

# Lynn Schneider

## Global Citizenship Education? An examination of UNESCO's latest hope for a peaceful world

By reviewing the 'Toolkit for measuring Global Citizenship Education', this essay critically examines the antagonistic roles and missions that are attributed to Global Citizenship Education (GCED). GCED is justified both, through a critical discourse that perceives education as a tool for challenging existing global inequalities, and through a neoliberal discourse in which GCED engages with global uncertainties by equipping individuals with the skills needed to contribute to global competitiveness and economic growth.

For example, critical approaches to GCED aim to create a global sense of belonging that fosters responsibility, mutual understanding, empathy and solidarity. Based on these objectives, GCED is frequently portrayed as both, the educational cure for gender inequalities, the cultural and economic tensions in today's globalised world and even for violent extremism (UNESCO 2017), as well as an important pedagogical tool to compensate for the inequalities perpetuated through educational systems. At the same time, however, GCED aims to foster a specific set of skills that enables individuals to flourish within the complex global structures of this Century (Toolkit 2017). Related learning objectives are reflected in the PISA Governing Board's decision to "include a global competencies dimension in the 2018 PISA Assessment", where countries will be ranked according to their students' preparedness "for the live and employment in culturally diverse societies", their level of exposedness to global news, as well as their ability to "understand and critically analyse intercultural and global issues" (OECD 2016, p. 3).

A review of the present assessments of GCED does not only reveal the pervasive dominance of the latter, neoliberal, approach to GCED, but also indicates that none of the present frameworks for GCED fundamentally challenge current education paradigms. The dominant reliance on purchasable assessment tools, as well as the prevalence of assessments that are based on competitions and other certificates betray the Toolkits' emphasis on competitive and individualistic approaches to global identity formation and further confirm what Pais & Costa (2017) describe as "the eminent subordination of education to the needs of the market" (P. 11). The critical approach to GCED aims to challenge inequalities without engaging with the neoliberal, unequal reality of today's educational landscape in which critical GCED is aimed to be implemented.

The paper concludes by raising the argument that the critical approach to GCED has become subservient to the market oriented approach. For example, a common argument against Trump's nationalistic statement that "There is no global anthem... No certificate of global citizenship" (Trump, 2016) is that universities indeed offer such a certificate based on course work and study abroad experiences. Here, 'global citizenship' is treated like 'national citizenship', which is not an abstract term for shared values but an official status, one can only acquire through birth, marriage or naturalisation certificates. From this perspective, 'global citizenship' is morally highly desirable but it only gains rights for existence

through certificates, which would not be available without the commodified nature of education systems. While the critical discourse on GCED creates the demand, the present market oriented GCED agenda provides the supply.