

Chapter 4

The Power of Volunteering in Fostering Global Citizenship Education

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ABSTRACT

Recent research tends to point to a connection between volunteering and global citizenship education. Particularly, it has been indicated that volunteering enhances participants' confidence, critical thinking, collaboration, communication skills and competencies, employability, and civil society vibrancy. There are many avenues to link local volunteering to global citizenship. However, although local volunteering has great potential to support the development of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes for global citizenship, little research has focused on such connection. Employing the semi-structured interview qualitative research method, this chapter presents empirical research findings of volunteering practices among critical stakeholders in primary schools in one of Kenya's counties. To make the discourse more lucid, an introduction to global citizenship, volunteering, and global citizenship education is made. This is followed by a description of the methodology used in the study, presentation and discussion of the results, conclusion, as well as recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

There is increasing research evidence that focuses on the link between international experiences like volunteering and studying abroad, and global citizenship education. This includes exploring the potential for young people to acquire skills and experiences to enable them actively participate in issues as global citizens (Rhoads & Szelenyi, 2011; Jones, 2010). The benefits of global citizenship are felt across the school and beyond (OXFAM, 2021). Particularly, global citizenship helps young people to build their own understanding of world events; think about their values and what is important to them; take learning into the real world; and challenge ignorance and intolerance. Similarly, global citizenship is beneficial in the sense that it makes one get involved in their local, national and global communities;

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develop an argument and voice their opinions; as well as see that they have power to act and influence the world around them.

But, who is a global citizen? According to Smith and Laurie (2011), global citizenship is an elusive concept that has many and contradictory definitions. Broadly speaking, a global citizen is one who is conscious of the wider world and has a sense of their own role in it; respects and values diversity; has an understanding of how the world works; is passionately committed to social justice; and participates in the community at a range of levels, both local and global (OXFAM, 2021). Furthermore, a global citizen works with others to make the world more equitable and sustainable place; and takes responsibility for their actions. Thus, global citizenship is all about encouraging young people to develop the knowledge, skills and values they need to engage with the world. It is about the belief that we can all make a difference as well.

Given the varied qualities that global citizens are expected to display today, learning institutions should strive to inculcate them among students. According to Wilde, Bentall, Blum and Bourn (2020), they include, but not limited to looking beyond their individual and local interests as well as appreciating the complexity of an interconnected world; understanding the nature of the challenges that face the world; and being aware of their social, ethical and political responsibilities. Other desirable qualities are being ready to demonstrate leadership and work together to change the world for the better; the ability to solve problems through innovation and entrepreneurship; and fitting well into the global job market that values the 21st Century competencies and skills.

Global citizenship inspires and informs teachers and parents, too. But above all, it shows young people that they have a voice (Wilde, Bentall, Blum & Bourn, 2020; UNESCO 15a). The world may be changing fast, but they can make a positive difference and help build a fairer, safer and more secure world for everyone. According to OXFAM (2021), education for global citizenship is not an additional subject. Instead, it is a framework for learning, reaching beyond school to the wider community. At the class level, it can be promoted either through the existing curriculum or new initiatives and activities. Global citizenship education aims to be transformative, and that it is particularly more relevant in a world of change when individuals are increasingly called upon to make a positive contribution to their communities through the promotion of peace, solidarity, and respect for others and the environment (UNESCO, 2014b; UNESCO 15a).

Just like the concept of global citizenship, there is no common agreement on the definition of global citizenship education (Pacho, 2020). This is partly attributable to the reasoning that the concept is still evolving. Schattle (2010) observes that global citizenship education entails being aware of responsibilities beyond one's immediate communities and making decisions to change habits and behavior patterns accordingly. In UNESCO (2015a; 2015b), global citizenship education aims to equip learners of all ages with those values, knowledge and skills that are based on and instill respect for human rights, social justice, diversity, gender equality and environmental sustainability. In other words, such education is supposed to empower learners to be responsible global citizens.

As per the North- South Centre (2002), global citizenship education opens people's eyes and minds to the realities of the world thereby awakening them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights for all. Accordingly, it is understood to encompass development education, human rights education, education for sustainability, education for peace and conflict prevention and intercultural education. The aim of global citizenship education therefore, is to enable learners to understand world issues while empowering them with knowledge, skills, values and attitudes desirable for world citizens to face global challenges.

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