Indigenous Education and Global Citizenship Education

Decolonial Education Concepts for Migration Societies

Phillip D. Th. Knobloch

Introduction

Global Citizenship Education is a specific educational concept that has emerged against the backdrop of globalization and makes constitutive reference to this phenomenon. This form of education is intended to provide a better understanding of globalization, but also to critically question and problematize it. Above all, the concept aims to prepare people worldwide for a common life in the context of globalization. An important advocate of Global Citizenship Education is UNESCO, which ten years ago published a first and fundamental document entitled »Global Citizenship Education« (2014) with the programmatic subtitle »Preparing learners for the challenges of the 21st century«.

While UNESCO is committed to ensure that all children have access to institutionalized education in so-called underdeveloped countries, the Global Citizenship Education concept aims to improve the »quality and relevance of education« (ibid., p. 5). This is to be achieved in particular by teaching values, attitudes, skills and abilities that promote mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. Global problems should be understood and solved in order to work together for a fairer, more peaceful and more sustainable world. As people are »more interconnected than ever before […] on the planet« – »in ecological, economic, social and political terms« – Global Citizenship Education should – according to the website of the German Commission for UNESCO (2024)

– »promote a sense of belonging to the global community […] and convey an understanding of the interactions between local and global action […]«.[1]

Global Citizenship Education has now also become a lively topic of discussion in educational science. Looking at some recent contributions from German-speaking countries, it is noticeable that a number of debates focus on the relationship between the Global North and the Global South. Christoph Wulf (2021), for example, refers to the concern of some »sociologists and ethnologists from the Global South […] that the concept of the global community merely serves to strengthen the dominance of the countries of the northern hemisphere in the international system« (ibid., p. 476). This concern may also be the reason why Werner Wintersteiner (2022) is in favour of integrating post- and decolonial perspectives into the theory and practice of Global Citizenship Education.

This article will first show examples of how the connection between Global Citizenship Education, colonial history and post- and decolonial theory is currently understood and formulated in German and European theoretical contributions. Subsequently, new possibilities for understanding and developing decolonial educational concepts will be identified. The thesis that emerges in this context is that the examination of indigenous educational history and indigenous educational concepts is a key to opening up a contemporary approach to the complex of topics of global and decolonial education. This appears to be particularly important in relation to education in so-called migration societies, as will be explained in conclusion.

GCED from a European perspective: dialog with the Global South

With regard to the understanding of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and the further development of this educational concept, it is interesting to point out that although there may be a globally valid and relevant basic idea, this must nevertheless be concretized and developed in the individual languages, countries and cultures. It is therefore interesting to note that the Austrian UNESCO Commission published in German language a booklet entitled »Global Citizenship Education« (Wintersteiner et al. 2014; in English: 2015) at the same time as UNESCO (2014).

1 All translations from German into English were made by the author.

A comparison of the publication by the Austrian UNESCO Commission (2014, 2015) with a later contribution by Wintersteiner (2022) shows that in both cases the topic of colonialism is associated with Global Citizenship Education.

> »*Global Citizenship Education* is incomplete and unthinkable without its historical dimension. Any attempt to build on the cosmopolitan and *global citizen* tradition in European thought must inevitably face the dark side of not only European, but more generally Western history, i.e. *colonialism* and *imperialism*« (Wintersteiner et al. 2015, p. 21; emphasis in original).

While the examination of modern European intellectual and cultural history against the backdrop of the Enlightenment and colonialism is seen by the group of authors (Wintersteiner et al. 2014, 2015) as an important aspect of Global Citizenship Education in the sense of historical education, Wintersteiner (2022) points to the need to also take postcolonial theories and perspectives into account when developing concepts of Global Citizenship Education. Every »critical pedagogy« must »face up to the postcolonial challenge«, as »postcolonialism has set out with the claim of a fundamental critique of a fairer world order« (ibid., p. 24). On the one hand, it is about »making the voice and perspective of the subaltern« and the »experiences from the Global South heard« (ibid.). In addition, »postcolonialism strives for a systematic decolonization not only of political and economic power relations, but also of knowledge and science, which are no less shaped by power relations« (ibid., p. 24–25).

In his article, Wintersteiner (2022) deals with different concepts of cosmopolitanism and, with reference to post- and decolonial theories from the Global South, promotes a critical-dialogical cosmopolitanism as the »foundation of a postcolonial-oriented Global Citizenship Education« (ibid., 23). In order to decolonize knowledge and science, to counteract Eurocentric limitations and mental blocks and to develop post- or decolonial educational concepts, it is helpful or even necessary to seek dialogue with others. Wintersteiner is thinking first and foremost of all people who express criticism, even if it is not postcolonial; he also refers to people »who disagree, but are open to new arguments« (ibid., p. 40). Above all, the dialog should be conducted with »all subalterns« (ibid.), with the disadvantaged of the Global South, or with »activists, researchers and educators of the Global South«. In addition, discussions should be held with the »marginalized in one's own country« (ibid.), in particular with »migrants and refugees« (ibid).

Even if the idea of getting to know the views of people from the Global South through dialog with them and thus overcoming Eurocentric thought patterns sounds plausible at first, it must still be critically questioned. This can initially be justified by the fact that it is sometimes difficult or impossible to clearly assign people to the Global South or North. In so-called migration societies in particular, many people look back on hybrid biographies and family histories that are linked to both the Global North and the Global South.

This phenomenon can be illustrated, for example, by biographical statements by the decolonial theorist Mignolo (cf. Maldonado-Torres/Mignolo 2007), to whom Wintersteiner (2022) refers. Born and raised in Argentina as the grandson of Italian immigrants, he already felt different from his Argentinian friends in his childhood due to his origins. He then experienced this feeling of not belonging again during his studies in France and later in his new country of choice, the USA: in Argentina he was a European immigrant, in France he was considered a »sudaca« (South American), in the USA a »hispanic« (Hispanic-American).

These biographical experiences of contradictory classification and identification as European or American can be seen as an important inspiration for the decolonial border thinking designed and propagated by Mignolo (2012), which in turn goes back to the reflections of the US-Mexican author Gloria Anzaldúa (1987/2021), who identifies herself as a »chicana«, i.e. as a US-American Mexican or Mexican-American. She therefore shares with Mignolo the experience of being assigned to both the Global North (USA or Europe) and the Global South (Mexico or Argentina), or of feeling that she belongs to both spheres (in their interconnectedness).

Against this background, the conclusion suggests itself that it is not so much the dialog between people from the Global North and the Global South that opens up access to decolonial thinking, but rather the dialog between people who cannot be clearly assigned to the Global North or South. However, this would include almost all Latin Americans, as they are, by definition, both European (Latin) and American. But a study by Argentinian educational scientist Felicitas Acosta (2023) shows that contributions to educational science from and about Latin America hardly refer to decolonial theories, and that debates on the significance of decolonial thinking are still in their beginnings here too – in other words, very similar to those in Europe and the West (cf. Paraskeva 2022; Knobloch 2022). It is therefore reasonable to assume that decolonial theory of Latin American origin is an advanced and complex theoretical program that – like any other complex academic theory – must first be

developed intellectually, as it currently resists uncomplicated appropriation (cf. Knobloch 2022, 2019). It therefore tends to be difficult to find competent dialogue partners in everyday life who can clarify decolonial border thinking.

Indigenous education and (epistemic) decolonization

In order to better understand and develop decolonial concepts of Global Citizenship Education, I believe it is useful to first look at the educational history of indigenous peoples. This is due to the fact that decolonial thinking, as advocated by Mignolo (2012), for example, is based on the ›colonial difference‹. It refers to the original distinction between the European colonial power and the colonised indigenous peoples of the Americas, which was based on a multidimensional power relationship. According to decolonial theory, this power relationship, which is also called ›the colonial matrix of power‹ or ›coloniality‹, not only encompassed the political control, economic exploitation and cultural assimilation of the indigenous peoples, but also influenced people's thinking and intellectual capacity. Despite all the transformations, the ›coloniality of power‹ allegedly still has an effect today.

While it was still clear at the beginning of modern European colonialism to name the two sides of the colonial difference – here the colonised, there the colonisers – this is much more difficult today. This is because in the course of modern European colonialism, so-called European expansion, the various global migration movements and phenomena of cultural mixing and hybridisation, the distinction between European and non-European, between Western and non-Western and between modern and traditional societies, cultures, and mindsets is becoming increasingly unclear. Latin America is a revealing example of this. The use of terms in decolonial studies is also ambiguous, for example when ›colonial‹ thinking is referred to elsewhere as ›modern‹ or as ›modern/colonial‹.

In order to explore the core meaning of the concept of ›decolonial education‹, we will now look not at American colonial history, but at Northern European colonial history. This is based on the assumption that Nordic colonialism is particularly comprehensible from a European perspective, as in this case a European indigenous people, the Sámi, were colonised by other – modern – European nations.

It is assumed that the Sámi have lived in northern Europe for thousands of years, in Fennoscandia, an area that today lies in Norway, Sweden, Finland and

on the Russian peninsula of Kola. They subsisted on hunting, fishing, sometimes simple forms of agriculture and the reindeer herds for which they are known worldwide. While the territory of the Sámi, called Sápmi, today only covers the northernmost part of Fennoscandia, in the Middle Ages their habitat extended as far as Oslo and included southern Finland and the Russian regions around Lake Ladoga and Lake Onega (Zachrisson 1992, p. 72). The Nordic peoples had early contact with the Sámi (formerly known as the Lapps), traded with them and also levied taxes.

> »Initially, the proximity to the Germanic living area in Norway and Sweden led to a mutual cultural exchange. But to the extent that the North Germanic culture penetrated the Lapp living space and this increasingly diminished, some of the Lapps submitted to this growing pressure and assimilated into the Germanic-Nordic culture« (ibid.).

While the proximity initially led to a mutual cultural exchange between the Sámi and the Nordic Germanic peoples, the latter increasingly penetrated the indigenous territories, displacing the Sámi further and further north and putting many under pressure to adapt to the North Germanic culture (ibid.).

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the main aim was to gain agricultural land (Kortekangas 2021, p. 7). In the course of colonization, attempts were increasingly made to Christianize and educate the Sámi.

»Since the implementation of intensified taxation, mission, and education in the seventeenth century both in Sweden (including modern-day Finland) and Norway (a part of Denmark at the time), the governmental policies targeting the Sámi reached their peak in the early twentieth century« (ibid.).

As the increasing assimilation of the Sámi into the language and culture of the Nordic nation states threatened the loss of their own language and culture, educational policy became an important aspect of the political resistance and activism of the Sámi that emerged in the 20th century (cf. Kortekangas 2021).

Although the educational history of the Sámi is usually described as a history of linguistic and cultural assimilation, Nyyssönen (2019) emphasises that the spread of modern education has also led in part to empowerment. Modern school education broadened horizons and tended to make it possible to choose one's profession and place of residence freely. Above all, modern education made it possible to stand up for indigenous rights and the recognition of their own language and culture in modern Nordic societies. It is therefore

not surprising that most Sámi activists are in favour of multilingual and intercultural education that combines indigenous and modern elements.

> »Today, the group is labelled as Indigenous by the legislation of all countries where the Sámi live (Norway, Sweden, Russia, and Finland). The UN-backed label grants the minority certain rights. However, questions such as land use and cultural rights continue to be highly debated and politicized in the Nordic countries, and the numerically small population regularly attracts media coverage on a national level« (ibid., p. 7).

With regard to the basic structure of decolonial education, it can be stated that both a purely indigenous and a purely modern education can be described as ›colonial‹ insofar as the other language and the other cultural elements would be suppressed in such a one-sided orientation. Decolonial education attempts to counteract these restrictions through a multilingual and inter- or multicultural (modern-indigenous) profile.

Indigenous Education and Global Citizenship Education

The previous considerations have shown that a basic concept of decolonial education can be derived from the educational history of indigenous peoples such as the Sámi. Because colonised indigenous peoples run the risk of either limiting their education to the teaching of their indigenous language and traditional culture, or completely eliminating this teaching in favour of modern educational content, decolonial education concepts combine indigenous and modern elements. Without such forms of education, there is a risk of either the isolation and exclusion of indigenous groups or the loss of indigenous languages and cultures. It can therefore be argued that education can be seen both as a central moment of colonial oppression and as a tool of decolonisation.

Indigenous educational histories not only reveal the main features of a decolonial educational concept for indigenous peoples, but also the main features of a (general) decolonial concept of Global Citizenship Education that is not limited to the situation of indigenous peoples. Looking at Norwegian school history, for example (Olsen 2019), it can be shown that not only the significance and relationship between indigenous and Norwegian language and culture was discussed here, but that other minorities were also considered.

Until the end of the Second World War, Norway pursued a policy of ›Norwegianisation‹ towards the Sámi, which is why the Sámi were prohibited from speaking their language at school and learning about their culture and history there from the middle of the 19th century. Indigenous citizens' movements formed at the beginning of the 20th century and intensified from the mid-1970s, and succeeded in having the Sámi language recognised as an official language in Norway in 1987. It is interesting to note that in a Norwegian education plan from 1987, for example, the Sámi were still described as one ethnic minority among others. This gave them a status that corresponded to that of ethnic immigrant groups – which obviously triggered protests among the Sámi, as they are native to northern Europe. While they can justifiably call themselves first nations on their own land, the other ethnic groups came later in the course of colonisation.

However, the Sámi are now recognised as an indigenous people in Norway, which gives them a special status and special rights. According to an education plan from 2011, Norwegian society includes both the majority society and the indigenous Sámi, as well as other national minorities and migrant minorities. This differentiation is revealing, as it allows the significance and evaluation of the various languages and cultural influences in relation to educational concepts and programmes to be discussed. With regard to the re-evaluation of Sámi culture, it is also interesting that an education plan from 2017 recognises Sámi culture as national heritage. All pupils should now learn about Sámi culture and history and acquire the ability to put themselves in the Sámi perspective (ibid.).

Even if the relationship between national majorities and minorities as well as migrant minorities may not have been historically characterised by colonialism, forms of linguistic and cultural dominance can still be diagnosed that allow us to draw on patterns of thought from decolonial theory. This is plausible insofar as, in principle, any language can be jeopardised or even suppressed by any other – and thus, at least in a figurative sense, may be perceived as ›colonial‹ (or ›modern‹). This also applies to national majority languages, many of which are currently dominated by global English in the field of science, for example (cf. Trabant 2020).

In this context, it is important to point out that the idea of border thinking proposed by Mignolo (2012) aims to correct one-sided perceptions in relation to colonial or modern power relations. Such one-sided perceptions can sometimes presumably be attributed to the fact that it is much easier to perceive one's own language and culture as being threatened than as a threat to

others. In other cases, learning foreign languages and engaging with foreign cultures may be perceived primarily as an enrichment. A decolonial-oriented Global Citizenship Education therefore aims to analyse the respective linguistic and cultural dominance and power relations at local, national, regional and global level in their context.

This should not only be informative for individual educational opportunities and educational measures, but also for pedagogical and educational policy decisions. For example, it is important to consider which languages should be promoted or protected in specific contexts, and which educational content or which subjects should be taught in schools. The distinction between indigenous, national, migrant and global majorities and minorities as well as between diverse cultural traditions and modern subjects and educational content should be instructive here. An examination of the modern and colonial history of education should be helpful in order to understand that the terms (colonial) assimilation and (modern) empowerment are patterns of interpretation that sometimes describe one and the same phenomenon – but from different perspectives.

Conclusion

Analysing indigenous educational histories is one way of exploring the significance of decolonial education. The example of the Sámi shows how closely the transition to modernity is interwoven with modern northern European colonialism. As in the Americas, modernity in the north began with the evangelisation of the Sámi, who were taught to read and write in the Lutheran tradition. At the same time, the country was colonised and the Sámi were increasingly displaced, educated and linguistically and culturally assimilated into the dominant Nordic nations. Some indigenous languages died out, cultural traditions were lost and many descendants became Swedes, Norwegians or Finns. Based on the decolonial theory of Latin American provenance (cf. Mignolo 2012, among others), it can therefore be argued that modernity for the Sámi began with Nordic colonialism.

Nevertheless, many Sámi also see (culturally) modern and (linguistically) national education as an opportunity to broaden their own horizons and opportunities for action and life, and to advocate intercultural and multilingual, indigenous-modern education. The aim is neither to lose the indigenous language nor the connection to cultural traditions, nor to forego a modern educa-

tion – in the sense of teaching modern school subjects and national languages. This education is decolonial in a double sense, as it opposes both the oppression of indigenous languages and cultures and any form of oppression that would result from the exclusion of the Sámi from modern and national education.

Contributions on the current situation of the Sámi show that it would be short-sighted to limit efforts towards decolonial education to analysing the relationship between indigenous minorities and national majorities. In order to analyse current linguistic and cultural power and dominance relations, national minorities, migrant minorities and internationally or globally dominant majorities and minorities must also be brought into context. In principle, every language and culture can pose a threat to other language communities and cultures, but – in terms of linguistic and cultural education – it can also be an enrichment.

An important topic for Global Citizenship Education is therefore the examination of linguistic and cultural dominance and power relations, whether at a local, national or global level. In doing so, one's own situation can be analysed and compared with constellations in other countries or regions. Such analyses are particularly informative in migration societies, as the constellations there can be linked to those in the migrants' countries of origin and thus placed in a larger context. Such analyses can be motivating for individual education, as they make us aware of our linguistic and cultural boundaries. This can motivate us to learn more about the diverse histories, cultures and languages in the context of the modern/colonial world, and about our own involvement in this history.[2]

Indigenous educational histories and decolonial theories can be used to raise awareness of one's own entanglement in the ›colonial matrix of power‹ (coloniality). However, since it is particularly difficult to perceive one's own education and culture not only as a benefit and enrichment, but also as a danger and threat to others, on the one hand, and the confrontation with foreign languages and cultures not only as a threat, but also as an educational opportunity, on the other, it seems necessary to exchange ideas with ›others‹ on the subject of education and coloniality, to consult with each other and to enlighten each other. The reflections on the connection between indigenous education and Global Citizenship Education have thus led to an insight that was already

2 To learn about the current situation of the Sámi, we can look at present-day cultural production, for example actual novels (cf. Laestadius 2024), artists and works of art (cf. Laug 2023) or television documentaries (cf. arte 2024).

formulated in essence by Wintersteiner (2022) and Mignolo (2012). Even if this insight is therefore not entirely new, this dialogical, decolonial and cosmopolitan educational concept can hopefully be better understood with reference to the educational history of indigenous peoples, such as the Sámi.

References

Acosta, Felicitas (2023): La producción y los usos de la Educación Comparada en América Latina. Una revisión en dialogo con las lecturas decoloniales. In: Revista Española de Educación Comparada, No. 43, pp. 51-70.

Anzaldúa, Gloria (1987/2021): Borderlands/La Frontera. The New Mestiza: The Critical Edition. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.

arte (2024): Zu Tisch. Roros, Norwegen. Dokumentarfilm, Regie Stella Könemann. Deutschland. ZDF. https://www.arte.tv/de/videos/114184-009-A/zu-tisch/(12.12.2024)

Deutsche UNESCO-Kommission (2024): Global Citizenship Education. URL: https://www.unesco.de/themen/bildung/bildungsqualitaet/weltbildungsempfehlung/global-citizenship-education/(28.11.2024)

Knobloch, Phillip D. Th. (2019): Zur Übersetzung der Grammatik und Rhetorik der Dekolonialität. In: Engel, Nicolas/Köngeter, Stefan (Eds.): Übersetzen – Pädagogische Grenzziehungen und -überschreitungen. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, pp. 115–135.

Knobloch, Phillip D. Th. (2022): On the concretization of decolonial options in education. In: International Journal for the Historiography of education, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 172–175.

Kortekangas, Otso (2021): Language, Citizenship, and Sámi Education in the Nordic North, 1900 – 1940. Montreal & Kingston, London, Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Laestadius, Ann-Helén (2024): Das Leuchten der Rentiere. Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe.

Laug, Anna-Sophie (Ed.) (2023): Eanan hállá. Sámi oinnodagat/Das Land spricht. Sámi Horizonte/The land has a mind to speak. Sámi horizons. Hamburg: MARKK. Museum am Rothenbaum. Kulturen und Künste der Welt.

Maldonado-Torres, Nelson/Mignolo, Walter (2007): Walter Mignolo: una vida dedicada al proyecto decolonial. In: Nómadas, No. 26, pp. 186–195.

Mignolo, Walter D. (2012): Epistemischer Ungehorsam. Rhetorik der Moderne, Logik der Kolonialität und Grammatik der Dekolonialität. Wien: Turia + Kant.

Nyyssönen, Jukka (2019): Narratives of Sámi School History in Finland: Assimilation and Empowerment. In: Kortekangas, Otso/Keskitalo, Pigga/Nyyssönen, Jukka/Kotljarchuk, Andrej/Paksuniemi, Merja/Sjögren, David (Eds.), Sámi Educational History in a Comparative International Perspective. Cham: Palgrave Macmillanm, pp. 47–62.

Olsen, Torjer A. (2019): Sámi Issues in Norwegian Curricula: A Historical Overview. In: Kortekangas, Otso/Keskitalo, Pigga/Nyyssönen, Jukka/Kotljarchuk, Andrej/Paksuniemi, Merja/Sjögren, David (Eds.), Sámi Educational History in a Comparative International Perspective. Cham: Palgrave Macmillanm, pp. 125–141.

Paraskeva, João M. (2022): Curriculum theorycide. Towards non-dervative curriculum theory now! In: International Journal for the Historiography of education, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 158–161.

Trabant, Jürgen (2020): Sprachendämmerung. Eine Verteidigung. München: C.H. Beck.

UNESCO (2014): Global Citizenship Education. Preparing learners for the challenges of the 21st century. Paris: UNESCO.

Wintersteiner, Werner (2022): Kritisch-dialogischer Kosmopolitismus. Fundament einer postkolonial orientierten Global Citizenship Education. In: Knobloch, Phillip D. Th./Drerup, Johannes (Eds.): Bildung in postkolonialen Konstellationen. Erziehungswissenschaftliche Analysen und pädagogische Perspektiven. Bielefeld: transcript, pp. 23–45.

Wintersteiner, Werner/Grobbauer, Heidi/Diendorfer, Gertraud/Reitmair-Juárez, Susanne (2014): Global Citizenship Education. Politische Bildung für die Weltgemeinschaft. Wien: Österreichische UNESCO-Kommission.

Wintersteiner, Werner/Grobbauer, Heidi/Diendorfer, Gertraud/Reitmair-Juárez, Susanne (2015): Global Citizenship Education. Citizenship Education for Globalizing Societies. Klagenfurt, Salzburg, Vienna.

Wulf, Christoph (2021): Global Citizenship Education. Bildung zu einer planetarischen Weltgemeinschaft im Anthropozän. In: Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Pädagogik, Vol. 97, No. 4, pp. 464–480.

Zachrisson, Inger (1992): Die Lappen. In: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Ed.): Wikinger Waräger Normannen. Die Skandinavier und Europa 800 – 1200. Uddevalla: Bohusläningens Boktryckeri, p. 72.