

Reframing Citizenship Education

Message during the G7 Satellite Conference
“Global Citizenship: The Role of Education in a Globalised World”
Complesso di Santa Lucia, Alma Mater Studiorum, Università di Bologna
Bologna, Italia

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INTRODUCTION

Greetings.

Let me begin by noting the centuries of cordial relationship between Philippines and Italy, in terms of trade and commerce, food, and most important, art and culture—through music, literature, and performing arts.

My country’s written history has an Italian as an important source. When Ferdinand Magellan’s expedition sailed around the world in 1521, a Venetian scholar Antonio Pigafetta, kept an account of the voyage including about the islands that formed my country. The Vatican, by virtue of *Patronato Real*, sanctioned the Catholic evangelization of my country.

The perspective that I am bringing is that of the developing world, particularly Asia and the Philippines where I come from. I believe that the reason I was invited to this conference is precisely for G7 countries to listen to the voice of developing countries on issues related to global citizenship and sustainable development.

CONCEPTS OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

- In the area of education, global citizenship gained prominence in teaching and learning through the Global Education First Initiative of the UN Secretary General (2012), which put forth the three priority areas of putting every child in school, improving the quality of learning, and fostering global citizenship.
- There are various conceptions of global citizenship; but for the purpose of this discussion we choose the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) framework to establish a reference point.
- In its 2015 document *Global Citizenship Education: Topics and Learning Objectives*, UNESCO defined “global citizenship” as “a sense of belonging to a broader community and common humanity. It emphasizes political, economic, social and cultural interdependency and interconnectedness between the local, the national, and the global.”
- Expanding the definition a bit more, the UNESCO *Global Citizens for Sustainable Development: A Guide for Teachers* (2016) answers the question “What is Global citizenship?” as follows:

“There are different interpretations of the notion of “global citizenship”. A common understanding is that it means a sense of belonging to a broader community, beyond national boundaries, that emphasizes our common humanity and draws on the interconnectedness between peoples as well as between the local and the global.

Global citizenship is based on the universal values of human rights, democracy, non-discrimination and diversity. It is about civic actions that promote a better world and future.”

- UNESCO identifies three core conceptual dimensions of global citizenship education: **cognitive** (knowledge and understanding of local, regional and global issues and diversity), **socio-emotional** (a sense of belonging to a common humanity), and **behavioral** (effective action; practical application. Global citizenship education seeks to achieve the following learning outcomes:
 - Develop an understanding of global governance structures, rights and responsibilities, global issues and connections between global, national and local systems and processes;
 - Recognize and appreciate difference and multiple identities, e.g. culture, language, religion, gender and our common humanity, and develop skills for living in an increasingly diverse world;
 - Develop and apply critical skills for civic literacy, e.g. critical inquiry, information technology, media literacy, critical thinking, decision-making, problem solving, negotiation, peace building and personal and social responsibility; Recognize and examine beliefs and values and how they influence political and social decision-making, perceptions about social justice and civic engagement;
 - Develop attitudes of care and empathy for others and the environment and respect for diversity;
 - Develop values of fairness and social justice, and skills to critically analyze inequalities based on gender, socio-economic status, culture, religion, age and other issues;
 - Participate in, and contribute to, contemporary global issues at local, national and global levels
- Ultimately, global citizenship education aims to provide learners with the “knowledge, skills, values and attitudes” to enable them to positively contribute to “a more inclusive, just and peaceful world”.

EDUCATION FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AND THE YOUTH

While concepts of global citizenship are fairly straightforward, the condition of youth in the developed countries differ from those in the developing countries.

The statement that “[t]oday's youth are better informed, more travelled and more connected across the world than ever before. They are naturally global citizens with a passion for the world, that is their heritage,” is not necessarily true for impoverished youth who comprise the global youth population.

GLOBAL YOUTH POPULATION

The global youth population as of 2016 is 1.8 billion. 90% or 1.3 billion live in less developed countries where poverty remains a persistent problem.

Asians comprise more than one-half of the global youth population, with 26% from South Asia and 29% from Asia-Pacific. South Asia has high levels of poverty.

The rest of the youth are in: Sub Saharan Africa (15%); Middle East and North Africa (MENA) (7%); Europe (6%); North America (4%); Central America and the Caribbean (3%); South America (3%); and Russia and Eurasia (3%).

Needless to state, global inequality poses barriers to global citizenship.

ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEMS FOR THOSE WHO ARE NOT IN SCHOOL

In the Philippines, it is estimated that there are four million children and youth who are out of school for various reasons.

Thus, the President is strengthening and expanding the reach of Alternative Learning Systems to enable those who are out of school to catch up with those who are in the formal educational system and to teach them skills so they can enter the world of work.

There is a need to integrate global citizenship not only in formal education, but also for alternative learning systems, in addition to the interventions that are often concentrated to the most essential.

CONSIDERATIONS IN GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

There is a need for deeper and closer scrutiny of a number of considerations if we are to generate the intended outcome and results from global citizenship education.

The UNESCO global citizenship education framework focuses on what to teach. I believe that we must emphasize, as a starting point, **the need to understand our learners more**, in terms of their conceptions of the global.

A. Perceptions of the Global are shaped by history

Perceptions of the global are shaped by history, which differ across countries and regions. Such perceptions can either be conducive to greater receptiveness to global citizenship education, or require a much more involved and contentious process.

Here we cannot confine ourselves, for instance, to the World Wars and the colonial period. There have been recent conflicts and wars vividly viewed across the globe. Economic and development history also leave indelible imprints. Trade and financial liberalization and structural adjustments, for example, give the global different faces, good or bad, across the youth in different parts of the world.

B. Conceptions of the Global are defined by experience

Direct contacts with the world take place under very different contexts and circumstances. Here, we are privileged to interact in healthy discussion, with all modern amenities and conveniences.

In my country, the broadly experienced engagement with the world over the last two decades is through our Overseas Filipino Workers. This is widely seen as a good thing, lifting families out of poverty, and insulating our economy from recent regional financial crises. But alongside the benefits are the mainly social costs that impact on our youth and their families.

Other countries will have their own contexts and circumstances, such as internal strife and displacement, human trafficking, among others.

CHALLENGES TO GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

- A. Global inequality poses barriers to global citizenship
- B. Gaps in Inter-Generational Understanding
- C. Global Political and Economic Conflict
- D. Balancing the National and the Global

SOME STEPS FORWARD

A. Leadership is Crucial

Because history and experience in engaging the world are important factors, leadership is certainly crucial. Are our leaders able to chart a course of history that is more tolerant, kinder, and more equitable? Are they able to address climate change together? Are they able to forge peace and stability? Are they able to build societies that offer positive engagements for families across the globe?

If not, I fear that even with global citizenship education, like Alice (in “Alice in Wonderland”), it will take us all the running we can do to keep in the same place.

B. We Need to Build Solidarity for Global Citizenship

Even though crucial, we cannot leave everything to leadership. We need to build solidarity for global citizenship.

We need to carve out spaces for meaningful exchange, where we learn of each other’s history, culture, and circumstances to foster greater respect and tolerance of each other’s identity.