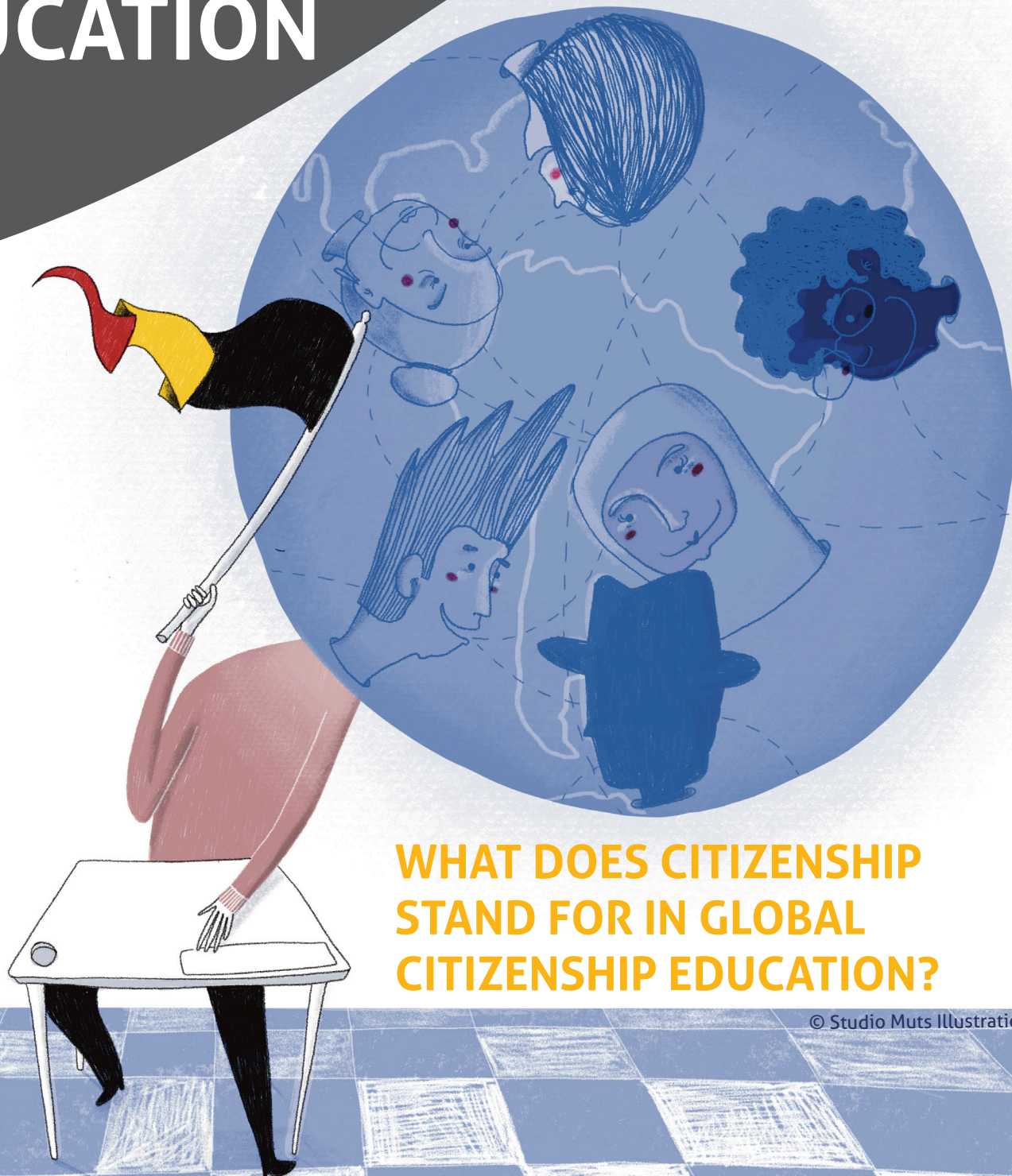


GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Issue paper n°4



**WHAT DOES CITIZENSHIP
STAND FOR IN GLOBAL
CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION?**

© Studio Muts Illustratie

Enabel 

Global Citizenship Education Centre of expertise

Global Citizenship Education receives increased attention in our globalised world. With the SDGs in mind, more and more policy makers and education professionals acknowledge that education should take a global perspective on citizenship. We notice so in Flanders' new attainment targets, in which many aspects of citizenship, a key competence, have received a global scope¹. A similar trend can be noticed in the French-speaking education system in Belgium.

Although citizenship is traditionally strongly linked to a nation's community, today this is no longer the only frame of reference for citizenship education at school. But in legal terms, citizenship is often still interpreted on a national foundation. Officially, we are citizens of a country, not of a world state.

Against such background, what does citizenship in Global Citizenship Education stand for? Is global citizenship not genuine citizenship? And is Global Citizenship Education therefore a toothless tiger giving vain hope to young people who want to have an impact as global citizens? Or is Global Citizenship Education instead a powerful political programme for change towards a more just and sustainable world?

In this issue paper, we examine these questions and explore whether global citizenship can be reconciled with the traditional interpretations and aspirations tying citizenship and citizenship education to nationhood.

Thin and thick conceptions of citizenship

To answer these questions, we must discuss the concept of citizenship. There are many different views on citizenship. The meaning given to citizenship also has implications for the interpretation of global citizenship.

In the thinnest sense, citizenship is equated with nationality and refers to legal membership of a state. In this conception, the concepts of citizenship and global citizenship are incompatible as there is no world state with passports for global citizens.

A broader approach is offered by Eis and Moulin-Doos (2017). They distinguish two dimensions of citizenship, but both are difficult to apply to global citizenship. According to a first dimension, the liberal-individual dimension, a citizen owns rights that he or she can defend before a court. But on a global scale, human rights are difficult to enforce legally.

In addition, according to them, citizens are also actors with direct political influence. They can initiate, decide and control political actions. However, ordinary citizens are hardly politically active on the global stage. The political struggle for global solidarity is mainly carried out by people connected to international institutions and NGOs.

What unites these concepts of citizenship is their rather thin conception. They view citizenship only from a legal perspective. Instead, thick conceptions of citizenship exist that recognise the legal perspective but emphasise that citizenship is about much more.

In thick conceptions of citizenship, membership refers not only to a legal status but also to a political and cultural identity. Rights go beyond respecting each other's freedoms and also imply civil responsibilities or even moral obligations. Also, citizenship is more than a passive state, but includes active commitments to the common good of society (Bauböck, 1999).

Global citizenship therefore always refers to a thick conception of citizenship. Membership is interpreted more fluidly here. It implies an affinity with local, national and international communities alike. Global citizens do not only identify with his their own nation, but feel connected to people all over the world. And they have a keen eye for the impact of actions and decisions on a local and global scale.

1. In Flanders, the new attainment targets for citizenship expect pupils, for example, to take a critical look at the mutual influence between social domains and developments and their impact on the global society and the individual, or to be able to interpret democratic decision-making on a local, national and international level.

The political dimension of global citizenship

Within a thick conception, citizenship can therefore be perfectly meaningful for global citizenship. Eis and Moulin-Doos (2017) do, however, touch upon a major sore point. Stripping citizenship of its legal aspects turns Global Citizenship Education into a toothless tiger, they say. The resulting actions have little political impact because they are not based on global citizens in the thin conception.

Does citizenship within Global Citizenship Education really have no political dimension? Attention for this issue is relatively new. For a long time, there has been little dialogue between the research traditions of citizenship education – historically linked to nationhood and patriotism – and Global Citizenship Education – popular within cosmopolitan thinking, global studies and other fields that seek to transcend the national scale.

Global Citizenship Education became the new conventional term for development education and global education. The term citizenship in this case emphasises the importance of action for a better world (Bourn, 2020) without this action having to have a political dimension. Critical approaches of Global Citizenship Education even point at a trend towards depoliticisation¹. By this they mean that unequal power relations, causes of global injustice and the need for systemic criticism are not sufficiently addressed. Also, the resulting actions are often of a charitable and uncomplicated nature. In so doing, they risk perpetuating global social inequalities, such as those between donors in the Global North and recipients in the Global South, rather than dismantling them.

Thus, Global Citizenship Education still has too little regard for the political. It still too often limits itself to superficially describing today's world rather than to critically assess it. Nevertheless, there are also more political and transformative approaches that aim to contribute to real social impact and global change. In this sense, Veugelers (2011) distinguishes three types of global citizenship:

- **Open global citizenship:** recognising that the world has become 'smaller' – that we are more closely connected, that there is more interdependence between different parts of the world – and focuses on openness to other cultures;
- **Moral global citizenship:** is based on moral principles such as equality and human rights and recognises the responsibility we have for the planet and humanity;
- **Socio-political global citizenship:** addresses unequal power relations and aims at global social justice and political change.

All of these types are valuable. But Global Citizenship Education is only political – can only have 'teeth' – if it also pays attention to a socio-political dimension. Cultural openness and a moral cosmopolitan approach are important but a critical analysis and change-oriented practices for a more just world are important too. This requires, among other things, a better understanding of global political processes, unequal global power relations and what this means for global (in)justice.

Work at an Ethos of Global Citizenship in Education

How can we translate these types of global citizenship into school practice? More and more countries explicitly include citizenship education in their curricula. The scope often exceeds the nation's. Openness to the broader global community is encouraged. But how can national agendas be combined in practice with global citizenship?

Pike (2008) offers a way out. However, he too starts with pointing out the difficult relationship between Global Citizenship Education and citizenship. Citizenship is inevitably linked to nationhood and may remain so for a long time. However, according to Pike, this does not mean that we should give up. In an era so strongly defined by globalisation and global interdependence we need to update our understanding of citizenship and citizenship education. Globalisation challenges educators to acknowledge the ever-changing relationships between people, communities and countries. We need to help students explore the implications of globalisation in terms of their rights and responsibilities, their allegiances and loyalties, and their opportunities for meaningful participation.

1. For a discussion of the various interpretations of Global Citizenship Education, see issue paper 1 in this series.

Pike does not advocate an either/or story but sees opportunities for an 'Ethos of Global Citizenship in Education'. Pike suggests six critical expansions of citizenship education while also paying attention to the political dimension of Global Citizenship Education.

1. An expansion of loyalty

Including, an acceptance and valuing of multiple identities and loyalties; an understanding that loyalties may shift over time, that identity is not 'sitting stock-still'.

2. A critical appraisal of both nationalism and globalism

Including, claims and conduct of national governments and transnational agencies from the perspectives of justice, equity, and human rights; an understanding that global interdependence often results in inequitable outcomes.

3. Global thinking

Including, development of synthetic and relational thinking to aid seeing connections and relationships between various phenomena; development of insights into the interrelationship of past, present and future by understanding the concept of sustainability.

4. Understanding citizenship as "doing," not just "being" or "knowing"

Including, refinement of political skills and attitudes required for social change at local, regional, national, and transnational levels.

5. Moral responsibilities of global citizenship

Including, an understanding of the consequences of imperialism; an understanding of the effects of the attitudes and lifestyles of the affluent minority on the choices and freedoms of the disadvantaged around the world.

6. Planetary thinking

Including, an understanding of the interdependence of all life forms and of the importance of biodiversity to the health of the planet.

(Pike, 2008, pp. 46-47)

Implications for practice

What does such insight into the possible meanings of citizenship in Global Citizenship Education offer us for education practices? We immediately notice three major opportunities.

First of all, we see a strong encouragement to focus on Global Citizenship Education. And this need not be extra work for schools and teachers already burdened by many expectations. In Flemish education, for example, the new attainment targets for citizenship are an ideal gateway for perspectives on open, moral and socio-political global citizenship. Pike's six dimensions provide interesting guidance here.

One of these dimensions refers to the need to learn critically about the global political scene. Our second recommendation is related to this. According to Lösch (2011), a political perspective can be brought into Global Citizenship Education from a critical understanding of global political processes. Addressing world politics therefore also has its place in Global Citizenship Education. How and why are political decisions made at the international level? And what opportunities are there to influence these decisions?

Thirdly, for those working on Global Citizenship Education, there is much to harvest from the rich tradition of citizenship education. According to Myers (2016), Global Citizenship Education can learn much from citizenship education theories and debates. Overview studies such as Sant (2019) are a useful starting point for those who want to learn more about ways to implement Global Citizenship Education. There is also much one can learn on a practical level. Approaches such as polarisation management, deep democracy and service learning are conducive to innovative Global Citizenship Education practices.

Kevin Goris - GCE Centre of Expertise - Enabel

References

Bauböck, R. (1999). National Community, Citizenship and Cultural Diversity. *Political Science Series* No. 62. Vienna: Institut für Höhere Studien.

Bourn, D. (2020). The Emergence of Global Education as a Distinctive Pedagogical Field. In: Bourn, D. (red.). *The Bloomsbury handbook of global education and learning* (11-22). London: Bloomsbury.

Eis, A. & Moulin-Doos, C. (2017). Cosmopolitan Citizenship Education: Realistic political program or program to disillusioned powerlessness? A plea for a critical power perspective within Global Citizenship Education. *Journal of Social Science Education*, 16 (4), 49-59.

Lösch, B. (2011). The political dimension of global education: Global governance and democracy. *Journal of Social Science Education*, 10 (4), 50-58.

Myers, J. (2016). Charting a democratic course for Global Citizenship Education: Research directions and current challenges. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 24 (55),

Pike, G. (2008). Citizenship education in global context. *Brock Education Journal*, 17, 41-51.

Sant, E. (2019). Democratic education: A theoretical review (2006–2017). *Review of Educational Research*, 89 (5), 655-696.

Veugelers, W. (2011). The moral and the political in global citizenship: appreciating differences in education. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 9(3-4), 473-485.

