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global citizenship project

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Contextualising cultural diversity and global citizenship[1]

In the context of the modern nation-state, **citizenship** has been advanced as a **constitutional cornerstone** and a powerful ideological framework for regulating social interactions at the level of citizens in their relations with the state. At its most basic level, **citizenship** indicates membership of a political community with associated rights and duties. This is akin to what many theorists term **contributory rights** (e.g. Isin and Turner 2007) where the legal status of national citizenship engenders certain rights and obligations.

However, in many émigré societies citizenship is being challenged and contested because of the increasing challenge of cultural and religious diversity. In particular, post-migration cities are grappling with the claims of culture (Benhabib 2002; Barry 2001; Kymlicka and Norman 2000) and **how best to accommodate increased diversity, with its underlying notion of 'difference' articulated by minority groups, while maintaining an over-arching sense of belonging** and inclusion within the broader society. The challenge here is to ensure that cultural rights are protected without the risk of producing segregated communities and a weakened sense of belonging to the wider society. In other words, the challenge remains how to produce acceptance and support for cultural and religious **pluralism** without necessarily erecting new forms of **mutual exclusion and intercultural tensions.**

The 'in principle' position pursued in this paper follows the intellectual arguments made within theories of **global citizenship** (e.g. Davis 2006) and **cosmopolitanism** (e.g. Appiah 2006) where the true binding glue for diverse societies does not only reside within nationalistic, normative citizenship articulations, but rather within a more **global**

approach emphasising our **shared human experiences and aspirations**. Such considerations of the shared and interconnected human experience must be pursued and promoted through UNESCO-led initiatives in a manner that takes precedence over narrower individual and group-based affiliations premised, for example, on race, religion, nationality or other social markers.

In other words, our **consciousness** should not simply be based on a premise of support for fellow citizens but rather on a personal commitment to social justice and an **ethics of care** oriented towards fellow **human beings.** The argument here is that any new framing of citizenship approaches must be **global** and **holistic,** and reflect the universality and interconnectedness of human experiences, whilst acknowledging the specificities of the socio-political environment within which they occur.

The capacity of 'global citizenship' to create global consciousness and intercultural understanding

Global citizenship has been invoked in the context of increased levels of diversity in the global era. In particular, it has been noted that existing 'local' social policies do not always take into account the fact that many people are nowadays connected to **'transnational communities'** with deep transnational ties, allowing them to maintain collective cultural identities and practices that transcend the boundaries of the nation-sate. These and other political implications of transnationalism represent significant challenges to national conceptions of citizenship with their concept of territorial demarcation and spatial fixity. But in order to overcome these limitations and reflect the **multiple identifications** facilitated through transnational practices, alternative (and often overlapping) frameworks for citizenship have been explored and advanced since the 1980s such as **post-national, multicultural, cosmopolitan, and global** articulations of citizenship. Though some of these concepts

Openness towards and acceptance of cultural diversity:

Education programs, whether they be formal or non-formal, should pursue as a matter of principle an agenda that has diversity and social justice as two of its key driving principles (Keddie 2012). As such, education programs within a Global Citizenship framework should be designed to ensure a diversity of stakeholders who are valued through their active involvement. Issues of power and representation become important aspects of such programs. One can argue whether international exchange programs are examples of global citizenship practice when so few programs actually involve North-South exchange. As a key distinguishing dimension of various UNESCO activities, the nature and directionality of such exchanges should encompass more representations and active input from the so-called developing South with its unique voices, perspectives and experiences.

Promoting universal human rights and ethical responsibility within diverse settings:

It may be seen that Global Citizenship inherently includes themes associated with human rights, gender equality, civic values and social peace. Indeed, *these interrelated features of Global Citizenship are all aimed at promoting an active respect for socio-cultural pluralism in all its manifestations.* An overarching theme in many of the practical interventions identified in the literature was a promotion of the intrinsic value of cultural diversity. Such active support for cultural diversity is illustrated at the level of: (i) grassroots' partnerships between different groups; (ii) active intercultural contact programs in order to learn about the 'other'; and (iii) proactive involvement in local community practice designed to generate and support universal values.

Based on the broad discussion above, the following section briefly discusses the possible application of Global Citizenship - primarily in education - but also in other important areas of social policy.

Specific strategies for education-based implementation

Education is the most critical domain where Global Citizenship can and should be pursued as a heuristic pathway towards intercultural understanding and social conviviality. Education has the potential to engender **sustainable transformative positive change** in the way people think, behave and act vis-à-vis others. Whilst Global Citizenship education remains a significant challenge at the level of operationalised and measurable attainments (Oxfam 2006; Tawil 2013), we can perhaps think about the goals and practices of a Global Citizenship education in terms of micro-orientations, such as developing skills and competencies that allow us to be effective participants in the global marketplace. But more importantly, we can also think about these goals in terms of transformative orientations, such as deepening one's intercultural understandings and/or developing one's capacities to work within an equity and social justice framework.

In addition to 'curriculum' and classroom-based initiatives, education systems need also to be challenged in terms of their institutional governance, pedagogical arrangements and openness to their social environments. To this end, a Global Citizenship approach within education should also consider: (i) extra-curricular activities, non-formal education experiences and alternative learning traditions; (ii) the educational policy-making process itself (issues of leadership, power and representation); and (iii) the physical structure and organisation of educational systems (most notably the extent to which social, economic and cultural segregation are engendered).

The overall aim here is to challenge existing thinking and practice in order to systematically nurture and develop Global Citizenship competencies through whole-of-school transformative approaches. Focusing on pedagogical interventions, and through flexible and interactive courses, students can explore citizenship in the context of **globalisation and shared human values**, noting that Global Citizenship education can address local, national, regional and international issues.

Global Citizenship education can equip learners with knowledge and competencies to operate, work and participate in daily affairs not only as national citizens, but as global citizens. Such educational programs enable students to develop their own understandings of complex and contested meanings of globalisation and world order. Students can explore the factors that might hinder or facilitate the realisation of global citizenship. They are assisted to examine the impact of their actions, as well as their individual and collective responsibilities as global citizens, within their local, national and international communities. Learning outcomes for such pedagogic approaches to Global citizenship can include the following:

- **Global Awareness**: a knowledge of the inter-relatedness of local, global, international, and intercultural issues, trends and systems.

- **Critical Thinking**: an ability to discuss and engage in a multi-perspective analysis of local, global, international, and intercultural problems

- **Committed Engagement**: a willingness to engage, not only in local, but also in national and global affairs with a view of achieving international peace and intercultural understanding.

Media-based implementation

As has been witness in recent times of conflict, media can play a crucial role in shaping public debates and opinions about specific events. Any efforts to promote social responsibility and global ethics will not be optimally successful unless they include a serious media engagement. Some of the key questions to be explored here relate to the role the media can play in fostering the norms of a Global Citizenship: To what extent does the media contribute to the development of a global civil society? In what ways is the media and its supposed connection to global citizenship premised on the foundations of human rights?

Media acts as the institutional body that produces, transmits and interprets information sharing between the public and various bodies, including governments. The challenges to be considered for such a role include: creative applications of the media in areas such as conflict prevention, disaster relief, and international relations; working with media outlets from different countries and from diverse platforms, the main objective here will be on the necessity for diversity of voices, multiplicity of perspectives; and an attachment to ethical representations in pursuing media coverage. This can be addressed through workshops/webinars which:

- narrate **powerful human** stories about people who live outside of our "sphere of affections" is one possible way **to bridge that gap**.

- access a selection of '**journalistic and literary narratives**' that can **bridge the knowledge and the emotional gaps** between distant (un-connected) individuals, and in the process contribute to the notion of global citizenship.

Global Citizenship agendas for democratic governance and cosmopolitan citizenship

The philosophical foundations for exploring the relevance of Global Citizenship for democratic governance and cosmopolitanism can be found in grassroots deliberative processes and transnational practices and orientations that transcend the nation-state. Following the basic Kantian idea that human beings belong to a single moral community, and that there is a need to engage policy-makers, leaders and educators (through workshops and professional development programs) to critically examine the potential and limitations of the interconnected notions of **global governance**, **universal ethics** and **global civil society**. The aim therefore is:

- to explore how best to construct and pursue **optimal transformative social policies** that respond to 21st century complexities, and reflect the realities of the new **hyper-diverse** and **inter-connected** world we all live in.

- to critically analyse the implications of **new forms of political attachments** to the traditional nation-state (with its supposedly fixed political membership within defined borders); and

- to reflect on how new **transnational approaches** to governance can look beyond legal frameworks and exclusionary citizenship rights.

To pursue such an agenda, a combination of <u>on-site workshops</u> and carefully designed <u>webinars</u>, delivered to a select group of decision-makers from a diverse cohort of backgrounds, can be used as the key tools for pursuing these transformative objectives.

Implementation within Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):

Global Citizenship within large corporations and multinationals (often referred to in this context as corporate citizenship or corporate social responsibility CSR) is fundamental to sustaining growth and profitability, although this is dependent, to a large extent, on the state of the global political, economic, environmental and social landscape. Global corporate citizenship should be pursued as both an <u>organizing principle</u> and a <u>strategic imperative</u>. In particular, it has a major role to play in promoting global citizenship ethics within an environment that has historically been concerned with profits and bottom lines. This can be pursued at many levels including (i) the level of corporate governance practices; (ii) recruitment policies; and (iii) investment options.

For multinational corporations, developing the required skills, knowledge and expertise for achieving global citizenship outcomes can be realised through a multitude of activities including among others:

- Global summits involving key/major corporations e.g. Resources/minerals corporations; automotive companies; Information Technology giants etc...;

- Series of networking workshops focussing on different modules associated with global corporate citizenship;

- Online-interactive resources with follow up webinars involving different cohorts of corporations.

Conclusion:

This paper provides some reflections on the concept of Global Citizenship at both the theoretical and practical levels. It is worth remembering that in the end 'citizenship', irrespective of its level of articulation (i.e. national, international, global etc.) remains an issue that reflects a status, a feeling and a practice (Osler 2010) that is intrinsically interlinked. In a way, legal status (formal citizenship) allows individuals to form a sense of belonging within a political community, empowering them to act and perform their citizenship within the spatial domains of the nation-state to which they happen to belong.

Global Citizenship asks these same individuals, not so much to neglect these notions of belonging and practice linked to a particular locale, but to extend such affinities beyond the territorial boundaries of their formal national membership. As such, Global Citizenship espouses a performative citizenship that is at once democratic and ethical, and which aims at achieving social peace and sustainable justice for all.

As the lead educational and cultural agency within the United Nations, UNESCO is ideally placed to build cross-cultural bridges and pursue sustainable social peace at the global level allowing and empowering various stakeholders to work together towards a genuine rapprochement of cultures and countries for the benefit of humanity at large.

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