Cultivating Global Citizenship And Intercultural Competence In "Super-Diversified" School Settings

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Abstract:

Background: According to the United Nations¹, roughly one in ten people worldwide is an internal or international migrant and one in eighty has fled conflict, wars, natural disasters or persecution. In this regard, global citizenship education and intercultural education has a pivotal role to play in order to help migrants/refugees adapt to the dominant cultural and social norms of the receiving country; prepare host populations to receive immigrants and refugees encouraging empathy, acceptance and compassion; and make educational, politic and social interventions in order to prevent marginalized groups and communities from xenophobia, biases, discriminations and violent extremism.

Materials and Methods: In this vein, this research study comes to highlight findings in relation to issues of global citizenship education in super-diversified school settings. For the needs of the study, the qualitative methodology was followed and semi-structured interviews were conducted by following the convenient sampling technique. The sample consisted of ten teachers working in the primary education in the prefecture of Achaia. The interview protocol was based on the UNESCO's definition of global citizenship education in terms of three domains of learning: the cognitive, the socioemotional and the behavioral. Therefore, the research questions focus on teachers' perceptions regarding the knowledge and skills needed to understand the world and its complexities, the values and attitudes that enable learners to co-exist respectfully and peacefully with others; the practices applied at school that could probably contribute to the development of global citizenship.

Results: According to the findings, the participants suggest topics, such as current events, refugees, immigrants, poverty, human rights and culture. In addition, they recognize the skills and values of empathy, tolerance, openness and respect. Finally, the practices applied are mostly projects, differentiated teaching, discussions, food festivals, myths, stories telling and role-play.

Conclusion: The role of teachers is of major importance, since their principles, values, notions, attitudes and knowledge define and shape the practices they apply in the learning and teaching process.

Key Word: Global citizenship education; Intercultural competence; Knowledge; Skills; Values; Practices.

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I. Introduction

Social, economic and political globalization, intense demographic changes, crises, wars, the advent of the 4rth industrial revolution and the dominance of technical civilization are among the factors that have caused confusing and clouding national lines. Particularly, with regard to the demographic changes, migration and displacement are on increase, since more that 65 million people are today asylum seekers, internally displaced individuals or refugees, and more than 280.000.000 human beings "constantly driven by their instinct for survival and better livelihood opportunities, live in different countries from those they were born in"² (p. 1).

In this vein, not only diversity but super-diversity dominates, a term used to describe the changes not only in social, cultural, linguistic and religious patterns but also, in the ways in which these patterns are combined with gender, age, motivation, pattern of migrants, legal status and migration histories^{3,4,5}.

Therefore, the indisputable model for civic identity seems to collapse, a new landscape of strong interdependence and convergence of cultures is prevailing, more and more diverse and cosmopolitan identity models emerge^{6,7}, whereas "national identity and citizenship have often been conflated because they both indicate a sense of belonging"⁸ (p. 54).

As a direct response by education systems, several nations have begun adding curriculum content aimed at cultivating knowledge, values and attitudes of a global orientation⁹, and seek to prepare students to navigate in global, multicultural and multilingual settings¹⁰.

Education, as highlighted by the international organizations, could contribute to fostering peaceful and inclusive societies, function as a tool to prevent human rights violation, racial and religious intolerance, and ensure stability, social justice and equality for all¹¹. Towards this direction, global citizenship education and intercultural

education are presented as a potential framework for dialogue, social cohesion and justice, creation of a universal identity, and a plural culture based on the values of a liberal society¹².

Preparing globally and interculturally engaged citizens is of major importance in Greece, since approximately 41.266 people recognized as refugees arrived in the country during 2023, whereas the total number of refugees having arrived in Greece over the last five years is 159.512¹³. In addition, the 2021 population census reported that 10.432.481 people are permanent residents of Greece, and it was also estimated that migrant citizens accounted for 11.34% of the total population. The majority of ethnic groups in Greece are mostly Albanian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Pakistani, Georgian, Ukrainian, Russian, Armenian, Syrian and Afghani^{14,2}.

Abiding by that, this research study comes to investigate teachers' perceptions regarding the knowledge and skills needed to understand the world and its complexities; the values and attitudes that enable learners to coexist respectfully and peacefully with others; the practices applied at school that could probably contribute to the development of global citizenship.

Displaced people and children on the move are one of the most vulnerable groups in Europe today, as they face persistent violations of their human rights, limited access to education, failures in appointing effective guardianship, family separation, demeaning age assessment procedures and confusing application procedures (Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child, 2016-2021). In addition, some serious queries emerge regarding the quality and relevance of provided and quite often interrupted education, transferring skills, competencies and qualifications to new contexts^{15,16}, learning gaps, inappropriate and not right skills¹⁷, exclusion of their culture and language¹⁸.

In view of Education 2030 and specifically the Sustainable Development Goal 4, inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all should be assured. Furthermore, the Agenda 2030 is calling for the promotion of a culture of peace, appreciation of diversity through education and global citizenship.

In an attempt define global citizenship, it is shown that there are many different conceptualizations and orientations. Still, it is generally addressed as a response to new global imperatives¹⁹, and related to some other concepts, such as global consciousness, world citizenship and global cosmopolitanism. In addition, over the last decades, there has been an interest in defining or mediating identities in the age of globalization²⁰.

James Banks²¹ (p. 368) describes four categories of citizenship which are interrelated, and can "describe and analyze any racial, ethnic, cultural, social class, or religious group". The proposed typology includes the failed citizenship, the recognized citizenship, the participatory citizenship and the transformative citizenship. Specifically, individuals or groups who experience failed citizenship could become recognized citizens in case they are provided with "increased recognition and structural inclusion" (p. 368). Following, recognized individuals may become participatory citizens in various sections, whereas participatory citizens could become transformative citizens when they take action to promote fundamental human rights.

In this context, citizenship education puts emphasis on civic, social, political and economic virtues. Specifically, courage, law-abidingness, loyalty, autonomy, open-mindedness), capacity to analyze and criticize and work ethic are promoted and cultivated through education policies and practices²².

Unlike citizenship education, which mostly concerns the construction of national identity, global citizenship education embraces all forms of citizen education, i.e., development education, human rights education, education for sustainability, education for peace and intercultural education. Furthermore, it has a transformative dimension, by building appropriate knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that learners need in order to coexist peacefully and harmoniously²², "promising implications for conflict-affected and divided societies" ²³ (p. 1), whereas it aims to cultivate students' sense of belonging in a community, commitments and responsibilities that transcend the national boundaries²³. In addition, it is offered as a strong framework for dialogue, structured discussion and creation of a common identity⁸.

Following, Veugelers²⁴ supports three forms of modern global citizenship: the open global citizenship according to which the global world has become smaller, more interdependent and "with more possibilities for cultural diversity" (p. 476); the moral global citizenship which promotes human rights and "recognizes responsibility for the global as a whole" (p. 476), endorsing a model of universalism, multiculturalism and humanitarianism²²; the social-political global citizenship which seeks to change political power relations with regard to equality and cultural diversity appreciation.

Towards this direction, we could emphasize on one more approach to global citizenship education, the competency-based approach, which is based on the human capital theory and focuses on individual's development. The basic dimensions of human development are related to those that directly improve human abilities, such as health, knowledge, resources, and those that create the conditions for human development and prosperity: active participation in political community, environmental sustainability, security and human rights^{25,26,27}. Educational topics of competency-based approach are global economy, international politics, foreign languages, linguistic proficiency²².

Similarly, Andreotti (2006) as cited in⁹ (p.11) distinguishes soft and critical global citizenship education. In the first case, education fosters students' understanding of the world and cultural tolerance, whereas the critical

form, which explains global citizenship on the basis of critical theory and post-colonialism²², requires a deeper engagement with issues involving conflict, power, and opposing views; to understand the nature of assumptions; and to strive for change. According to this perspective, focusing only on the dimension of knowledge is not sufficient enough to resolve current global issues.

Based on Delors report, the UNESCO defines global citizenship education in terms of the learning, cognitive, socioemotional and behavioral domains. The basic pillars of the cognitive domain are acquiring knowledge and critical thinking about global, regional, national and local issues, understanding of global conditions and current events, experiential understanding of intercultural communication, the interconnectedness and interdependency of different countries and populations, whereas topics of interest could be human rights, gender equality, poverty, trade migration, inequality, environment, conflict, cultural differences and stereotypes, geopolitics, pollution, intercultural relations, languages, arts, traditions and norms. Furthermore, numerous and digital skills, communication skills in intercultural contexts, adaptability are considered to be of crucial importance as well^{28,29,30}.

With regard to the socioemotional domain, it is important for students to learn to live together, to have a sense of belonging to a common humanity, sharing values, empathy, solidarity and respect for differences and diversity²². Values serve as standards that people use both consciously and unconsciously in order to think, behave, act and interact. Identifying with one's country culture and values, supporting that one's worldview is one of many equally valid worldviews, and considering ourselves valuable to our country and society are among the most important values of global citizenship education³¹.

Finally, as far as the behavioral domain is concerned, it is important for citizens to learn to do, to act effectively and responsibly at local, national and global level for a more peaceful and sustainable world. Both individual and collective actions should be taken by demonstrating ethically responsible behavior²².

II. Material And Methods

This research study comes to investigate teachers' perceptions regarding the knowledge and skills needed to understand the world and its complexities (cognitive dimension), the values and attitudes that enable learners to co-exist respectfully and peacefully with others (socioemotional dimension); the practices applied at school that could probably contribute to the development of global citizenship (behavioral dimension).

The qualitative methodology was followed, through which nonnumerical data are collected, analyzed and interpreted in order to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of social interest^{32,33}. In addition, the principles of the constructivism were applied, as the worldview is obtained through experiences and interaction³⁴.

As far as ethics considerations were concerned, the informed consent took the form of a dialogue that mutually attempted to shape the results; the research was conducted in a manner that minimized potential harm to the participants; confidentiality was assured; finally, building trust between the researcher and the participants was considered of utmost importance³³.

Sample size: The sample of the study consisted of ten (N=10) primary school teachers, working in the region of Achaia, during the academic year 2023-2024. The convenient sampling process was followed, as the main criteria for sample collection was the accessible population for the researcher and the participants' characteristics needed for the research³⁴.

Data collection and analysis: Semi-structured interviews were adopted, as an informal and conversational research tool with an aim to "find out where the participants are coming from... what they have experienced... and to obtain more complex or personal information"³³ (p. 386). The questions of the interview protocol were created in alignment with the aforementioned research questions, relative theoretical framework and other similar research studies. They were also organized in four distinctive groups: the demographic and professional data; knowledge and skills; values and attitudes; practices. Finally, all interviews were face-to-face, and each of them lasted twenty minutes approximately.

Data analysis was proceeded through five stages: transferring of interviews to written texts; familiarizing with the data and responding them to each research question; coding, meaning that a conceptual definition was given to each part of the text; transition from coding to sections, meaning that similar codes were edited in more general concepts and subsections; data presentation³⁴. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the interviews were conducted in the Greek language, as it was the participants' mother tongue and easier for them to express their thoughts and ideas in this language.

III. Findings

In this section the research findings will be presented by starting with the participants' demographic and professional data, and then continuing with the findings per each research question. Concerning their demographic traits, seven out of the ten participants were female and three were male; their age ranged from 32-55 years; their

years of service at public schools ranged from 8-25 years, and most of them (eight out of ten) had a postgraduate degree. Finally, all of them had some educational and working experience in multilingual and multicultural formal settings.

At the second part of the interviews, the involving teachers were called to deposit their perceptions regarding knowledge and skills that should foster in students in order to understand the world and its complexities. Their answers included issues related to environment, identities, religions, cultures, refugees, migration, globalization, pandemics, wars, peace, travelling, history, sustainability, human rights, social and soft skills, such as problem solving, decision-making, critical thought, communication, hard skills, digital skills and linguistic skills. Particularly:

P3: "It is not easy for me to define specific topics, because I think that this term describes everything that is happening all around the world: peace, violence, movements of people, refugees, pandemics, stereotypes, isolation, economy, crises... and of course human rights".

P8: "Well, I could focus on diversity, and globalization... I also try to discuss in my class events that are covered by the mass media... you know the war and conflicts in Ukraine or in Israel and Palestine". They want to discuss these topics with me. They are worried and they try to understand why they happen...".

P4: "I think that skills that could help them understand the world and its complexity are problem solving, thinking, reflecting, critical discussions... and not being passive, I mean active citizenship... of course learning foreign languages helps a lot as well".

P9: "Digital skills and technology help a lot to understand what is going on worldwide. Technology bridges people's wishes and needs".

P1: "I encourage them to talk about the environment, the climate change, the pollution..."

The next question focused on teachers' perceptions on the values and attitudes learners should cultivate and develop in order to learn to co-exist respectfully and peacefully with others. Their answers included values such as love, empathy, compassion, justice, human rights, tolerance, equality, inclusion, freedom, respect, responsibility. As far as the attitudes were concerned, they distinguished the positive attitudes (e.g., openness, flexibility, tolerance, solidarity) from the negative attitudes, which contribute to the emergence of stereotypes, prejudices, biases, discrimination, xenophobia, fear, threat, anxiety, anger and indifference. Particularly:

P1: "I think that the most important thing for students is to cultivate empathy, to understand and experience other's problems, to learn to communicate, to cooperate, to help and to listen ... after all what happens to other places and other societies, may become a reality for us as well..."

P2: "In some cases both teachers and students carry negative attitudes, stereotypes and biases. So, first they have to recognize these feelings, notions and fight against them. We should not be afraid of diversity... we should embrace it... nonetheless, we are all human beings with common needs...".

P7: "Well, I have experienced many times negative attitudes, such as xenophobia and racism from students, parents or even from some colleagues... you see negative attitudes towards refugees for instance are promoted by the media".

P10: "For me it is important to develop interaction, respect, tolerance and empathy".

With regard to the final section of the interviews, the practices applied usually vary depending on the educational setting, the demographic composition of students (sex, age, ethnicity), the school climate and culture, the leadership/administration style. The practices mentioned were learning based on projects and teaching approaches which promote active participation, differentiated teaching, translanguaging, audiovisual digital material, myths, life-stories, role-play, food and music festivals. Specifically:

P6: "... well, it depends on the age and on our relative experience. When my students are in the 1st or on the 2nd grade, I usually focus on using fairy tales, myths or some animations which mostly cultivate empathy. I often use some relative material from the UN Refugee Agency and the Global Refugee Forum. For students of 5th and 6th grade, we approach current issues through dialogue and critical discussion".

P5: "I usually organize some multicultural and multilingual events... parents are coming to school and they present something representative of their culture...they mostly prefer presenting a dance, a cooking recipe or describing their experience of displacement".

P2: "When I have new students, I let them use their mother tongue or another language, such as English, especially when they are older, or even the google translate...communication is our first priority".

P3. "For me it is important to encourage my students to work as a team, to cooperate with other schools or with other classes mostly through the implementation of projects... of course almost all my colleagues are doing the same thing... and our principal is very supportive".

P1: "What I try to do is to encourage my students adopt active behavior through social and environmental projects... We have participated in actions such as planting trees, collecting litter, protecting animals' rights...".

IV. Discussion

This study reveals some interesting findings regarding the implementation of global citizenship education in the Greek context, which is getting more and more diversified. Summarizing the aforementioned findings, it is visible that the knowledge topics proposed by the participants are in alignment with the international discourse of the OECD^{28,30} and the UNESCO²² and cover an interdisciplinary knowledge base on global issues and current events^{35,36,37}. Still, there are some more dimensions that could have been revealed, such as the issue of inequality, poverty, well-being, history, geography, trade migration and geopolitics^{28,30}. Towards this direction, a similar quantitative research study where 350 primary education teachers were asked to declare topics of global education that they should be trained in, showed that most of them focused on diversity, environment, geography, interculturalism, current events, international development immigrants, economy, human rights, culture, religion and history³⁸.

Following, and with regard to the attitudes and values learners should cultivate and develop in order to learn to co-exist respectfully and peacefully with others they referred to those mostly described by the relative bibliography. In addition, it is revealed that the values and attitudes of global citizenship education are often intertwined with those of multicultural and intercultural education³⁹. Openness, critical thinking, responsibility, communication, cooperation, empathy, international orientation, respect and tolerance, seeing things differently are fundamental principles of interculturalism as well⁴⁰. These values should permeate the content of education, the process of knowledge production, the leadership of education, but also the culture of the school unit and the social structure⁴¹.

Providing students with appropriate knowledge, skills and values, which constitute the cultural tool kits, they are enabled to understand and facilitate learning that is built on experiences different from their own, but also to go beyond the stage of simple intercultural and global experience.

Finally, with regard to the practices applied by the participants in order to cultivate and promote global citizenship, they focused on food and music festivals, projects, differentiated teaching, translanguaging, discussion, audiovisual digital material, myths, life-stories and role-play. This finding is mostly in alignment with the ones of other similar studies. Specifically, structured debates, proposed by the OECD²⁸, give students the opportunity to defend opposing positions on global issues and to approach them in a critical way, developing simultaneously their communication skills. In addition, current events discussions enable students understand how global events affect their local communities, whereas role-play encourages teamwork, collaboration and decision-making.

Furthermore, Antoniadou's effort⁴² to investigate teachers' practices while teaching refugee children, shows that they use material tailored to their students' needs and apply a wide variety of methods. Indicatively, they attend seminars, they seek for relative video material, internet resources, pictures and songs, and even try to communicate by using students' mother tongue. In this vein, international school partnerships, participation in drama performances, sports teams, digital story telling afford culturally and linguistically diverse students to view the world through different lenses and experience academic progress and success^{43,44}.

In any case, sharing one's understanding of injustice, xenophobia, intolerance through structured discussion and intercultural dialogue is part of a self-reflection process⁴⁵. On the contrary, displaying countries on the map, learning their languages, customs, famous actors, poets, athletes and recipes is a superficial approach to multiculturalism⁴³ and barely contributes to critical awareness.

V. Conclusion

Global citizenship education and cultivating intercultural competence seek to equip learners with all those values, knowledge and skills that are based on respect for human rights, social justice, inclusion, tolerance, sustainability, prosperity and well-being^{46,47}. The role of teachers is of major importance, since their principles, values, notions, attitudes and knowledge define and shape the practices they apply in the learning and teaching process. Though, it is important to take into consideration that the "concept of global citizenship is not free of political and academic criticism"⁹ (p.10. Thus, some risks associated with global citizenship are the following: "it would benefit mostly members of elite groups; weaken national identities by providing citizens with an alternative identity"⁹ (p.10). Finally, and expanding upon work of postcolonial and decolonial scholars (e.g., Santos, Andreotti), knowledge is not enough to bring about critical social change⁴⁸. Thus, "the struggle for global social justice must therefore be a struggle for global cognitive justice as well"⁴⁸ (p. 48).

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