

Global Citizenship Education for Future Generation—The significance of experiential learning.

Global citizenship education (GCED) is needed to face the challenges of the 21st Century the challenges of the VUCA world, world that is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. Global Citizenship education develops global citizens to be independent, to develop global perspectives, to develop harmony among people from other countries and ethnic groups, to understand diversity through cross-cultural education, to respect Earth and all living beings, to promote global well-being while enriching their own lives. to learn to create imaginative solutions to world problems, to help solve diverse global problems, and to become active citizens to make changes in the society for the good of everyone.

In order to achieve the educational goals of global citizenship education as mentioned above, experiential learning plays an important role in developing knowledge and skills to cope with the rapidly changing society, to cultivate humanity, to maintain harmony among people and to practice conflict management and communication skills.

Global Citizenship Education is education for transformation, Transformation that means profound “profound global cultural change that affects ways of thinking, world views, values, behaviors, relationships, and the structures that make up our public order. It implies great change in the human consciousness and in human society.” (Reardon, 1988)

To encourage students and citizens to take action for transformation, global citizenship education courses need to offer programs that are cognitive to raise students’ awareness and understanding of the issue, and affective to help students to respond and feel concerned (See diagram below).

Learning Process of Global Citizenship Education



The learning process of this diagram connotes that knowledge acquired in the classroom and

research touches the mind. This cognitive part of the process raises awareness and understanding of the issues and situations objectively. To perceive the issues as a global citizen, it is crucial to add the affective factor that touches the heart, namely experiential learning that plays an important role to feel and understand the problem subjectively, as their own. When this part of the process occurs, the students and citizens are encouraged and compelled to take action for change.

The affective factor includes images of the problems that could be more powerful than words. Listening to the stories of the people concerned makes listeners feel and hear their moaning cries of pain. Visiting various countries and affected countries of post conflict offers boundless opportunities to think, feel, and act.

For experiential learning (EL) to play a major role in Global Citizenship Education, EL in the form of fieldwork develops knowledge, attitude and skills to act. Plato (375 BC) mentions that “business of the crafts (hands-on learning) has the power to awaken the best part of the soul and lead it upward to the study of the best among the things that are...” (p.205).

Dewey (1916) connotes that

It is the office of the school environment to balance the various elements in the social environment, and to see to it that each individual gets an opportunity to escape from the limitations of the social group in which he was born, and to come into living contact with a broader environment. (p. 20)

This is an education that propagates exposure to diversity. Education should help the students to appreciate cultural diversity. Citizens of the world need to know and live by international standards of human rights, gender and racial equality. Thus, curriculum that supports this idea of understanding diversity is crucial in this modern era.

Dewey further mentions that “Experience as the perception of the connection between something tried and something undergone in consequence is a process” (p. 166). Every individual is required to employ his own powers in activities that have meaning. Dewey also states that curiosity “is a necessary consequence of the fact that an experience is a moving, changing thing, involving all kinds of connections with other things” (p.209).

Reardon (2001), former director of the Peace Education Center at Teachers College, Columbia University, described that “Active, experiential learning in the realm of social change can reinforce positive social values and provide an experience of social or political efficacy that empowers learners to take more constructive action for change” (p. 173).

In the process of establishing the Global Citizenship Studies Department in 2001 at Seisen University, experiential learning was considered as one of the main features of the curriculum. The department offers students experiential course work through field studies to be able to

participate in the constructive action for change in their respective community. Every year students have the opportunity to apply their acquired knowledge in service learning in agricultural area of Japan, community work in Okinawa, Philippines, India, Bhutan, and countries in Africa. Based on the information, theory and knowledge acquired in school, the students actually go out of the classroom to practice what they have learned and then, return with the gathered information to present the study results. It is a department that allows students to satisfy their desire to have the experiences they wish to have and to pursue their curiosity. Students are encouraged, through experiential educational activities to be imaginative and creative by integrating their knowledge of diverse peoples and cultures into their everyday lives and professional work. Thus, the objective of this department is to nurture students who can contribute to society with the knowledge to develop values of caring and sharing among themselves as well as among people on earth with a global perspective to take action where needed beyond countries and ethnic background.

Another significant role of EL is that EL cultivates humanity, an important value most needed in this global age of scientific and technological advancement. Nussbaum (1997) mentions that there are three capacities that are essential to cultivation of humanity. The first one is critical examination of oneself and one's tradition. "Training this capacity requires developing the capacity to reason logically, to test what one reads or says for consistency of reasoning, correctness of fact, and accuracy of judgment" (p.10). The second capacity is the ability to see human beings bound to other human beings:

We neglect needs and capacities that link us to fellow citizens who live at a distance or who look different from ourselves....Cultivating our humanity in a complex, interlocking world involves understanding the ways in which common needs and aims are differently realized in different circumstances. (p.10)

The third capacity is narrative imagination, which is the ability to empathize with others. It is the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of the person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have. (p.11)

All three of the capacities can be practiced in experiential learning, as EL is about reaching out to those in a different community to hear and feel their story and realize that we are all a part of the same world.

Further development of the moral traits of a person through education is actually the development of a global citizen leader. A citizen leader would be good for a better society. Couto (1992) described citizen leaders as those who "speak in simple terms about the basic dignity of every human being. . . They are compelled to pass on to the next generation a society less tolerant of human and environmental degradation" (p. 15). Citizen leaders will speak out to authorities when needed and have the power to change the system when necessary. Furthermore, Gerzon (2003) described that becoming a global citizen means "to

live according to values not just good for ourselves, not our own tribe or religion, or for our country or region, but good for the world” (p. 9). I believe that a global citizenship leader would fulfill the ultimate goal of democracy and education.

In conclusion, EL develops students’ independent skills, offers students development of appropriate knowledge, skills, attitude and values, raises the quality of education, cultivates humanity and awakens students to grow. Thus, there is no doubt in stating that experiential learning plays a significant role in global citizenship education to develop transformational leaders of the future generation.

Lastly, recommendation by UNESCO on international understanding, co-operation, peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedom is also important in global citizenship education. This recommendation is directed to the full development of the human personality and promotes understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups. In order to enable every person to contribute actively to the fulfillment of these aims, the following objectives should be regarded as major guiding principles of educational policies: (a) an international dimension and a global perspective in education at all levels and in all its forms; (b) understanding and respect for all peoples, their cultures, civilizations, values and ways of life, including domestic ethnic cultures and cultures of other nations; (c) awareness of the increasing global interdependence between peoples and nations; (d) abilities to communicate with others; (e) awareness not only of the rights but also of the duties incumbent upon individuals, social groups and nations towards each other; (e) understanding of the necessity for international solidarity and cooperation; (f) readiness on the part of an individual to participate in solving the problems of his community, his country and the world at large.

It is time that an educational institution acknowledges and adopt this curriculum suggested by UNESCO not only to offer knowledge and qualifications to be competent in society but to offer skills to form values and abilities to become responsible and cooperative global citizens who can make changes happen as well as practice constructive problem-solving negotiation.

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