

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP
Developing a Sense of Responsibility for Global Issues and Promoting Cooperation
and Solidarity across Cultures

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Abstract

The 21st century is defined by interdependence and global challenges such as climate change, inequality, pandemics, migration, and conflict, which transcend national borders and demand shared responsibilities. Traditional notions of citizenship, rooted solely in nationality, are increasingly insufficient to address these realities. This paper explores the concept of global citizenship as both an ethical framework and a practical necessity for fostering responsibilities toward global issues, cross-cultural cooperation, and solidarity. Grounded in cosmopolitanism and critical global citizenship education, it highlights the cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral dimensions required for effective engagement. Emphasizing values of justice, equity, human rights, and interdependence, the study examines how education, intercultural dialogue, civic participation, and institutional reform can cultivate global citizens equipped to confront pressing global crises. While challenges such as nationalism, inequality, and misinformation persist, global citizenship offers a transformative pathway for building empathy, solidarity, and collective action toward a just, peaceful, and sustainable future.

Keywords: Global citizenship, sense of responsibility, promoting cooperation, solidarity and cultures

Introduction

The contemporary world faces a myriad of global challenges, including climate change, migration, pandemics, poverty, inequality, and geopolitical conflict. These challenges

transcend national borders and demand shared responsibility and collective action. The 21st century is marked by profound interdependence. No nation or community remains untouched by global problems-from climate change to pandemics, from technological disruption to economic instability. In such a context, the traditional notion of citizenship, rooted in state boundaries and legal status, is increasingly insufficient. This shift has prompted renewed interest in the concept of global citizenship, which refers to recognition of belonging to a global community and a commitment to act on issues of global concern (UNESCO, 2015; Andreotti, 2006).

Brown, (2017) holds that global citizenship combines awareness, responsibility, and active engagement. It promotes values such as human rights, cultural diversity, peace, sustainability, and shared responsibility. This current world is increasingly interconnected by globalization, technology, and migration, the concept of global citizenship has never been more relevant. Traditional notions of identity rooted solely in nationality are evolving to embrace a broader, more inclusive understanding of what it means to belong- not just to a country, but to the global human community.

Global citizenship emphasizes the need to develop a sense of responsibility for global issues, promote cross- cultural cooperation, and cultivate solidarity among people of diverse backgrounds. It further argues that global citizenship is not an abstract ideal, but a practical and ethical framework for addressing some of the most pressing challenges facing our planet-climate change, inequality, pandemics, conflict, and displacement. Global citizenship transcends political borders and ethnic divisions. It is based on the recognition that all human beings share a common humanity, and that the rights, dignity, and well-being of individuals anywhere affect people everywhere. Oxfam, (2015) defined a global citizen as someone who:

- Is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen.
- Respects and values diversity.
- Has an understanding of global issues.
- Is willing to act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place.

Major characteristics of Global Citizens:

- Empathy: The ability to understand and share the feelings of people from different cultures.
- Critical consciousness: Awareness of the social, political, and economic forces shaping our world.
- Action orientation: A commitment to taking informed action in solidarity with others.

Theoretical Foundations of Global Citizenship

a. Cosmopolitanism

The philosophical roots of global citizenship lie in cosmopolitanism, the idea that all human beings belong to a single moral community. Greek philosopher Diogenes famously declared, "I am a citizen of the world." Later thinkers like Immanuel Kant (1795) argued for a *cosmopolitan right*- a legal and moral framework for peaceful coexistence among nations and individuals.

Modern cosmopolitan theorists such as David Held (2010) and Martha Nussbaum (1996) advocate for universal moral obligations beyond borders, emphasizing global justice, human dignity, and institutional reform. Cosmopolitanism provides the moral justification for global citizenship, positing that ethical concern should not be limited by geography or nationality.

b. Critical Global Citizenship Education (GCE)

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) aims to equip individuals with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to navigate and contribute to an interconnected world (UNESCO, 2015). Andreotti (2006) distinguishes between *soft* and *critical* GCE. While soft GCE promotes empathy and awareness, critical GCE encourages structural analysis, decolonial thinking, and active resistance to injustice. Critical GCE emphasizes that global citizenship is not just about charity or multiculturalism, but about interrogating power dynamics, understanding historical inequalities, and working toward systemic transformation.

The Ethical Foundations of Global Citizenship

UNESCO, (2015) posited that Global citizenship is rooted in universal ethical principles:

- Justice: Pursuing fairness across borders.
- Equity: Ensuring all people have access to the resources and opportunities necessary for a dignified life.
- Human Rights: Upholding the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed to all people.
- Interdependence: Recognizing that our actions have global consequences.

These values support the idea that citizenship is not merely a legal status, but a moral responsibility (Eja, 2021).

Dimensions of Global Citizenship

Eja, (2021) citing Campos, Goldstein and McKenzie, (2014) observed that Global citizenship comprises multiple interrelated dimensions:

1. Cognitive Dimension

This involves understanding global systems- economic, political, environmental, and cultural systems; recognizing how local actions affect global outcomes. It includes awareness of issues such as climate change, poverty, migration, and technological change.

2. Socio-Emotional Dimension

Global citizenship requires empathy, respect for diversity, and solidarity. It encourages seeing oneself in others and building intercultural understanding.

3. Behavioral Dimension

Beyond knowledge and empathy, global citizenship entails action-advocacy, civic participation, volunteering, and responsible consumption. It encourages collaboration across cultural and national lines to solve shared problems.

Global Issues Requiring Citizen Engagement

Nussbaum, (2010) further observes that Global citizens engage with a range of interlinked challenges, including:

- Climate Change: Rising temperatures, sea levels, and extreme weather events require cooperative solutions.

- Poverty and Inequality: Economic injustice persists across and within nations.
- Migration and Refugee Crises: Forced displacement calls for humane and coordinated responses.
- Health and Pandemics: COVID-19 revealed the fragility of health systems and the need for shared responsibility.
- Global Education: Disparities in access to quality education affect future generations and global stability.

Understanding these issues is the first step; taking action is the second.

Cultural Diversity and the Power of Solidarity

Council of Europe, (2008); Adeniran and Adebayo, (2019) observed in their respective works that Global citizenship is encouraging people to embrace cultural diversity not as a threat, but as strength. The ability to engage respectfully with people from different ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds is essential for peace and progress.

Solidarity is more than sympathy-it is an active alignment with others for justice. This may involve:

- Participating in interfaith dialogues.
- Supporting global development initiatives.
- Challenging xenophobia and racism.

Through solidarity, global citizens should build bridges where others erect barriers.

Education for Global Citizenship

UNFCCC, (1992); Omotola, (2013) and Oxfam, (2015); observed that Global citizenship is nurtured through education that promotes:

- Global awareness: Teaching students to understand global systems and interdependence.
- Critical thinking: Encouraging analysis of power structures and media narratives.
- Service learning: Combining classroom instruction with meaningful community engagement.
- Digital literacy: Understanding the impact of online actions and accessing diverse sources of information.

Educational institutions play a pivotal role in equipping learners with the skills and values needed for responsible global engagement.

Promoting Cooperation and Solidarity across Cultures

a. Intercultural Dialogue

Effective global citizenship relies on meaningful communication and mutual respect among cultures. Intercultural dialogue fosters appreciation of diversity, reduces prejudice, and enables cooperative problem-solving (Council of Europe, 2008). Dialogue promotes a shared humanity while respecting cultural specificity.

b. Shared Responsibility and Collective Action

The principle of shared but differentiated responsibility underpins global cooperation, especially in climate and development agreements (UNFCCC, 1992; Idris, 2018; United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT, 2020). While all have a stake in global problems, capabilities and historical roles vary. Global citizenship supports solidarity—not only emotional or moral, but institutionalized through fair international systems.

c. Civic Participation in a Global Context

Civic engagement at the global level includes transnational advocacy networks, digital activism, global Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and participation in global movements like Fridays for Future or #BlackLivesMatter. These platforms exemplify how individuals and groups can mobilize across borders for justice.

Challenges to Global Citizenship

Andreotti, (2014) further observed that despite its promise, global citizenship faces numerous challenges:

- Nationalism, populism and isolationism: Rising populism in many countries promotes “us versus them” ideologies. The rise of exclusive national identities can weaken commitment to global concerns (Brown, 2017).
- Misinformation: Biased or false information can fuel division and apathy.
- Economic inequality: Marginalized groups may lack access to the resources needed to participate globally.

- **Structural Inequality:** Power asymmetries in global institutions often marginalize voices from the Global South.
- **Digital Divides and Misinformation:** Unequal access to information and the spread of fake news undermine informed global discourse.
- **Tokenism in Education:** Without critical reflection, GCE can become superficial, failing to address real injustices.

Overcoming these barriers requires commitment from individuals, institutions, and governments alike.

Strategies for Cultivating Global Citizenship

Appiah, (2006) and UNESCO, (2015) in their respective dispositions suggested that some of the following strategies could be used to cultivate global citizenship

1. Education Systems

Formal and informal education systems must integrate global citizenship as a core competency. Curricula should foster global awareness, ethical reasoning, collaborative skills, and media literacy. Experiential learning- such as service learning, model UN, and exchange programs-can deepen understanding and empathy (Oxfam, 2015).

2. Media and Technology

Social media and digital platforms can be leveraged to connect individuals globally, promote awareness campaigns, and foster cross-cultural exchanges. However, media literacy is essential to navigate misinformation and polarization.

3. Institutional Reform

Global governance institutions must be democratized to reflect the voices of marginalized populations. Accountability, equity, and representation are crucial for meaningful global solidarity.

4. **Staying informed:** Following reputable international news sources.

5. **Consuming ethically:** Supporting fair trade and sustainable brands.

6. **Volunteering locally with global impact:** Many local actions ripple outward.
7. **Participating in advocacy:** Campaigning for global justice through petitions, protests, or policy engagement.
8. **Practicing empathy:** Listening to stories from people of different backgrounds.

Everyday choices shape the kind of world we co-create.

Conclusion

Global citizenship offers a compelling framework for addressing 21st-century challenges. Rooted in universal values of justice, human rights, and shared responsibility, it transcends borders and identities. However, to move from aspiration to reality, it must be cultivated intentionally- through education, intercultural engagement, civic action, and institutional change. As we navigate a complex and interconnected world, developing a sense of global responsibility and solidarity is not just a moral ideal- it is a practical necessity for sustainability, peace, and shared prosperity. Global citizenship is not a destination-it is a lifelong journey marked by awareness, empathy, responsibility, and action. It asks individuals to look beyond their immediate surroundings and act as stewards of humanity and the planet. In this era marked by global crises and deep divides, embracing global citizenship is not just wise; it is essential for a more just, peaceful, and sustainable future

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