul meeting, will be compiled into a new major publication that will be completed and launched within the first half of 2014. This will be the main output from the Forum with wide dissemination electronically and in hardcopy to enable support for country level action and implementation. Efforts will be made to achieve high visibility for the launch of the publication in 2014, contributing to encourage widespread education sector engagement in this exciting and important area of work.

A key outcome of the Forum will be to provide a platform to bring together and share examples of innovative practice and good policy in the area of GCE, the facilitation of good networking amongst various partners resulting in a lasting network of experts and practitioners, and the identification of prioritised actions for future work to advance support for implementation at country level.

To learn more about the UNESCO Forum for Global Citizenship Education, please contact:

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