

GCE Serving Sustainable Development and Ecological Justice

Introduction

In 1992, the Earth Summit launched the great debate on the environment. The Rio Declaration produced by this summit insisted on citizen participation as an essential means of resolving ecological issues and challenges. It also underlined the importance of mobilizing young people and leveraging their creativity for a more inclusive and sustainable world. Thirty years later, the situation is not encouraging. There is no clear global consensus on what is to be done to deal with the serious problem of global warming. The measures recommended by numerous international conferences to preserve biodiversity are no match for concrete policies on the ground (deforestation, extractivist practices, etc.).

However, we can be encouraged by the fact that there is a vast global movement, led mainly by young people, urging humanity to confront the problem head on, as we saw during the major demonstrations in September 2020 in response to the appeal by the young Greta Thunberg.

But back to our main issue, education. In 2015, the United Nations called on all states to mobilize in support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among the 17 priority objectives to put the world back on the path of inclusive and sustainable development, educational reform is a major component. These objectives cannot be achieved without the committed support of the people. It is therefore absolutely necessary that education for global citizenship be an integral part of all events organized by the United Nations, including on the climate. And that COP27 itself be the initiator!

This document is organized around three main parts. The first part covers the definitions, approaches and foundations of global citizenship education. The second part discusses education as a lever for sustainable development and ecological justice. The last part presents learning and awareness activities, on the one hand, and additional resources, on the other.

What is GCE ?

After a long incubation, Global Citizenship Education (GCE) has become an increasingly widespread concept in the world. Where are we at today ?

According to UNESCO, GCE “aims to equip learners of all ages with those values, knowledge and skills that are based on and instill respect for human rights, social justice, diversity, gender equality and environmental sustainability.” Thus, it can be divided into several forms of education, including international development, human rights education, public education, intercultural education, education for international solidarity, education on the environment and sustainable development, etc.



FIGURE 1: DIMENSIONS OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION
Source: Nassif-Gouin and Tousignant, 2017

In practice, GCE is structured around five approaches (Nassif -Gouin and Tousignant, 2017):

- 1. Overall school approach:** GCE issues are explicitly mentioned in the priorities of the school and are written into the school's policies.
- 2. Transversal approach:** GCE is taught horizontally so that several disciplines interact. Each discipline establishes a link with its specific subject matter while ensuring overall consistency.
- 3. Independent approach:** GCE is vertically taught and each teacher is responsible for teaching according to the specific objectives of his or her discipline.
- 4. Non-formal approach in an educational setting:** GCE is implemented through ad hoc initiatives which are illustrated by the partnerships between schools and stakeholders in society.
- 5. Non-formal approach in a community setting:** GCE is implemented by the use of ad hoc or sustainable initiatives through community centres and summer schools.

The UN's Agenda 2030 (the Sustainable Development Goals) places education at the heart of its agenda. A key objective recalls the role of global citizenship and education in the development of the knowledge and skills required to achieve the other objectives (Council of Europe, 2019).

Global Citizenship Education refers to a paradigm of thought that will enable us to understand the issues and challenges facing the world and the way in which they are interconnected. In practice, it is presented as a lever for societal commitment towards a peaceful, prosperous, inclusive and sustainable world. Moreover, the promotion of peace, the defence of human rights, the fight against inequality, and environmental protection are the four main themes of GCE, all of which are transversal issues insofar as they pertain to more than one topic.

Global citizenship education is designed to remedy the gaps observed in educational systems. On the one hand, issues of globalization and awareness of today's realities are not considered relevant in national programs. On the other hand, the educational model, which is supposed to lead to cooperation and solidarity between nations and peoples, provides a patchwork education, making it difficult to recognize the interconnections between peoples, and in particular the political, economic, ethnic, cultural and religious interdependencies.

Because of the separation of topics and categorization of materials, most formal educational systems hierarchize learning. The division generated by these compartmentalized and fragmented systems prevents the educator or learner from being at the centre of a connected world. Consequently, it is one of the main reasons why the construction of bridges for exchange and intercultural dialogue appears to be such a laborious task (Council of Europe, 2019).

However, through reflective learning and consideration of multiple perspectives, global citizenship education promises a profound structural change, both in thinking and in sensitivities and behaviours. This provides for the interconnection as well as the implementation of all the resources needed to ensure greater ecological justice between nations and peoples.

To get to this point, it is necessary to proceed through four essential steps:

- 1. An analysis of the current world situation**
- 2. A reflection on the models likely to replace the current dominant models**
- 3. The strengthening of a series of skills promoting a democratic culture**
- 4. A process of evolution towards responsible global citizenship**

Sustainable Development and Ecological Justice

Our Mother Earth is confronted with unprecedented ecological challenges. There is a permanent need for a popular commitment to sustainable development and ecological justice. However, if this is to be achieved, education must become one of the levers to build awareness and consciousness of the urgency of discovering alternative models of society.

Ecological Issues and Challenges

Two billion human beings suffer from malnutrition, and 25,000 persons, including more than 10,000 children, die of hunger each day. Meanwhile, the global population continues to grow, and is expected to reach 10 billion by 2050. The problem is not a lack of resources since food production and available natural resources are sufficient to support this growth in a sustainable manner, provided that a production and consumption model centred on respect for ecosystems is developed.

Since the Earth Summit in 1992, it must be acknowledged that the consumption of natural resources, including fossil fuels, has continued to increase. Many current agricultural practices deplete land, destroy biodiversity, put excessive pressure on water reserves and result in loss of natural habitat. Economic actors, in particular multinational corporations, operate to the detriment of small peasants, indigenous peoples and rural women. Without doubt, productivism and consumerism damage nature. Wherever we look we see rising tensions: climate refugees, hunger riots, rural exodus, the rise of extremism and identity conflicts, the construction of walls, reinforced security policies, massive drownings in the Mediterranean and shipwrecks in many other parts of the world are the ultimate expression of the global human drama. In the meantime, climatic contrasts are accentuating. While some regions experience rainfall that causes catastrophic flooding, others are faced with exceptional drought. Water becomes a challenge not only locally but also internationally.

In the North as in the South, ecological transition must make it possible to build an economic and social model which renews our ways of consuming, producing, working and living together. The goal is no longer “economic prosperity” but rather “well-being.” In other words, to produce goods and services while limiting the consumption and overexploitation of water, and using energy sources that create a balanced ecosystem between humans and the world. Thus, the balance between us and our needs as expressed by our relationship to the atmosphere, water, soil, living species, oceans, landscapes, becomes more important than economic exchanges and gains in productivity whatever the cost. It is therefore indeed an inversion of the currently accepted system of values.

Sustainable Development

The Agenda 2030 of the UN (The Sustainable Development Goals) are the result of a global mobilization that took place between 2013 and 2014 in which representatives of institutions, NGOs and governments of the world participated. Seventeen sustainable development objectives were identified, each with their own priorities, targets, and monitoring mechanisms, that all governments of the world were to pursue while taking into account the specific national environment (Council of Europe, 2019).

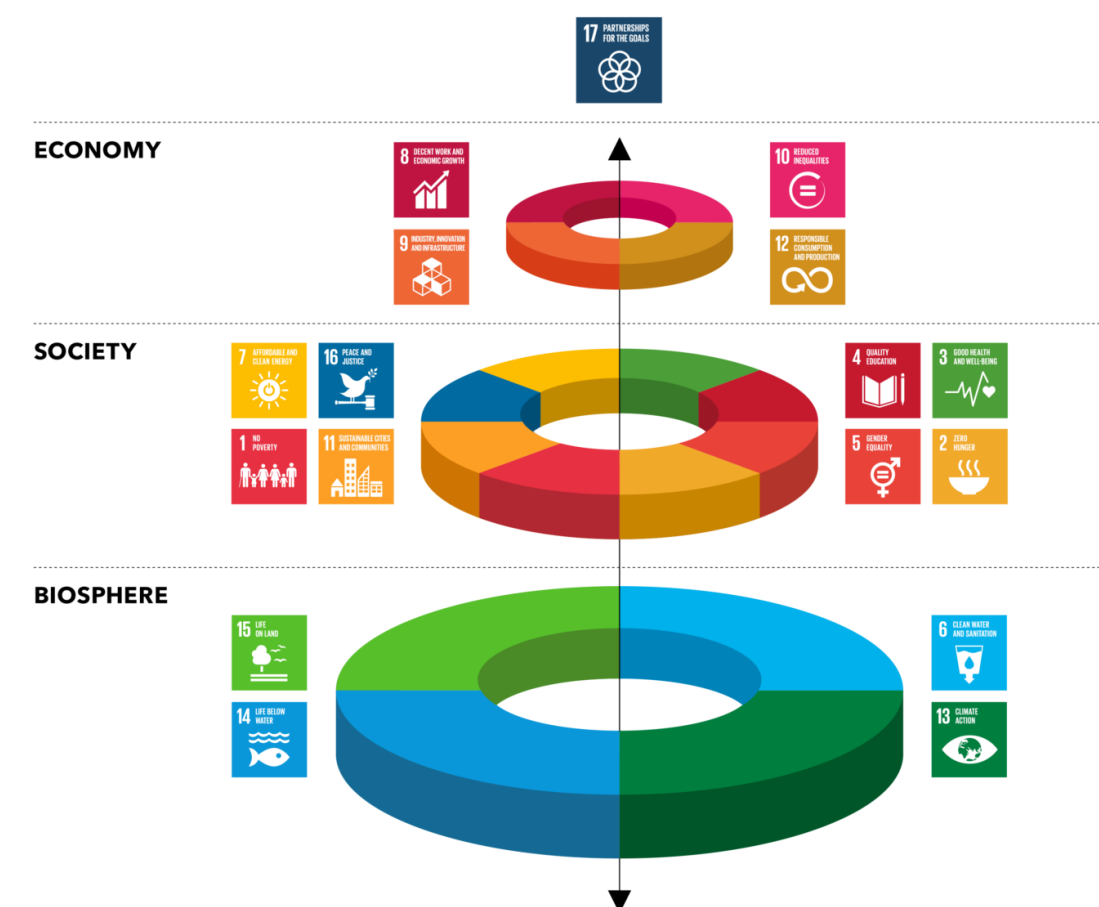


FIGURE 2: ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSIONS OF SDGs
Source: Council of Europe, 2019

Ecological Justice, A Transversal Issue

In practice, ecological justice is a social movement that mobilizes in response to various ecological crises, in particular by defending the rights of communities that are the victims of inequalities (Talbot, 2019).



FIGURE 3: GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AT THE CENTRE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES
Source: Council of Europe, 2019

In the past, we used to talk about climate justice. Now we are talking more about ecological justice. It is clear that justice and ecology, taken individually, do not suffice if we are to think about and implement solutions to climate change. On the other hand, ecological justice recognizes the inter-connection and interdependence between all beings and reminds us of the responsibility shared by human beings, in this case the responsibility to coexist in harmony for the well-being of the planetary community.

To this end, ecological justice prioritizes human dignity, self-determination and the development of sustainable economies that are just for everyone in a world with limited resources. Today, many civic actions are unfolding around the world, such as the transition movement and the Family Farmer or Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model. In other words, environmental justice refers to a movement of citizen power the purpose of which is not just to denounce injustice but to propose and experiment with alternative models of society.

Sustainable Development and GCE

Global citizenship education involves participatory decision-making processes at all these stages. The educator and the learner are invited to examine with a critical eye the current issues and challenges and to explore the possible alternatives to remedy them. The goal is not only to tackle egocentrism, but above all, to develop a collective conscience through cooperation and solidarity.

As the educator and the learner are placed at the centre of the transformative learning process, global citizenship education promotes awareness of these actors as to the effects of their actions both locally and internationally. With this awareness, it is possible to effect changes that can bear upon the world situation, as well as to forge a global citizenship. In particular, through the use of participatory strategies designed to enable citizens to learn to assume responsibilities which cannot be the sole responsibility of governments.

To this end, global citizenship education is coherently articulated around different fields of action, namely, development education, human rights education, viability education, education for peace and conflict prevention, education for citizenship, education in gender equality and children's rights, intercultural and interfaith education, education in disarmament, social and economic education, environmental education, etc.

Toolbox



Activity 1 : What's New?

Explanation

What's new is speaking time in which to make a transition between the outside world and school. Students have the opportunity to speak openly about what pleases them and what bothers them.

Every morning, before starting the session, each student will have the opportunity to share an idea, tell a story or present a book. No student is obliged to speak, because it is indeed a free activity.

In order to ensure better functioning, it is suggested that the students themselves establish the principles and rules of the activity, such as how the speaking time of each student is to be organized.

Objectives

Allow students to get rid of what is bothering them in order to focus on learning.

Impacts

- What's new contributes to the development of group and student autonomy.
- This activity encourages speaking out, which gradually becomes more structured.
- The students understand that for everyone to have the right to speak, it is necessary to respect operating rules.

Skills to Develop

1. Speaking in public
2. Expressing one's thinking in a clear and concise way
3. Active listening
4. Knowing the rules of collective life and understanding that they are necessary for the activity to work

Duration: 30 minutes

Frequency: Every morning, or twice a week (First and last day of the week)

Format: In-person and online

Technological Tool

- Kumospace : <https://www.kumospace.com/>
- Mentimeter : <https://www.mentimeter.com/>
- Mural : <https://www.mural.co/>

Activity 2 : Class Council

Explanation

The students meet in order to participate in the class council. A president is chosen by drawing lots, but the student is free to refuse. In consultation with the other pupils, the chairman notes the questions to be discussed, namely the activity proposals as well as the operating principles and rules. The president gives the floor, refocuses the debate, calls to order and controls the time. If it turns out that a consensus is difficult to establish a decision is taken by majority vote. However, there is no obligation to vote. The class council also establishes the penalties in the event of non-compliance with what has been decided. The teacher and students write a report on what has been decided and post it in the classroom.

Objectives

- To teach pupils to manage themselves as a group.
- Giving expression to their needs and suggesting constructive proposals.

Impacts

- Enables each student to express his or her opinion.
- Gives the group the opportunity to find alternatives to the challenges and problems raised.

Skills to Develop

1. Speaking in public
2. Working in a team, which presupposes knowing how to listen, dialogue, and highlight your opinion
3. Singling out the problems and talking about them
4. Developing awareness and assuming responsibility

Duration: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Frequency: Once a week

Format: In-person and online

Technological tool

- Kumospace : <https://www.kumospace.com/>
- Mentimeter : <https://www.mentimeter.com/>
- Mural : <https://www.mural.co/>

Activity 3 : Cooperation

Explanation

Through this activity, the student learns to provide his or her help to the group and the community. Each student is responsible for a rotating service for his or her class and each class performs an annual role for the school. The first may be to sweep the classroom, clean the blackboard, put away the books or even empty the trash, while the second may be the installation of chairs when there is a theatre or a lecture at the school, picking up lost items, emptying the trash in the teachers' room, doing the dishes, etc.

Each week, the teachers appoint a student to check if the tasks have been completed correctly.

Objectives

- Taking responsibility.
- Involving students in the life of their class and their school.

Impacts

- Accountability.
- Improving self-discipline.
- General improvement of the school environment.

Skills to Develop

1. Becoming aware of the necessary contribution of each to the group
2. Knowing the rules of collective life and understanding that every human organization is based on codes of conduct that include cooperation and respect
3. Living together

Duration: 10 minutes

Frequency: Once a week

Format: In-person

Activity 4 : Solidarity

Explanation

Global citizenship education also involves solidarity activities. Each class is assigned a project to set up and tasks to be carried out. It must first be presented to the students and be brought to the attention of the other classes. Then, the class handles the collection of money, clothing, objects or other things. Finally, the class is responsible for giving this money to the responsible person, and depositing the objects in the containers, trucks, or boxes.

Objectives

Getting really involved in a project by defending it, presenting it, organizing a fundraising, in short, ensuring its management.

Impacts

- Accountability.
- The pupils become actors in a cause.
- Learning to organize and become involved.
- Sensitizing students to solidarity and respect for differences.

Skills to Develop

1. Learning to orient one's speech according to the communication situation.
2. Knowing how to communicate information, the steps taken and the results obtained.
3. Learning to work in a team.

Duration: Depending on the project, between 5 and 10 hours spread over two weeks.

Frequency: Once or twice per year

Format: In-person

Activity 5 : Sustainable Development

Explanation

Here is a whole set of small activities to be established in order to promote education for sustainable development:

1. A local seasonal fruit on Friday: Every Friday, the students bring as a snack for recess a fruit that is both seasonal and local: an apple from their grandmother's orchard, strawberries from their neighbour's garden, or even plums, grapes or pears from local production.
2. Recovery of school materials: The students keep their books for the duration of a cycle. They keep their pens, pencils, etc., from the year before. They use scrap sheets for some classroom activities, etc.
3. Waste sorting: This activity begins with the installation in each classroom of three different bins (paper cardboard, organic, and the large garbage can). A group of designated students empties the paper-cardboard bin in order to send it for recycling. The organic trash is emptied every week. Finally, the large garbage can is emptied every evening by the cleaners via the cooperative service system.
4. The rake: Each day, a class is assigned at the last recess to clean the playground. To do this, the children form a long line that runs the length of the playground, and cross it to collect all the waste they see.
5. Create a garden: The garden is an impressive way in which to mobilize students around a project, make them aware of organic, local and seasonal food, but also to tell them about the ecological footprint and waste.

Objectives

- To develop the planetary consciousness of the pupils, in order to give them the will and the capacity to act for their environment.
- Education for sustainable development is based on 3 pillars: society, environment and economy. The environment pillar is designed to make students aware of the fragility of the environment and the effects of humans on it. Through this, they should be made aware of climate change and the challenges of protecting the environment and biodiversity. The economic pillar should inform the students about the limits of economic growth and its negative effects on society and the environment. The pupils will thus be made conscious of the eco-responsible commitment.

Impacts

- Nurture the ecological awareness of students.
- Adopt conduct favourable to sustainable development.

Additional Resources

Additional Resources on Global Citizenship Education

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