

## GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Bronwyn E. Wood, Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington

To cite: Wood, B. E. (2019). Global citizenship education: Definitions and Debates. Curriculum Matters, 15 (2019). 93-98. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.18296/cm.0038>

### What is global citizenship education?

The idea of global citizenship or world citizenship is the idea that human beings are ‘citizens of the world’ (Dower & Williams, 2002, p. 1). This notion of membership of a wider global, universal or cosmopolitan citizenship goes back to the Stoics in the time of the ancient world of the Greeks and the Romans (Heater, 1999). In such times, the ideas of virtues, including moderation in the passions and endurance of adversity was viewed as an ideal – and such people called themselves the ‘cosmo-polities’ or ‘citizens of the cosmos’. They viewed their role and responsibilities as part of an ordered (global) reasoned life in which acting as a global citizen was a natural response to one’s position in life and the cosmos (Dower & Williams, 2002).

Yet, as an idea it is highly contested. For some, global citizenship represents a desired sense of collective responsibility for the issues which cut across national boundaries – environmental degradation and climate change, terrorism, refugees and human rights. Yet, others reject the idea of a global citizenship completely as people hold little political power in jurisdictions beyond their own (e.g. Parekh, 2003) and neither is there a world government that ‘governs’ beyond the nation-state and therefore it is too abstract a concept to be valuable (Davies, 2006). In addition, as a concept it is subject to varying interpretations according the ideologies which underpin its understanding and as a result has yielded criticism and debates from various quarters (Goren & Yemini, 2017; Oxley & Morris, 2013; Parmenter, 2018).

A key debate is the extent to which Global Citizenship Education [GCE] serves to prop up imperialist, capitalist and neoliberal approaches in which learning about the ‘other’ results perpetuates broad paternalistic stereotypes and furthers the ability for the Global North to dominate in global economic exchanges (Andreotti, 2006; Jefferess, 2007). Andreotti (2006) refers to this type of global citizenship education as ‘soft’, contrasting it with more ‘critical’ forms which seek to understand global inequalities as a reflection of deeply unequal power relations associated with colonialism, resource and labour distribution.

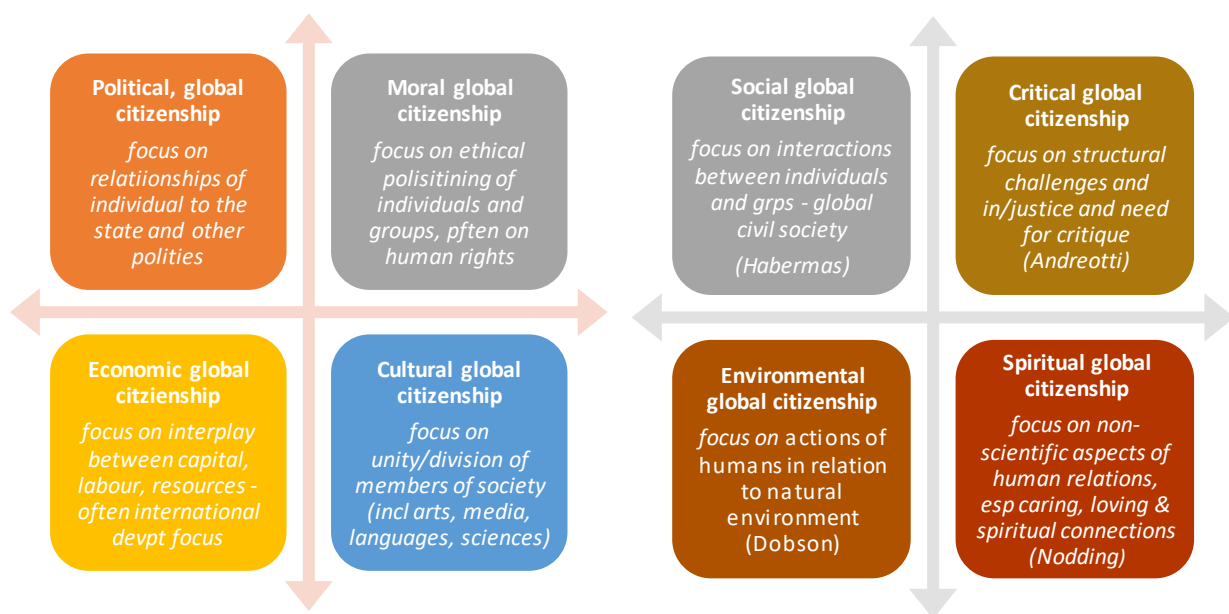
Further debates centre on the spatiality of global citizenship and how this is interpreted within education (Isin & Wood, 1999; Ong, 2006). While the movement of people and mass migration is not a new phenomenon, in recent times the scale and the pace of such movements have challenged traditionally-held notion of the citizen and his/her relationship, identity and loyalty to the nation-state (as articulated by Marshall (1950)). In

response, many citizenship scholars have argued for more global understandings of citizenship that are characterised by flexible and multiple notions of identity and connectedness beyond the nation-state (Isin & Turner, 2007; Kallio & Mitchell, 2016).

Yet somewhat paradoxically, there are still enduring reasons for why membership of a nation remains one of the most powerful attributes of contemporary citizens. As Turner (2016) states, the ‘right to mobility’ (p. 681) and to cross borders still holds considerable power even in a globalised and transnational world. In response, a number of scholars now argue for more spatially-agile, dynamic and flexible conceptions of citizenship that acknowledge the multi-scaled nature of citizenship and its constitution through a range of social and spatial affinities (Ball, 2012; Wood & Black, 2018). For example, Wood and Black (2018) argue that as a result of these understandings, we need GCE policies and practices that better understand the multidimensional and multi-spatial nature of citizenship today.

As an attempt to explain these multiple interpretations of GCE, Oxley and Morris (2013) offer a typology for classifying the various forms of Global citizenship education. They propose four conceptions and four advocacy types based on prevailing literature (Figure 1)

**Figure 1: Conceptions of global citizenship (left) and categories of advocacy types of global citizenship (right)**



**Source:** (Oxley & Morris, 2013, p. 306)

It is important then to understand that GCE has many diverse expressions and interpretations. Goren and Yemini's (2017) extensive review of GCE policies (through Oxley and Morris' (2013) framework) also concluded that GCE is often adapted to fit local needs and is often therefore extremely complex as an idea to unify (Goren & Yemini, 2017). As a result, it is important to undertake careful examination of contextual factors when studying global citizenship education (Goren & Yemini, 2017).

## GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

While New Zealand does not have a GCE curriculum as such, there are still many opportunities to teach such ideas – and, in particular, within social studies and languages and through the curriculum's overarching framework, such as the 'future focus' principle. Senior subjects such as geography, history, senior social studies and economics also have many opportunities to explore global contexts and ideas.

Goren and Yemini's (2013) analysis of Australia and New Zealand's GCE (using Oxley and Morris) concluded that the prevailing cosmopolitan outlook was 'moral' cosmopolitanism (which focuses on ideas such as human rights and empathy) with advocacy for environmental issues but not others. Peterson, Milligan and Wood's (2018) review of NZ and Australian GCE similarly concluded that both countries use an 'education+citizenship+global' approach (drawing on Davies' (2006) typology) in which some dimensions of citizenship and international understanding are introduced into the school curriculum, but these ideas are not necessarily connected or cohesive.

One significant challenge for GCE in New Zealand is the open, conceptual nature of the NZ curriculum and low levels of prescription (Sinnema, 2015). This means that social studies teachers can choose to select global or local studies and not necessarily present a range of scales, or engage with global citizenship education with any depth (Parmenter, 2010; Peterson, Milligan, & Wood, 2018; Wood, 2012, 2013; Wood, Taylor, Atkins, & Johnston, 2017). For example, in a comparison of GCE between Japan and New Zealand, Parmenter (2010) found that New Zealand's less centralised school system meant that it was difficult to know what teachers were teaching for GCE in comparison to Japan with a highly centralised education system and usage of common textbooks. The openness of this approach also means it is difficult to provide resources and support for teachers (Wood, Bolstad, Atkins, Milligan, & Perreau, 2018).

One further significant challenge to GCE in New Zealand is the divide between high and low socio-economic school communities in their knowledge and experiences of citizenship education (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr, & Losito, 2010). This finding has been confirmed in school-based studies in NZ which found that students from wealthier

communities were receiving a more ‘globally-oriented’ citizenship curriculum than those from poorer communities who were encouraged to focus on their local area (Wood, 2012, 2013; Wood et al., 2017). Teachers’ logic for these spatial orientations reflected expectations of their students who they perceived as being destined for a more local or global futures. Such patterns needn’t always be the case. An exploratory study by Bolstad, Hipkins and Stevens (2014) found that a low decile, highly multicultural school community in NZ had rich insights into global citizenship through drawing on diasporic students’ experiences and what this meant in an increasingly transnational world.

To summarise, the coverage of GCE in New Zealand is patchy and while there is an intention for global dimensions to permeate the curriculum, these lack a unifying definition and cohesion (Peterson et al., 2018). In addition, there is a risk that GCE has become a more common option for more elite schools with ‘global’ aspirations for their students.

## References

- Andreotti, V. (2006). Soft versus critical global citizenship education. *Policy & Practice: A Development Education review*, Autumn 2006(3).
- Ball, S. (2012). *Global education Inc.: New policy networks and the neo-liberal imaginary*. Oxon/NY: Routledge.
- Bolstad, R., Hipkins, R., & Stevens, L. (2014). Measuring New Zealand students’ international capabilities: An exploratory study. Retrieved from <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/international/144533>
- Davies, L. (2006). Global citizenship: Abstraction or framework for action? *Educational Review*, 58(1), 5-25.
- Dower, N., & Williams, J. (Eds.). (2002). *Global citizenship: A critical introduction*. New York: Routledge.
- Goren, H., & Yemini, M. (2017). Global citizenship education redefined – A systematic review of empirical studies on global citizenship education. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 82, 170-183. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2017.02.004>
- Heater, D. (1999). *What is citizenship?* Malden, MS: Polity Press.
- Isin, E., & Turner, B. (2007). Investigating citizenship: An agenda for citizenship studies. *Citizenship studies*, 11(1), 5-17.
- Isin, E., & Wood, P. K. (1999). *Citizenship and identity*. London: Sage.
- Jefferess, D. (2007). Global citizenship and the cultural politics of benevolence. *Critical literacy: Theories and practices*, 2(1), 27-36.
- Kallio, K. P., & Mitchell, K. (2016). Introduction to the special issue on transnational lived citizenship. *Global Networks*, 259-267. doi:10.1111/glob.12113
- Marshall, T. H. (1950). *Citizenship and social class*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ong, A. (2006). Mutations in Citizenship. *Theory, culture & society*, 23(2-3), 499-505. doi:10.1177/0263276406064831

- Oxley, L., & Morris, P. (2013). Global citizenship: A typology for distinguishing its multiple conceptions. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 61(3), 301-325. doi:10.1080/00071005.2013.798393
- Parekh, B. (2003). Cosmopolitanism and global citizenship. *Review of International Studies*, 29(1), 3-17. doi:10.1017/S0260210503000019
- Parmenter, L. (2010). Global citizenship, cultural change, and education policy in Japan and New Zealand. In W. Ascher & J. M. Heffron (Eds.), *Cultural Change and Persistence: New Perspectives on Development* (pp. 183-201). New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.
- Parmenter, L. (2018). Politics, global citizenship and implications for education. In I. Davies, L.-C. Ho, D. Kiwan, C. L. Peck, A. Peterson, E. Sant, & Y. Waghid (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Citizenship and Education* (pp. 331-345). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Peterson, A., Milligan, A., & Wood, B. E. (2018). Global citizenship education in Australasia. In I. Davies, L.-C. Ho, D. Kiwan, C. L. Peck, A. Peterson, E. Sant, & Y. Waghid (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Citizenship and Education* (pp. 3-20). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Schulz, W., Ainley, J., Fraillon, J., Kerr, D., & Losito, B. (2010). *ICCS 2009 International Report: Civic knowledge, attitudes, and engagement among lower-secondary students in 38 countries*. Retrieved from Amsterdam: [http://www.iea.nl/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Publications/Electronic\\_versions/ICCS\\_2009\\_International\\_Report.pdf](http://www.iea.nl/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Electronic_versions/ICCS_2009_International_Report.pdf)
- Sinnema, C. (2015). The ebb and flow of curricular autonomy: Balance between local freedom and national prescription in curricula. In D. Wyse, L. Hayward, & J. Pandya (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment* (pp. 965-983). London: Sage.
- Turner, B. S. (2016). We are all denizens now: on the erosion of citizenship. *Citizenship studies*, 20(6-7), 679-692. doi:10.1080/13621025.2016.1191432
- Wood, B. E. (2012). Scales of citizenship: New Zealand teacher's diverse perceptions and practices. *International Journal of Progressive Education*, 8(3), 77-93. Retrieved from <http://inased.org/v8n3/ijpev8n3.pdf>
- Wood, B. E. (2013). Participatory capital: Bourdieu and citizenship education in diverse school communities. *British journal of Sociology of Education*, 35(4), 578-597. doi:10.1080/01425692.2013.777209
- Wood, B. E., & Black, R. (2018). Globalisation, cosmopolitanism and diaspora: what are the implications for understanding citizenship? *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 27(2-3), 184-199. doi:10.1080/09620214.2017.1415161
- Wood, B. E., Bolstad, R., Atkins, R., Milligan, A., & Perreau, M. (2018). Civics, citizenship and political literacy in the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Mātauranga o Aotearoa. *NZPSA Our Civic Future Civics, citizenship and political literacy in Aotearoa New Zealand: A public discussion paper*. Retrieved from <https://nzpsa.com/resources/Documents/Our%20Civic%20Future.pdf>
- Wood, B. E., Taylor, R., Atkins, R., & Johnston, M. (2017). *Creating active citizens? Interpreting, implementing and assessing 'personal social action' in NCEA social studies: Final Report*. Retrieved from Wellington: [http://www.tlri.org.nz/sites/default/files/projects/TLRI%20Summary\\_Wood%28v2%29.pdf](http://www.tlri.org.nz/sites/default/files/projects/TLRI%20Summary_Wood%28v2%29.pdf)