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## **Value-Creating Perspectives and an Intercultural Approach to Curriculum for Global Citizenship**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Several recent scholarly works have challenged the Western dominated paradigm underlying the UNESCO-led agenda of global citizenship education. This includes the heavy influence of Enlightenment liberalism. Further discussions must also be centered on integrating non-Western perspectives so that the practice of global citizenship has a more critical and intercultural focus. This paper offers suggestions to develop curriculum for global citizenship based on a study of leaders and their movements, including Wangari Maathai and Daisaku Ikeda who have inspired people to act within their local communities based on their personal values that are rooted in their experiences with being engaged in both Western and non-Western modes of thinking.

**Keywords:** Global Citizenship Education, Education for Sustainable Development, Ikeda, Maathai, Makiguchi, Toda

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This paper shares key outcomes from my recent work and publication on the education strand of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO's) 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The United Nation's (UN's) 2030 agenda "seeks to eradicate extreme poverty and strengthen universal peace by integrating and balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental" (UNESCO 2018: 3). As argued through my study of literature and works from selected Asian thinkers is that what seems to be missing in this UNESCO-led discourse is a more detailed engagement with the human/personal dimension, as well as a values-based framework for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED or GCE) reflected in target 4.7 of the SDGs.

The key proposal of this paper is that the knowledge of all groups, not only the dominant but also the subordinate groups, as well as less widely known perspectives are represented within the curriculum across formal, non-formal, and informal education settings across the world. A more substantial engagement with alternative paradigms and perspectives on education can develop a more intercultural approach to the curriculum. At a basic level, the inclusion of diverse knowledge systems can be selected from different regional diasporas that are similar to but also distinct from each other. For example, Ubuntu from Sub-Saharan Africa (see Swanson 2007), Buen Vivir from South America (see Van Norren 2017), and Soka from Japan (see Sharma 2018). These approaches are necessary to bring into the mainstream discourse within ESD and GCE for a variety of reasons as explored in this paper.

### **SDGS FOR A PEACEFUL AND GLOBAL WORLD**

Let me start by providing some context to these discussions within the emerging discourse on GCE. Several scholarships challenge the Western dominated agendas and the underlying Western worldview in GCE (Andreotti 2006, 2011; Andreotti and de Souza 2012; Bowden 2003; Calhoun 2002; Dill 2013; Gaudelli 2016; Jooste & Heleta 2017; Merryfield 2009; Tarozzi & Torres 2016; Torres 2017). And so, a question worth considering is, "how and where do we fit in less widely known perspectives within the discourse in GCE?" Among various possible responses to this query is the need to promote

comparative and contextual studies that bring into focus alternative ways of thinking, being, acting, and living that have informed people and have led to the development of sustainable communities worldwide. This paper reiterates my emphasis through ongoing presentations and publications of the importance of paying attention to different philosophical understandings and values-based perspectives that can bring forth diverse and creative solutions to global issues, such as, environmental degradation and climate change. Education within the classroom can learn lessons from initiatives in which people and communities have been propelled to take part in local, national, regional, and global solutions as engaged citizenry based on their values that have informed their action for positive personal, social, and environmental transformation.

Examples include the Green Belt Movement in Kenya pioneered by Wangari Maathai (1940-2011) and inspired by African tradition, such as, the mythology surrounding the Sycamore Fig Tree (Webster 2012; also see SGI 2014). Kenyan folklore and the traditional narratives of the Kikuyu people, the largest ethnic group in Kenya, have long revered and worshipped the Fig Tree as sacred. Maathai advocated the importance of the Fig Tree's presence on the entire ecosystem and the people who depend on the soil and water to live. (See <https://www.greenbeltmovement.org/node/374>) She encouraged rural women to plant trees to combat the negative effects of soil erosion and forest devastation that was causing them social and economic anxiety. Their initiative was confronted by the dictatorial political regime and consequently a nationwide movement to protect the Natural environment took place which had positive impacts in terms of economic growth, defend human rights and promote democracy within the nation. The marches led by Maathai in 1970s with protestors holding seedlings to stop deforestation can be compared to the marches led by the leader of the non-violent movement for Indian independence, Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), for example, the 1930 Salt March to gather salt from the ocean in a campaign to boycott the British rule. These examples suggest that development can be possible through harnessing the ontological understandings that come from peoples' native culture. Further, a perception of the unity of human life and its Natural and social environment can act as an enabling condition for environmental and social progress.

There are several recommendations for policy and praxis made in my recent study (Sharma 2018) that also challenge the dominance of English as the *lingua franca* in developing and promoting GCE worldwide, which makes it particularly important that curricular themes and practices can allow

learning from other views that are developed within non-English and/or non-Western contexts.

## **THE RELEVANCE OF ALTERNATIVE PARADIGMS AND PERSPECTIVES TO THE PRACTICE OF SDGS**

In re-examining possible alternative paradigms, perspectives, and praxis in achieving the SDGs, there are two questions that I have posed through my ongoing work in relation to this enquiry.

- Are there different ways in which we might approach issues of social justice? And tied to this question is
- How can we expand our focus from individual empowerment to enable bold collective efforts (see Ikeda 2018)?

It is no exaggeration to state that given the heavy dominance of neoliberal capitalism worldwide and its impact across various national educational policies, the efforts and plans to tackle the SDGs are largely oriented to empower the individual human being. While this is important, it also leaves out the particularities that are also equally important in meeting these goals, such as, the particularities of culture, of the individual's needs, interests, and values.

One of the guiding questions for my work has been on how education can focus on the individual but not become individualistic. This to me is a serious concern that has emerged from the Enlightenment period, Western-scientific-industrial revolution, and modern capitalism. My long-term study of selected Asian thinkers shows that their engagement with particularities, values, and beliefs have led to their own creative and distinct strategies and action to create positive change and sustainable communities within their respective geographical locales.

These include the Japanese educators, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871-1944), Josei Toda (1900-1958), and Daisaku Ikeda (b. 1928). Makiguchi, Toda, and Ikeda are the leaders of the lay Buddhist organization, the Soka Gakkai, and the members of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) across 192 countries and territories have provided support to achieve the UN's efforts to build a peaceful and sustainable world within their own communities, particularities, and daily life. Ikeda is also the founder of several institutions promoting peace, culture, and education. This includes several kindergartens, primary, and secondary schools, and universities across the

world. His annual peace proposal offers several suggestions often directed to various UN initiatives. In the recent past, there has been a surge of studies that examine the relevance of Ikeda's Soka education (lit. Value-creating education) to contemporary education, human rights, and a sustainable future.

In comparative and contextual studies of the Soka progenitors and other thinkers from across the world, I have tried to develop confluences in their ideas. For instance, the ideas and values of Gandhi and the Soka progenitors who have galvanized millions of people to work for social justice. The practice of ESD and GCE and efforts to achieve the SDGs can take strides forward through drawing on the important lessons from the vast repository of human wisdom that these thinkers have generated in building consensus within disparate groups and communities. In a lecture titled "Thoughts on Education for Global Citizenship" delivered at the Teachers College, Columbia University in 1996 Ikeda proposes as an essential element of a global citizen "the wisdom to perceive the interconnectedness of all life and living" (Ikeda 2008: 444). This wisdom, Ikeda notes elsewhere is a "living wisdom" that can be learned from various cultural traditions that appreciate the unity and connectedness of life, such as, the Desana people of the Amazon and the Iroquois people of North America" (Ikeda 2002).

One of the consequences of similar worldviews has led some nations states, including Ireland and India, to give constitutional rights to trees and rivers as being sacred. This wisdom, of perceiving the interdependence between the self and the Natural and social environment, is what Maathai was able to perceive through the influence of the Kikuyu culture on her family. Similarly, Gandhi and the Soka progenitors developed their wisdom to understand the interdependence of all life through their respective religious beliefs and cultures that are based on a *dharmic* view of life, that is, the notion of a universal law that nurtures and sustains all life. These alternative ways of thinking about human and all life can have important consequences in the aims and methods for education for citizenship.

My recently published book suggests that a shift in paradigm and perspectives will have a significant bearing on the practice of education for global citizenship (UNESCO 2015: 14-15). The title of my book is *Value-creating global citizenship education* (Sharma 2018) which emphasizes the value that can be created through bold and collective efforts. To summarize the many arguments made in this work, Value-creating global citizenship education can contribute to the UN's 2030 goals for sustainability and global citizenship in at least two ways.

1. **First, as an educational resource** through the several lessons learned from a study of alternative paradigms and perspectives of

how we think about ourselves, society, Nature, and the universe have a significant bearing on the three domains of learning within the global citizenship education conceptual dimensions of UNESCO (2015) – the cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral.

2. **Second, through the lessons learned from a study of these movements** that have inspired people worldwide to act based on their own values. They are central to the discussions on education for citizenship across nation states experiencing the effects of migration, displacement, and transition.

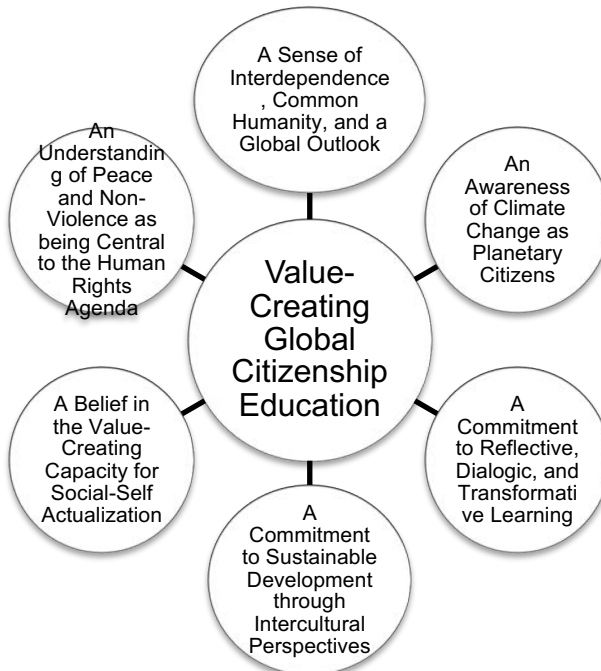
As a member expert with the UN forum Harmony with Nature I advocate an Earth-centered worldview of Mother Nature, also called Earth Jurisprudence (see <http://www.harmonywithnatureun.org/welcome/>). Moving on with the arguments of this paper, in the realm of education, one of the core challenges of fostering youth as future world citizens needs to be a focus on the values, beliefs, and interests of the individual learner. A broader engagement with the human/personal dimension is necessary for the success of education for global citizenship as mentioned before. These are 6 themes provided for the practice of a Value-creating global citizenship education as mentioned in my previous work (Sharma 2018: 93-94). These themes aim to promote the necessary knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to enable learners to develop:

- **A sense of interdependence, common humanity, and a global outlook:** that explores existential questions including that from non-Western perspectives; while also challenging colonial perspectives.
- **An awareness of climate change as planetary citizens:** that acknowledges that climate change is real; develops reverence for Nature; a wonder and appreciation for life as creative coexistence; and mandates an urgent action and concern for the welfare of the planet by the citizens of the earth.
- **A commitment to reflective, dialogic, and transformative learning:** that prioritizes not just a quantitative approach to acquiring more knowledge about others but a qualitative one that facilitates the development of the learner's own values and attitudes through dialogic processes.
- **A commitment to sustainable development through intercultural perspectives:** that engages with particularities and specificities of the local while also connecting with global issues; and the integration of

lessons from history on the normative and creative use of values across societies such that a study of these dissidents and their movements can promote.

- **A belief in the value-creating capacity for social-self actualization:** that can approach issues concerned with social justice, gender, and equity through developing the value-creating capacity of the learner to contribute to individual benefit and social good.
- **An understanding of peace and non-violence as being central to the human rights agenda:** that builds character through a critical engagement with studies on the patterns of living of people and communities across Western/non-Western diasporas that are based on peace and non-violence.

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed framework based on a value-creating paradigm for GCE.



**Figure 1.** Framework for *Value-creating global citizenship education* (Sharma 2018: 94).

Within each theme a brief description is provided that challenges epistemic assumptions for the practice of GCE that is currently often based on a neoliberal paradigm. One of the distinctions that can be drawn between the neoliberal paradigm and a more holistic approach to ESD and GCE is the shift in focus from individual empowerment to building relationships through the process of education, between the learner and her/his Natural and social environment. As mentioned earlier through the examples of Maathai, Gandhi, and the Soka progenitors, since all life is interdependent, the education of people cannot take place in isolation, and so moving beyond just empowering the individual, education for global citizenship needs to aim at developing the individual's capacity to harness her/his network of independent relations starting from their local community and Natural environment.

I won't go into the detail of my in-depth study of these thinkers over two decades across India, Japan, the UK, and the US (Sharma 1999, 2008, 2018) which provides brief insights into these thinkers and their ideas. For example, Gandhi's understanding of the Natural world in spiritual terms, his values and beliefs, as well as creative strategies to use values, such as, non-violence in real world politics, and enthuse millions of people, including youth in the non-violent *satyagraha* movement or movement based on truth force. Similarly, Makiguchi through his work, *Jinsei chirigaku* or The Geography of Human Life, arrived at the understanding of humanitarian competition, making human happiness at the core of education, that is, in developing the individual's ability to live contributively, for the welfare of oneself, Nature, and humanity (see Makiguchi 1983: 398–401, also Ikeda 2003a: 21). The goal of education within the Soka paradigm, which is individual happiness, is inextricably linked to other people, that is, an individual cannot become truly happy on one's own. Instead, happiness is found in a life of value creation which as Ikeda (2008: 443) describes is "the capacity to find meaning, to enhance one's own existence and contribute to the well-being of others, under any circumstances." This inseparable link between the happiness of the self and the welfare of the other permeates the ethos within the Soka education institutions that are secular schools and universities established by Ikeda.

In this paper I would like to focus on the contributions made from a study on their ideas and modes of thinking to the important task of ESD and GCE. Overall, based on my study of Asian perspectives an acknowledgement of one's common humanity I have argued, would give emphasis to perceiving the divisiveness and alienation that is present within modern societies. That is, it would place a strong emphasis within the curriculum to tackle stereotyping and foster the socio-emotional capacity of compassion towards



all inhabitants of the earth whilst also recognizing the nature and forms of power structures in an increasingly globalized world and the unseen perpetuation of colonial perspectives. The behavioral response to solve global issues would be rooted in a non-dualistic belief system which perceives an inextricable link between the self-other-Nature-universe. Through an intuitive examination of the depth of human life such belief systems subscribe to the view that an attitudinal change within each person can impact upon their environment (see Ikeda 2003b: 106). The emphasis in the educational environment that subscribe to this way of thinking, such as in the Soka Schools in Japan, aim to develop and foster meaningful life-to-life connections among people – between students and teachers, schools and communities, and so on. Based on my proposals for a shift in putting more emphasis on relationship building within the curriculum, I have developed the 6 themes stated earlier that are a response to UN goals, such as, climate change, peace and non-violence. For related discussions see the video via either web link provided below under Sharma 2019.

### **LESSONS FOR GCE DEVELOPED BASED ON A STUDY OF DIVERSE EXAMPLES**

In addition to proposing themes for the practice of GCE I have also emphasized in my earlier work (Sharma 2018) that curricular lessons be developed based on a study of thinkers and movements for ESD and GCE. I have questioned through my long-term work of how can we foster active citizens within the classroom and learn from the examples of those who are creating change within their respective communities? Through related discussions in my earlier work (Sharma 2018: 115-130) I had proposed teaching guidelines that can used to integrate non-Western perspectives within the curriculum to develop a global outlook within teacher education programs; for the professional development of in-service teachers; within undergraduate (bachelor's) and graduate (master's) programs on international and comparative education, development education, and global learning; and within civil society organizations promoting GCE. Core activities were provided that can be used to develop curriculum according to the needs of the cohort. Suggestions were made in that work for lessons that engage with the Asian thinkers, Gandhi, Makiguchi, and Ikeda's beliefs, modes of thinking, behaviors, and strategies as active protagonists within their respective countries.

In this paper suggestions are made to include a study of Maathai and the Green Revolution that can be integrated within the lessons in my earlier work (ibid.) to develop curriculum based on a study of leaders who have inspired people to act within their local communities based on their personal values that are rooted in their experiences with being engaged in both Western and non-Western modes of thinking. For example, Maathai's personal values that were shaped by both the Kikuyu culture and Christianity; Gandhi's in-depth reading of Christianity, Hinduism, and Jainism; Ikeda's numerous dialogues with faith leaders, scholars, and people from across the world. In this section I will briefly introduce the lesson development and overview in my earlier work. A more detailed engagement with the framework can be found in the above-cited work. Overall this proposed course can challenge cohorts to read and reflect on the writings of Gandhi, Makiguchi, Toda, Ikeda, and Maathai (primary sources); compare texts authored by other scholars on their ideas (secondary sources); and to develop questions related to education for global citizenship. Each unit or module within the proposed course can integrate these successive steps:

1. **watch/read** the assigned material;
2. **reflect** on the materials studied; and
3. work on a culminating **activity/assignment**.

Lessons on the educational philosophy and practice of these thinkers can be taught through the use of a historical-comparative study and discussion of non-Western perspectives, knowledge systems, and cultural contexts in education. A three-part historical study can explore

(a) their respective **historical backgrounds** that includes the political, religious, and cultural contexts in which they were situated,

(b) their **personal histories** including relevant events and influences on their lives, for example, as Ikeda recounts from his meeting with Maathai in February 2005 in Tokyo, Maathai placed an importance on her experience of encountering good teachers in her life (Ikeda 2006: 165-167),

(c) their **present use and applicability** that draws together lessons from different leaders and movements from non-Western diasporas.

Overall the methods used to study their ideas are based on critical, textual, and biographical analyses of their respective lives and values. This involves a study of their writings (primary sources), as well as a comparison of the texts authored by other scholars on their ideas (secondary sources). Primary sources that have been translated need to be read while being mindful of the translator's position and influence on the translated work. Further, the

results of historical-comparative studies can shed light on broader issues that are relevant to educating citizens in the twenty-first century.

The following questions can be used to guide a more detailed engagement with these thinkers, their ideas, movements, and relevance for GCE (developed and adapted from Sharma 2008):

**1. What are the key challenges faced by these thinkers that can be identified through a contextual and historical analysis?** This question guides an investigation of the context in which these thinkers were placed. It also draws us to engage with their writings/texts, and to understand the time and context in which these were written. (See this video that takes Gandhi as an example to show why contextualization is an essential skill:

<https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/reading-like-a-historian-contextualization>)

**2. How have the “values” systems or values and beliefs of the thinkers impacted upon education today?** This question guides an investigation into the use and influence of their ideas in education and examines the applicability of their proposals.

**3. Is there any way in which the findings of this analysis may have generalizable use for future studies?** This question engages with the outcomes from a study on these thinkers that can have a broader impact beyond the task of schooling and education. For example, an identification of their strategies, behaviors, and beliefs as citizens that can be useful for professional development and training across sectors.

To summarize, as the sessions progress students should be able to critically engage with various issues within GCE across the international community as well as to understand that education needs to be sensitive to the culture of the students, school, and community. The focus on these alternative paradigms and perspectives can highlight two common aspects in the above examples of non-Western perspectives. The first is a focus on social justice that stems from the needs and values of the people. The second is that the knowledge systems that influenced these thinkers and movements are based on interdependent worldviews. The focus for these thinkers was not just individual empowerment, but of taking bold, collective action for positive change. The relevance of this for global citizenship is that education on its own cannot compensate for society (Bernstein 1970: 345). And so, schooling is not enough in education for citizenship that must take place across the home-school-community continuum. This also requires an engagement with the values, needs, and interests of the individual student within classroom teaching. The importance of this study also suggests the need for a whole-school approach to GCE and ESD with a focus on not just individual

empowerment but also the challenging task of building relationships between the learner and their Natural/social environment. The development of school policies and practices need to engage with the goal of *learning to live together* in the twenty-first century (see Delors 1996, UNESCO 2001).

## **CONCLUSION: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM A STUDY OF VALUE-CREATING GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION**

1. **A broader engagement with the human/personal dimension** is necessary for the success of education for global citizenship and the 17 SDGs. This would fill the present gap within UNESCO's proposals for sustainable development by adding the personal dimension to the currently proposed economic, social, and environmental dimensions (see UNESCO 2018: 3).
2. **Value-creating global citizenship education as a pedagogical approach** in addition to the three key approaches in ESD currently offered by UNESCO, which are, "a learner-centered approach," "action-oriented learning," and "transformative learning" (UNESCO 2017: 55).
3. **An emphasis on building relationships** through ESD and GCE between the individual learner and her/his Natural and social environment by engaging with the personal dimension.
4. **Lessons learned from movements** inspired by Maathai, Gandhi, Ikeda and others to help expand the current focus within ESD and GCE from individual empowerment to enable bold collective efforts.

Gandhi, who had an influence on leaders, such as, Nelson Mandela (1918-2013) and Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968), spoke of moving beyond "*ahimsa* (non-violence) of the weak." (In an interview to Deputation from Quetta dated 8 July 1947 in the Collected Works, Vol. 96, 7 July 1947 to 26 September 1947. Also see *Harijan* dated 26 March 1938, 4 November 1939.)

There is much to be learned from the bold action taken to combat climate change by Kenya that includes my earlier example of the Green Belt Movement. Further, as argued through the discussions and practice offered in this paper, there is a lot to learn from the historical legacy of thinkers who have demonstrated by their examples of how to create a more peaceful and sustainable world.

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