

Creating a Space of Scientific and Civic Engagement

Background and core elements of an adventure called “GloCo”: The Global Campus Online and its projects on Global Citizenship Education

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“Global Campus Online started as just an idea—a way to break out of the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic, driven by the need to step out of the comfort zone of the Global North and engage with other parts of the world. We had no funding, no concrete plan, and no idea if it would work. We just did it. And it worked!”

This volume emerges from the work of the UNESCO Chair on “Global Citizenship Education—Culture of Diversity and Peace” at the University of Klagenfurt, first established in 2020. From its inception, the Chair has not been conceived as a place of only academic discourse, but as a space of scientific and civic engagement—one that resists the temptation to observe the world from a distance and instead insists on being implicated in it. It is, jokely spoken, not a chair to ‘sit down’ and rest, but a platform from which to question, to connect, and to act.

The contributions gathered here are closely linked to one of the Chair's core initiatives, the Global Campus Online (GloCo). As a transnational, participatory learning environment, GloCo has brought together people from all continents, and also from different disciplines and life contexts—scholars, students, educators, activists, and practitioners—who share a common concern: how can we respond to the entangled crises of our time. One answer was that we would have to put Global Citizenship Education into practice as a genuine approach to change and as a North-South exchange. While the project itself will be introduced in greater detail in the following chapter, it is important to emphasize from the outset that GloCo is not merely a platform for discussing Global Citizenship Education (GCED). It is an attempt to enact it—through dialogue, through experimentation, and through the often fragile process of learning with and from one another.

This book grows out of that process. It assembles a range of grassroots initiatives that take the challenge of translating global concerns into local practices seriously. Global justice, climate change, social inequality, gender gap, migration, questions of peace and conflict—these are not abstract issues ‘out there,’ but lived realities that unfold in specific places, within particular histories and conditions. The projects presented here show how such realities can be engaged through situated, relational, and open-ended educational practices. They remind us that the ‘global’ does not precede the ‘local,’ but becomes visible, tangible, and contestable through it.

Global Citizenship Education itself is marked by a productive tension. On the one hand, it is promoted as a key educational response to global challenges, aiming to foster responsibility, solidarity, and the capacity to act in an interconnected world. On the other hand, it resists easy definition. Its promises can appear too broad, its concepts too open, and its expectations too ambitious. Rather than attempting to resolve these ambiguities, this volume approaches them as part of the very condition of Global Citizenship Education: a field that must remain unsettled if it is to remain meaningful.

In this context, the distinction between different orientations within GCED becomes particularly relevant. Vanessa Andreotti's dis-

inction between *soft* and *critical* approaches has drawn attention to how educational practices can either reproduce or challenge existing global inequalities. While “soft” approaches often emphasize empathy, awareness, and individual responsibility, critical perspectives insist on confronting the historical and structural dimensions of injustice, including colonial legacies, power asymmetries, and epistemic hierarchies. They ask not only how we can respond to global problems, but how we are already entangled in them.

Yet even this critical stance is not the final horizon. Andreotti’s proposal of a Global Citizenship Education *otherwise* suggests a further step—one that is less about refining existing frameworks than about recognizing their limits. It calls for an engagement with complexity that cannot be fully contained within familiar narratives of progress, control, or solution. To think GCED *otherwise* is to remain attentive to what exceeds our categories, to what resists translation, and to what challenges our own assumptions about knowledge, responsibility, and action. It is an invitation to approach education not only as a space of answers, but as a space where difficult questions can be held.

Many of the initiatives presented in this book resonate with such an orientation. They do not present themselves as models to be replicated, nor as solutions to be scaled up without friction. Instead, they offer situated responses—partial, provisional, and often experimental. They engage with the tensions between intention and impact, between learning and unlearning, between global aspirations and local constraints. In doing so, they make visible a form of Global Citizenship Education that is less about certainty than about attentiveness, less about mastery than about relation.

This perspective also shifts how we understand education more broadly. Global Citizenship Education, in this sense, is not an additional subject or a clearly bounded field. It is a way of approaching education that challenges familiar separations—between ‘us’ and ‘others,’ between local and global, between knowledge and responsibility. It foregrounds interdependence, vulnerability, and the need to think and act across differences. In this, it intersects with traditions of peace education, human rights education, and education for sustainable development,

while also pushing beyond them by insisting on a deeper reflection on how we come to know the world and our place within it. Global Citizenship Education means engaging in caring for humans and nature at the grassroots level and in the planetary dimension. The change has to begin at your door, with a perspective for a world that can no longer be divided.

The projects collected in this volume make these reflections tangible. They show that Global Citizenship Education takes shape not in abstract frameworks but in concrete encounters—in classrooms, communities, and collaborative spaces where people engage with one another across boundaries. At the same time, they do not conceal the difficulties of such work. Educational initiatives alone cannot resolve structural inequalities, nor can they escape the conditions in which they are embedded. What they can do, however, is to open spaces in which new forms of understanding, connection, and action become possible.

In this sense, the book can be read both as a documentation and as an invitation. It documents experiences, practices, and reflections that have emerged within and around the Global Campus Online. But it also invites readers to approach Global Citizenship Education as an ongoing, unfinished process—one that requires critical awareness, humility, and a willingness to remain engaged even in the absence of clear solutions.

Perhaps this is where the work of the Chair, and the contributions gathered here, find their common ground: in the refusal to settle for easy answers, and in the insistence that education must remain responsive to a world that is itself in motion. To take Global Citizenship Education seriously, in this sense, is not to arrive at a stable position, but to stay with the questions that connect us—across places, perspectives, and possibilities.

Finally, this volume would not have been possible without the commitment, creativity, and perseverance of many people. Our sincere thanks go to the core team of the Global Campus Online—Christiane Faymann, Elia Rinne, and Jasmin Donlic—whose dedication has been central to the project's development and realization. We also gratefully acknowledge the funding provided by the Land Kärnten (Carinthia), the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), and the Federal Ministry for

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For further reading

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