



INTERNATIONAL
Youth White
Paper on
Global
Citizenship



Prologue

This paper is a result of work done by over 1300 students from 11 countries, in partnership with The Centre for Global Education, Canadian Commission for UNESCO, TakingITGlobal, the Centre for Global Citizenship Education and Research, and the Global Centre for Pluralism. Students came together to collaborate, through the use of technology, in a Virtual Town Hall to discuss the youths' vision for Global Citizenship Education. From every continent, the youth of the world exchanged ideas, debated alternatives, and ultimately created a document that represents their voice on the relationship education should have with global citizenship. The Virtual Town Hall was the culmination of months of online teamwork, 10,000 hours of student collaboration, over 500 hours of teacher facilitation, and the passion of these youth to engage in an international conversation and have their voices heard.

Paper Structure

The White Paper is structured around a seasonal song cycle. A song cycle consists of a set of solo pieces that are intended to be sung as a unit. The sections of each theme in this paper – summer, autumn, winter, and spring – reflect the ever changing but interconnected character of the natural world. Like the natural world, we want to be ever changing yet completely cohesive in the approach for global citizenship, as we aspire for our ideals (summer), work through our concerns (autumn) and questions (winter), to consider new ways of moving forward (spring).

Participant Countries

- Edmonton, Canada - Queen Elizabeth High School
- Brasilia, Brazil - Centro Interescolar deLinguas deTaguatinga
- El Jadida, Morocco - Ange Bleu Private School
- Auckland, New Zealand - Auckland Girls' Grammar School
- Manila, Philippines - Veritas Catholic School
- Fort Vancouver, United States - Fort Vancouver High School Center for International Studies
- Stockholm, Sweden - Globala Gymnasiet
- Nairobi, Kenya - St Austin's Academy
- Ptuj, Slovenia - Gimnazija Ptuj
- Barrhead, Canada - Alberta Distant Learning Centre
- Carrefour, Haiti - College De Cote Plage
- Palestine - Turkish Secondary Girls School

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Introduction

In this project, we united around a key idea from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

“Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.”

Article 2, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

A strong concern emerged that we live in the twenty first century, yet not everyone has access to the same basic rights. It is important for global citizens to ensure that everyone has this access. As long as substantial inequality persists, we cannot talk about progress in societies on a global level.

During the project, we recognized inequality as being caused by already existing gaps between people and nations. As youth from different countries and contexts, we worry about how an imperial instinct plays into this. The interdependence of economic systems and pre-established hierarchies make it harder for global relations to be equitable because nations often enter into agreements based on self interest. We recognize that the different positions from which people enter into these conversations about major global issues make it difficult for some people to be heard and be part of the change. As youth, we are one of those groups who feel they do not have the opportunity to have our say. It's most likely that people who have more opportunity have the voice and end up speaking for everyone.

Through our discussions, an important question kept coming up: is equality a goal that erases complexity? We wondered if focusing on equality can result in treating people the same instead of achieving fairness. Can this view of equality lead to simple ideas that don't really change or challenge inequalities? This question led us to begin to use the word equity as we recognized how we are each constructed by our histories and context. Equity is acknowledging different needs of people and communities in their contexts. Equity is about being in dialogue with all people and recognizing that many people are marginalised in a variety of ways.

The concept of equity and discussions of justice and fairness have been central to all aspects of this project. We all have different backgrounds, religions, cultures, languages, genders, and races, and many experience marginalisation which impacts us in different ways and prevents us from having what we perceive as a good life. This means that we are working with a huge variety of people who don't always agree or relate to each other, which makes conversations complex.

As we came together around the idea of global citizenship, we saw that it related to all of these issues. In this paper, we will use and understand the term global citizenship in a dynamic way. It can and must be questioned through different lenses. We need to be constantly examining who is and is not assumed to be a global citizen. In this project we recognize that having the space to consider and analyze global citizenship is itself a privilege many people don't have, and we want to always keep that in mind.

“It is significant that we as global citizens learn to think critically and analyze situations instead of blindly accepting or agreeing. This is an important aspect of making change in society and it enables us to overcome prejudices and stereotypes.”

– Vera and Miriam, Sweden

Global citizenship will not be defined by one set of actions - it is an ongoing conversation about multiple ways to enable equity around the world. Because of different positions in societies, people will experience global citizenship differently and will have different sets of responsibilities. There are, however, some pillars that we feel hold up global citizenship as a moving and dynamic concept that enables the possibilities for equity. These pillars are what can make global citizenship accessible to everyone: deep listening to others, self-reflexivity, and engaged action within a global community.

Trying to address global citizenship is an ambitious task. In this paper we focus on three key themes through which we seek to speak to this delicate concept: interconnection and complexity, diversity and difference, and community and compassion.

I. Interconnection and Complexity

Our Ideals

- We want all people to be aware of the variety of connections between people and nations (historical, economic, political, social, cultural, etc) and therefore aware of complexity of the world.
- We want a widespread understanding among people engaging in global citizenship that due to the complexity of the world, any and all knowledge we have is incomplete.
- People can and should challenge global citizenship (or refute it completely) but we can all agree that the world is complex and interconnected, due to past and present occurrences.
- Global citizenship actions should be done with all of the above in mind.
- Global citizens need to be aware that complexity and interconnectedness of the world has impacted our individual situation, and have an understanding of the specifics of their position.

“The world is interconnected in a variety of ways, through technology, rapid access to information, political alliances, immigration, the need to fight for environmental causes and social equality, among others.”

- Luiza, Brazil

The interconnectedness and interdependency of the world is what makes global citizenship complex, so an understanding of connections leads to a deeper understanding of global citizenship; one which asks people to question, constantly question and be critical of the idealistic simple solutions.

“Understanding complexity and knowing how to deal with it is the first step to becoming a global citizen”

- Youssef, Morocco

"Many of the corporations that are involved in our everyday life operate in poorer communities by exploiting them in different ways in means of increasing profit. As a member of a richer nation where these corporations are based we are responsible to use our voices and consumership to try and decrease their exploitation, as well as using the democratic rights to change the laws of which enables the corporations to act the way they do."

- Vera and Miriam, Sweden

Our Concerns

Complexity means that expressions of global citizenship will differ according to how people are positioned in the world. Factors that influence and create the complexity include the diversity of people and cultures, existing inequalities (including within and through education systems), historical backgrounds, power structures between and within countries. These unequal relations of power result in inequities - systemic racism, neocolonialism, land dispossession, the gap between rich and poor, xenophobia, sexism, among others. For example, many people experience sexism due to the patriarchy, racism due to white supremacy, exploitation due to capitalism and so on.

Can simple solutions solve complex problems?

What makes global citizenship complex is the need to understand how power is manifested. It is necessary to be aware of power structures (like so-called "developed" countries benefitting from historical colonisation), root causes of the power structures that exist, connections between power structures and how power structures contribute to inequity. Therefore, we are concerned about a lack of awareness on the part of those in positions of privilege to address the deep power structures that tend to constrain the potential for a better life for others.

Our Questions

- How do we make a complex concept such as global citizenship accessible?
- Are we perpetuating global issues in our goal to prevent/undo them?
- How can we encourage people to promote change without falling into the trap of simplistic, feel-good approaches?/ How can we conceive of change (or "making a difference") in a way that takes up rather than steps over complexity?
- Would introducing complexity and interdependencies at an earlier age and in an age-suitable way open up possibilities/ help to avoid getting invested in simple ideas?

"In Brazil, in the capitalist system in which we live, where everything revolves around money and power, one can have a clear vision of the power structure where people work to survive, pay their taxes and end up supporting a government that does not act on behalf of all citizens."

- Luiza, Brazil

"Analyzing of the underlying assumptions and power dynamics that exist between larger and smaller powers must take place"

- Katrina, Canada

Ways Forward

We know that creating policies is not easy because complexity and interconnectivity are things not only present but are “the DNA” of our respective societies. However, a critical spirit and a perpetual awareness of societal complexity coupled with a projection towards the future must be present in the educational programs in order to tackle global problems related to complexity. Complexity and interconnection are features that will always characterize our world and raise challenges and concerns; therefore, building connections in education is mandatory in supporting global citizenship. Education can help present the complexity and interconnected nature of the world as a framework for global citizenship.

“Complexity was the main issue we found with global citizenship and education, and while we had potential answers, we were left with more questions! The initial question was how do we deal with the complexity of the issues in a way that will actually solve them, bearing in mind that generalising tends to water things down and paint over diversity in an unhealthy way.”

- Scarlett, New Zealand

II. Diversity and Difference

Our Ideals

- We want a situation in which people are comfortable expressing their world experience without having to suppress a part of themselves.
- Acknowledge that everyone has different needs and obligations, as individuals come with their own unique experiences and backgrounds.
- Give diverse voices in the global community an equitable hearing.
- Global citizenship must change as the world changes, and it must be defined by as many diverse people as possible, so it works for as many people as possible.

“Global citizenship aims to transcend borders, but does so in the social, cultural, political, and economic sense. It calls for unity, solidarity and a sense of a truly global community under the umbrella of the human species, but that does not mean it wants local identities to end.”

Bob, Republic of the Philippines

The Portuguese expression *abertura* illustrates the importance of accepting new ideas through openness. All countries and people have differing impacts on global issues, and it is important to be aware of everyone’s needs and obligations, which should also be looked at through a historical context. Equity should be put before equality because people want and need different things in life.

Our Concerns

Through diversity, we are all different but we still deserve the same basic rights. However, because of underlying power dynamics, some voices are accorded more importance. Our concern is that if all people are given the same volume of

microphone, the volume of their voice (as a result of existing power structures) will change the conversation. Therefore, diversity should be about equity rather than equality. In order to reach equity in diversity, marginalized and diverse voices should be highlighted

Even the most educated people do not know needs and wants of communities as well as the people who live there. The people who properly and fully understand their communities are the ones whose thoughts should be valued. This touches on the point that global citizenship should have conversations in which voices are equitably heard (as opposed to equally).

Scarlett, New Zealand

occur at a local level.

Often times, there is a lack of recognition of the multiple aspects and root causes of an issue. This lack of recognition is problematic as it does not enable us to take action in recognition of local contexts. Such actions are important because most often they do not take place on a global scale, but

“Global citizenship is not only about “international aids” as many people might think, we believe that behavioural, ethical and cooperative actions and deeds are the ones that are more effective and provides development on the long term!”

- Youssef, Morocco

Our Questions

- How can difference and diversity be perceived as a strength as opposed to a deficiency?
- What can be done to foster respect with regards to the differences encountered?
- How can we encourage people to work towards greater understandings of difference, diversity and equity?
- Why are some perspectives and worldviews more marginalised than others?

Ways Forward

Diverse perspectives should be incorporated in school curriculums around the world at a younger age. This would spread the concept of global citizenship as well as broaden views and enable more complex thinking, thus preventing future misunderstandings and fear of the unknown and allow an understanding of the nature of oppression. Students should be taught to understand the roots of their opinions as well as what informs their beliefs; schools could support this by participating in projects that broaden students' knowledge and raise awareness about global issues. Furthermore, educators need to make sure that students have the chance to speak up and be taken seriously.

“We need to eliminate the perspective that you are only a Global Citizen once you are an adult. The best way to become a Global Citizen is learning at a young age.”

- Nasri, Kenya

“Our problems aren't our own. Our solutions can be shared, can be recycled...can be used by other countries. It's the most beautiful thing.”

- Yolicia, Republic of the Philippines

III. Community, Relationality and Compassion

Our Ideals

- We are all connected; it is through shifting the focus from individual to community development that we can achieve change and form a sustainable community.
- A critical and respectful understanding of community, relationality and compassion allows for more ethical relations.
- Two essential factors of global citizenship are compassion which enables us to see beyond the walls of our own perception and relationality which helps us recognise ourselves within the global community.
- We must challenge the perception that global issues are the responsibility of other people or nations.

“The ideal of the good life is built through the search of the wellness of others. If life is like a rainbow, there must be rain and sun to see her different colors.

- Salaëta, Haiti

Learning to consider the effects of the choices we make on a local and global scale as well as carefully choosing what we support is important. Global citizens should develop a mindset built on unity and solidarity and realize that working towards

improving global issues is an investment for everyone. As global citizens, it is essential for us to not only realize what we are doing wrong as a community but how to correct our mistakes and learn from others.

“One important point that needs to be changed is moving from considering our status away from other countries and starting to looking upon our situation as an important part of the global context. Each country should start considering other countries' situations while looking upon theirs.”

- the students from Palestine

The survey data (see Appendix) acquired through this project shows that respondents tend not to view issues as very potent when on a local level; however, on a global level, they are usually viewed as a larger issue.

Our Concerns

We are concerned that global citizenship tends to be used in a way that develops a kind of saviour perspective. A saviour complex results in the creation of further divisions because people are portrayed as objects of pity instead of equal in dignity and rights. Therefore, compassion is called for which encourages learning from and trying to figure out ways to support each other.

Through the international survey, we noticed that many people see problems as beyond their own communities. For instance, issues such as poverty, environmental issues, racism, and freedom of religion are more likely to be noted as “global issues” rather than problems within local communities. This makes us distance ourselves from these issues and consider it as not our responsibility to solve them.

A shift in focus is required to understand the struggle between operating as an individual as opposed to acting as a member of a community. Individualism allows a slide back into forgetting our connections with others, potentially leading to a perpetuation of already existing inequities. Injustice and the imbalance of power leads to marginalization.

Our Questions

What are the barriers to learning from one another? How do existing power structures affect us?

- Am I able to assume responsibilities towards the others? How are others impacted by my actions?
- To what extent can we expect the marginalized to feel compassionate towards people who contribute to their oppression?
- Is anyone shut out of the conversation? Who are we speaking over right now? Are we listening to the right people?
- How do we create a community in which we are working towards equity?

It is integral to the conversation of global citizenship that we consider these questions constantly if we want to make a change that is long-lasting. In that sense, we must become aware of how our actions are impacting the whole.

Ways Forward

More international collaborations between students from different parts of the world promotes compassion and relationality and supports local, national and global communities. Curricula should broaden perspectives and teach about relationality, power relations, colonial history and oppression in order to fully understand what structures our relations. Facilitators of global citizenship need to be aware (as all global citizens do) of economic, social, and political power structures and how these affect people's capacity to be involved.

IV Recommendations

By providing a variety of perspectives on the world, global citizenship education can be presented in a way that promotes equity. It should also be framed as something that is growing and changing. This will allow students to challenge and change the concept. We therefore make the following recommendations.

Curricula

Curricula must teach a global perspective in relation to principles of equity, complexity, interconnection, diversity, and community by:

- Addressing complexity and root causes of global issues to open up possibilities rather than promoting simplistic, feel-good citizenship responses.
- Exploring how different perspectives and worldviews originate, including what informs the opinions and beliefs of students themselves.
- Making transparent global power relations, colonial history and oppression in order to fully understand what structures our relations.

All concepts should be introduced at an earlier age and be adapted in age-appropriate ways for students at all levels.

We ask for flexible curricula that provide these same basic concepts but offers different branches depending on situation, hierarchical scales and community needs. As an example, education should introduce a variety of perspectives on global citizenship, including critiques and edits of the concept.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is, without a doubt, a catalyst for mind mechanisms based on the fact that it enables youth to continually support and amplify their comprehension of the world. It is essential that education:

- Helps students seek out, listen to and incorporate marginalized perspectives in order to question and possibly unlearn mainstream ways of thinking and address inequitable balance between the dominant and marginalized perspectives.
- Gives space to students to express their ideas and skills, encouraging them to learn from their mistakes and experiment with new iterations, rather than focusing on standard academic assessment.

School Structures

School structures could be set up to promote education as a community enterprise rather than a single lane race, where the focus is on individual learning and achievement.

- Setting up non-traditional classroom structures and collaborations (i.e. not single grade or single subject classrooms) to make students aware of the interconnections between school subjects and between students, as they learn from each other.
- Creating collaborative spaces to foster exchange across differences, such as online collaborations across national borders.
- Providing teachers with professional development for the challenging work of global citizenship as expressed in this paper.
- Remove barriers to learning from and with one another (i.e. reduce competition as a motivator for student learning).

V. Conclusion

It is critical that these recommendations be taken seriously. Unless we consider the complexity of global issues, take seriously our differences, and recognize how we are connected in a global community, we may inadvertently reduce access to human rights and contribute to inequities. If we truly want to see a just world, we have to start thinking about global citizenship critically. The term global citizenship is itself such an opportunity to unite around one single cause despite the diversity standing between people and nations! Consequently, the right approach is perhaps not to pursue the real definition of global citizenship but to never stop looking for it! And we, as youth, want to contribute our voices because we have a perspective that our world is lacking. It is also wrongly assumed that young people are no more than leaders of "tomorrow". It is our right but also our duty to be leaders of today. As we navigate through our thoughts, perspectives and actions we restore something that is often missed: hope!

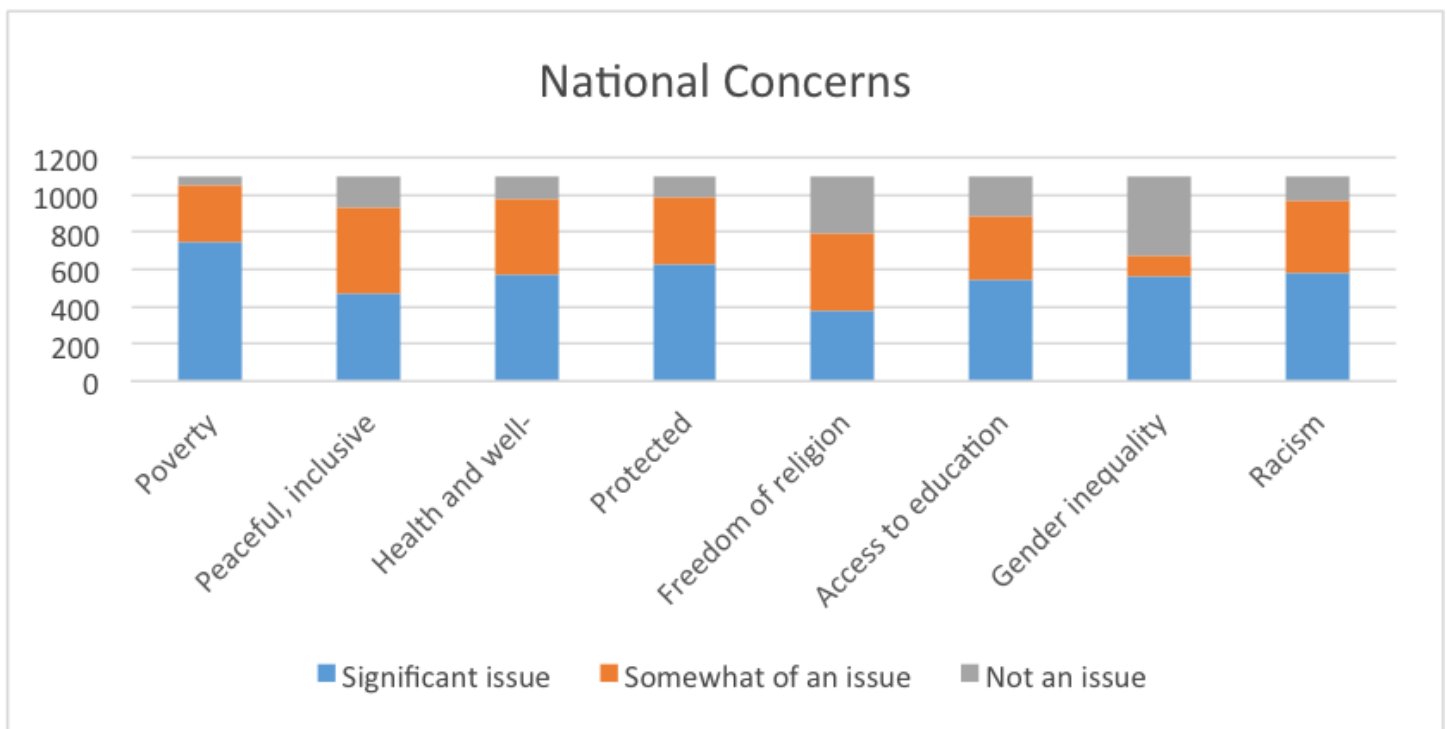
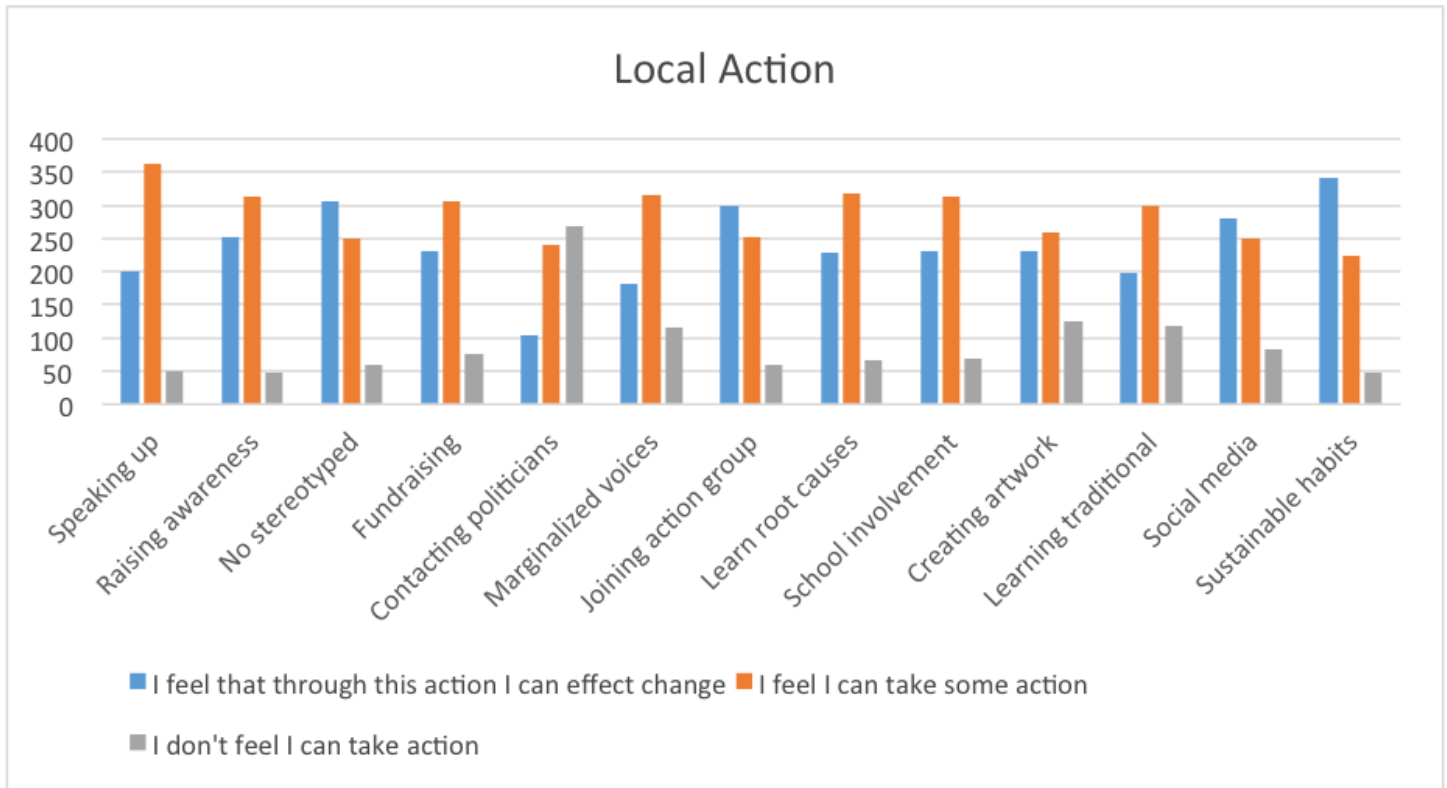
"Adults aren't the only actors of global citizenship"

-Youssef, Morocco



The Ottawa Student Writing Team

Appendix: Survey Results



Global Concerns

