

A Laboratory for Change and Exchange

Project Report about GloCo—the Global Campus Online

Elia Rinne

“It has been a lived experience of what it means to build community across borders, time zones, and perspectives—and how worthwhile that is.”

Abstract: *This report presents the Global Campus Online (GloCo), already described in the introduction of this book. Against the backdrop of accelerating societal change, the project situates Global Citizenship Education (GCED) as a trans-disciplinary framework that fosters critical reflection, global awareness, and local engagement. The report traces the development of GloCo from its initial structure of dialogue groups to a more flexible model of open, thematic transnational meetings, highlighting the role of participatory methods, expert input, and grassroots project work. Particular attention is given to the emergence of locally grounded best-practice initiatives that translate GCED principles into concrete action and help address global challenges such as climate change, social inequality, migration, and peacebuilding.*

Keywords: *Global Citizenship Education (GCED); Transformative Learning; Digital Learning Networks; Grassroots Initiatives; Global-Local (Glocal) Perspectives; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*

Project Members

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Introduction

The early 21st century is characterized by significant societal transformations and an accelerated pace of social change. The world is becoming increasingly complex and globally interconnected. The current political, economic, and sociocultural developments, therefore, require more than ever a global perspective and an interdisciplinary approach to make sense of them.

This interconnected reality also especially calls for a shift in educational perspectives and practices; for approaches that move beyond the mere transmission of factual knowledge. Transformative learning can only happen when learners are given the space and tools to critically engage with the topics at hand and locate themselves within them. Global Citizenship Education is an educational concept that aims to answer that call by centering tools of critical (self)reflection and equipping learners with the skills to navigate, analyze, and critically engage with these intricate global dynamics. Being embedded across all areas of learning, this transdisciplinary educational concept acknowledges the growing complexity and evolution of a globally interconnected society. It seeks to answer the question of what these changes imply for educational practices in a globalized society.

Being an institution dedicated to the advancing of interdisciplinary, global discussions and solution approaches from a transformative pedagogical perspective, the UNESCO Chair of Global Citizenship Education—Culture of Diversity and Peace, founded in 2020, has tried to establish a transnational platform and network dedicated to peer discus-

sions, actions, and peer learning and support around the mentioned topics—The Global Campus Online (GloCo). Since its foundation in 2022, GloCo has grown into a platform for exchange, learning, and collaboration for anyone concerned with addressing the pressing challenges of the 21st century. Over 3 years, a strong network of scholars, students, teachers, civic workers, and activists worldwide has been continuously built, expanded, and facilitated. Through regular network meetings, the network members discussed global crises, their implications for education, and transformative approaches to addressing them. Contributions from both the Global North and South enriched the discourse, promoting diverse perspectives and localized strategies for addressing global challenges.

The overarching goal of Global Campus Online was to promote the mutual learning and exchange among participants, who, in turn, acted as multipliers within their own communities. The GloCo project team also supported the creation of various learning opportunities and formats, with a focus on transformative learning and Global Citizenship Education. It supported the development of local initiatives and contributed to scientific publications on related themes.

For this goal, the core approach of GloCo was to encourage participants to undertake even small initiatives and projects in their communities to explore the possibilities for change at the grassroots. The online meetings served as a laboratory where participants shared their experiences to stimulate mutual learning about the potentials and challenges by trying to put Global Citizenship Education into practice.

The development of those projects was supported by the GloCo community through common discussion, feedback processes, and transnational collaborations. Over 3 years, inspiring projects were initiated and successfully implemented, tackling problems in their respective communities and directly impacting beneficiaries' lives.

By showcasing these projects in this publication, it is hoped to make those learnings available to a broader audience and to highlight the great contribution they make to advancing and concretizing a practice-oriented Global Citizenship Education. The Global Campus Online itself served as a framework and virtual home for these initiatives. In this

opening chapter, the Global Campus Online will be introduced by tracing its development through the different stages and components of its implementation, and reflecting on the achievements and challenges encountered over the 3 years of continuous project development.

Why a Global Campus Online—Background and Overall Goals

The idea for the *Global Campus Online* (GloCo) emerged from the goal to advance a critical, diverse, and practice-oriented approach to Global Citizenship Education (GCED). This educational framework seeks to empower individuals to become critical, compassionate, and responsible members of the global community. It addresses crucial issues such as environmental sustainability, climate change, social justice, power dynamics, racism, and gender inequality. By integrating participatory and transformative learning methods, GCED encourages critical reflection and concrete action. Drawing upon theoretical frameworks such as post-colonial theory, global justice, human rights, and intersectionality, it fosters a deeper understanding of global challenges while promoting a commitment to social change.

From the outset, GloCo aimed to foster cross-cultural exchanges and explore educational approaches adaptable to various local contexts. By providing a platform for diverse perspectives, the initiative actively sought to counterbalance dominant Western, neo-colonial narratives and promote a truly global educational dialogue. Over the past three years, GloCo has evolved into a thriving digital hub for teaching, learning, and collaborative action on topics including Global Citizenship Education, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the climate crisis, migration, peace and conflict, and other urgent issues of the 21st century.

At the heart of GloCo is an international network of NGO staff, activists, artists, students, and scholars from both the Global North and Global South. Through dialogue groups and network meetings, participants engage in regular and in-depth discussions, reflecting on their personal and professional experiences. What began as a single dialogue

group of 15 members in 2022 has grown into an active community of over 100 participants. This network fosters continuous exchange, encourages collaborative project work, and serves as a source of inspiration and motivation through shared experiences, expertise, and engagement.

The project was designed to cultivate a collaborative learning environment where participants could engage in regular exchanges, attend thought-provoking lectures, and present ideas and projects from multiple perspectives. This exchange enhances mutual learning and promotes creative, practice-based approaches to global challenges. Among the participatory methods employed, PhotoVoice was particularly effective, offering participants a hands-on, reflective way to explore complex topics.

Beyond fostering dialogue, GloCo aimed to support concrete action and transformative practices. Network members were encouraged to initiate local projects aligned with the initiative's goals. These projects received support through educational resources, networking opportunities, and assistance with planning and implementation. Outstanding initiatives were further recognized through the *Global Education Project Award* (GEPARD), which provided financial backing for projects that demonstrated innovation and local impact. The funding was possible through another initiative of the UNESCO Chair at the University of Klagenfurt, namely the University Course on Global Citizenship Education, which in 2021 was awarded the *Global Education Network Europe Award* (GENE). The Chair reinvested the prize in GEPARD to support, even on a small scale, the initiatives developed in the Global Campus Online.

To ensure the sustainability of these efforts, GloCo also prioritized documenting and disseminating learning outcomes. A best-practice handbook was developed to capture the insights and methodologies generated within the dialogue groups. This resource not only serves as a guide for future initiatives but also broadens the reach of Global Citizenship Education by providing accessible, actionable knowledge.

Another key objective was to elevate the importance of Global Citizenship Education on a global scale. The initiative encouraged dialogue across different approaches and worldviews, deliberately challenging

and mitigating the dominance of Western perspectives. By fostering this exchange, GloCo contributed to a more equitable and inclusive understanding of education in the 21st century.

The Project Structure and Activities

The Global Campus Online featured a range of activities that were designed to foster collaboration between the network participants and to support the development of global initiatives. Regular virtual network meetings provided a platform for discussing current global issues from a general, personal, and contextual perspective; for setting common goals; and for exploring strategies and local action aligned with these objectives. These meetings also featured impromptu lectures from experts, broadening participants' knowledge and perspectives on related topics. A main portion of each network meeting was reserved for a project presentation by a network member or local group, bringing the awareness of the network to a specific and locally contextualized issue and then refining their project idea through critical peer feedback—a two-way learning opportunity for everyone involved. Once a project met the necessary criteria, it was recognized as a best-practice initiative and awarded the *GEPARD*.

In addition to regular project activities, annual transnational conferences were held, offering the entire GloCo network, along with interested guests, an opportunity to come together. These events included presentations by international guest speakers, panel discussions, and workshops, with a general atmosphere of lively and critical exchange. They also provided a platform for network members to present their best-practice initiatives to a broad international audience, drawing attention to local issues that are globally relevant.

In the following section, the respective project phases and activities will be explained in closer detail.

Phase 1: The Dialogue Groups

The initial objective of the Global Campus Online was to establish a network of 5 dialogue groups, each with 12 to 15 members from different professional backgrounds and locations, who would meet regularly in their respective groups. The groups would be in contact with each other via a speaker and by connecting through shared resources, protocols, and cross-group meetings. Still, they would mainly stay within the group they were initially “assigned” to. The benefit of this structure was the opportunity to establish a peer group in which participants became familiar with one another and could work on topics together in a progressive manner.

With these goals in mind, the Global Campus Online officially started in May 2022 with its very first dialogue group meeting, connecting students, scholars, and activists from Austria, South Africa, Ethiopia, and Bosnia. An intense phase of outreach and networking on part of the GloCo project team made it possible to initiate the next two dialogue groups soon after: Dialogue group 2 with members from Austria, Italy/South Tyrol, Vietnam, Bosnia and Hungary was founded a couple of months later in October 2022 and group 3 kicked off around the same time, connecting participants from Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Bosnia, Italy and Austria. Group 4 was founded a little later, at the beginning of 2023, bringing together people from the Netherlands, Uganda, Ethiopia, Austria, and the USA.

While the first meetings in each group were dedicated to getting to know each other and the project team, exploring the theoretical background and framework of the project, and establishing wishes and expectations for working together, the participants were also encouraged from the get-go to use the platform and community for discussing topics of their concern, and developing projects that would target those concerns, specifically. In the first few meetings, significant input was still provided by the GloCo project team. For example, the participatory photo-voice method was introduced to the participants, who then practiced it by photographically documenting their own lifeworlds through the lens of a specific question. However, as the initiative progressed, the

emphasis shifted increasingly towards participant-led discussions. A driving force for those discussions was the best-practice project presentations by respective members or local groups, which provided a basis for critical discourse on the topic and offered critical feedback to the implementing members of the local initiative.

Fig. 1: Screenshot of the first group meeting



The initial framework of the Global Campus proved successful, with the groups meeting regularly, engaging, establishing fruitful peer support and learning communities, and fostering connections between people from different continents and professional backgrounds who are concerned with similar topics. Furthermore, over the first 2,5 years, 6 local initiatives were presented during the dialogue group meetings, with some already moving into the implementation phase.

Nonetheless, the structure of the Global Campus also proved challenging for consistent participation, mainly due to participants' different time zones and prior engagements and responsibilities. Due to these circumstances, a decrease in participation over time was observed. To address those circumstances, the GloCo team conducted an evaluation of the project to date among network participants. In the questionnaire, participants expressed a need for additional expert input to enhance

their knowledge base and facilitate informed discussions, as well as a desire to regularly connect with the broader network rather than just their specific dialogue group. This feedback led to a restructuring of the network meetings and to the second phase of the Global Campus Online project.

Phase 2: Open and Thematic Transnational Meetings

Phase two of the GloCo project started at the beginning of 2024. Following the feedback and expressed desires of the network participants, the fixed dialogue groups were dissolved in favor of a more flexible structure. Instead of separate dialogue group meetings, the Global Campus Online now hosts monthly network meetings open to all network members and interested colleagues, guests, and stakeholders. This also made it easier to continuously invite and include new members, leading to the network expanding to over 90 active participants, with new members joining from Bolivia, Zambia, Turkey, Sierra Leone, and Japan, to name a few. Each network meeting was now held under a thematic focus by inviting scholars from outside the network to give a lecture on a topic of their expertise and facilitate a discussion. Topics and speakers were selected based on participant interests, ensuring a balanced representation of voices from the Global North and South.

The restructuring of the Global Campus was overall very well received, as evidenced by the high level of engagement. The first thematic meeting, which focused on *Migration and Climate Change*, attracted 16 participants.

While the lectures were a definite highlight of the network meetings, the project presentations by network members remained an equally important part, providing interesting input for the audience and an opportunity for the implementing team to receive support. During each meeting, one hour was reserved for a project presentation, leading to eight best practise projects being developed and presented during project phase two. These best-practice projects were a key component of the Global Campus from the beginning and remained so throughout the second project phase. Not only did they provide input and context for

interesting discussions among network members, but they also helped advance the principles of GCED and, most importantly, strengthened local communities.

Several best-practice projects emerged, focusing on themes such as environmental sustainability and climate action initiatives, community-led educational workshops on gender and social justice, intercultural storytelling projects fostering dialogue between displaced communities, or peace education and conflict resolution programs. These projects have had a significant impact on local communities, strengthening the foundations of GCED at the grassroots level.

The Transnational Conferences

#1 Creating Glocal Perspectives—Global Citizenship Education for a Transformed Future (2023)

Held on November 17–18, 2023, this conference featured two panel discussions and eight workshops. Renowned international experts in GCED shared their perspectives, discussing topics such as gender, migration, climate change, and artificial intelligence. A project partner from Ethiopia presented a peace education initiative, while the AAU team introduced GloCo's digital learning platform. A highlight of the event was the presentation of local best-practice initiatives through video showcases. The conference attracted over 60 participants.

Fig. 2: Conference poster

Join us for

CREATING GLOCAL PERSPECTIVES

Global Citizenship Education for a Transformed Future

unesco University Chair

UNIVERSITÄT KLAGENFURT

With funding from:
Austrian Development Cooperation
IEB Diversity & Education

An Online Conference and Network Event by the
UNESCO Chair for Global Citizenship Education,
University of Klagenfurt

FRIDAY & SATURDAY,
NOVEMBER 17 & 18

HOSTED ON ZOOM

Registrations:
<https://forms.gle/FWDSVaJVtobA8dzI9>

CREATING GLOCAL PERSPECTIVES 2023 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

FRIDAY afternoon November 17, 14:00 - 18:00 (UTC +1)

- Opening Remarks, Program Presentation**
Hans Karl Peterlin and GloCo Project Team
- Panel Discussion on different Perspectives of Global Citizenship Education #1**
Yvonne Andreotti, Carlos Cardoso, Darla Deardorff, Gina Theodor
- 15 min break**
- The GloCo Initiative - Achievements, Insights, Best Practices**
GloCo Team and Members of 4 Project Groups
- Presentation of the Digital Platform for Gamified Global Education & Collaboration**
Felix Schma and Tom Tulek from the Programme for Game Studies and Engineering at the AUK
- 15 min break**
- Workshops on different Aspects of Global Citizenship Education - Details see Page 3**
Corinna Mimbach, Florian Olschowski, Miriam Wack

SATURDAY Morning November 18, 08:00 - 12:30 (UTC +1)

- Opening Remarks, Program Presentation**
Hans Karl Peterlin and GloCo Project Team
- The GloCo Initiative - Achievements, Insights, Best Practices**
GloCo Team and Members of 4 Project Groups
- 15 min break**
- Panel Discussion on different Perspectives of Global Citizenship Education #2**
Jana Elst, Alessandra Toranzo, Ural Chung, Werner Wintersteiner
- Dialogues for Peace-building and -education in Ethiopia**
A GloCo Project
Katherinegeri Atinola
- 15 min break**
- Workshops on different Aspects of Global Citizenship Education - Details see Page 4**
Catherine Fiebert-Rio, Emma Omandakawo, Katherine Crepez
- 15 min break**
- Output Session and Closing of the Conference**

#2 Young Voices of Global Citizenship Education—Ideas for Globally Connected and Solidaric Societies (2024)

With over 90 attendees, this event included:

- A panel discussion featuring emerging researchers and practitioners shaping the field of GCED.
- Thematic talks on the future of GCED and the role of intercultural competence in peacebuilding.
- A live test run of the GloCo digital platform.
- Presentations of successful best-practice projects by participating groups.

Highlights:

- A two-hour panel discussion with promising up-and-coming researchers and practitioners who are dedicated to shaping, sharpening, and advancing the theoretical and practical field of GCED
- Two thematic talks on the topics of the future of Global Citizenship Education and the mobilization of intercultural competences for peace-building efforts
- A live test run of the digital platform,
- Presentations of the successful best practise projects by the project groups

Fig. 3: Conference poster

Join us for

YOUNG VOICES OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Ideas for Globally Connected and Solidaric Societies

unesco University Chair

UNIVERSITÄT KLAGENFURT

FRIDAY, 15. NOV. '24
13:00 - 20:00 (CET)
HOSTED ON ZOOM

YOUNG VOICES OF GCED 2024 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

FRIDAY November 15, 13:00 - 20:00 (UTC +1)

13:00 - 13:45
Opening Remarks, Program Presentation
Hans Karl Peterlini and GloCo Project Team

13:45 - 15:30
Panel Discussion - Young Voices of Global Citizenship Education
Alexis Legault, Kgadi Mathabathe, Stefania Maser, Aaryan Salman, Danbee Song

15:30 - 16:00
20 min break

16:00 - 17:00
Beyond Borders: Leveraging Intercultural Competence for Sustainable Peace
Talk by Didem Ekici

17:00 - 18:00
10 min break

18:00 - 18:30
Presenting the GloCo Best-Practice Projects
Project teams give direct insights into the achievements, challenges and joy of the GloCo projects via videos and Q&A

18:30 - 19:00
15 min break

19:00 - 19:45
Futures of Global Citizenship
Talk by Roland Benedikter

19:45 - 20:00
Summary and Reflections; Visions
Plenary session

With funding from:
Austrian Development Cooperation

An Online Conference and Network Event by the
UNESCO Chair for Global Citizenship Education,
University of Klagenfurt

With funding from:
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GENE
Global Education Network

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Diversity & Education

Partners and Supporters:

Registrations:
<https://forms.gle/tZ86e7dSeZKGZfbt7>

#3 Initiatives for Change (2025)

With the expiry of project funding and the official conclusion of the project, the Global Campus Online was not shut down—quite the contrary. In collaboration with students from the university course on Global Citizenship Education, a transnational conference was held in 2025, at which initiatives from the Global South and North were presented that contribute to Global Citizenship Education in their own ways.

In parallel, the GloCo lecture format was developed, to which new initiatives continue to sign up spontaneously to present their specialized approaches and projects. In this way, the GloCo network is, surprisingly, continuing to expand and to evolve.

Reflections and Lessons learned

The Global Campus Online (GloCo) has demonstrated the transformative potential of digital platforms in fostering global learning, collaboration, and local action. A key achievement has been the successful implementation of best-practice projects that address pressing local challenges while serving as models for Global Citizenship Education. The project also successfully reached its target audience, encompassing educators, researchers, students, artists, activists, and civil society actors. The network's diverse composition enriched discussions and fostered a multi-perspective approach to global and educational challenges.

The transition to open, thematic transnational meetings marked a pivotal evolution for the project, enhancing inclusivity, flexibility, and participant-driven knowledge creation. Incorporating external expert input enriched discussions among the participants and contributed to a more robust understanding of complex global issues.

Key lessons include the value of adaptability, the importance of participant-led processes, and the need for sustained support for local initiatives. Moving forward, the experiences and outcomes of GloCo pro-

vide a solid foundation for advancing Global Citizenship Education and fostering a reflective, interconnected global community.

GloCo was designed to align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in the areas of quality education, reduced inequalities, and strong global partnerships. The initiative was also integrated into the broader UNESCO Chair Network, further solidifying its academic and institutional connections.

For further reading

Grobbaauer, Heidi, & Werner Wintersteiner (Eds.) (2019). *Global Citizenship Education. Concepts, Efforts, Perspectives—an Austrian experience*. KommEnt: Salzburg. https://www.komment.at/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/GlobalCitizenshipEdu_Dokumentation-2019-engl_online.pdf

Peterlini, Hans Karl (2024). *Divided Humanity, Divided World—Questions and Perspectives for a Peace-oriented Diversity Education as Global Citizenship*. In: Claudia Lohrenscheit, Andrea Schmelz, Caroline Schmitt, and Ute Straub (Eds.): *International Social Work and Social Movements* (pp.187–204). Nomos: Baden-Baden. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/379845490_119_Divided_Humanity_Divided_World_-_Questions_and_Perspectives_for_a_Peace-oriented_Diversity_Education_as_Global_Citizenship