

A Pasifika perspective on global citizenship education

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I open this discussion paper by first introducing myself by way of pēpeha; this is integral to who I am, my way of being, connecting, and knowing the world. Ko Tiavi tōku maunga, ko e Loloa tōku awa, ko Hāmoa tōku iwi, ko Siumu tōku hapū, ko Jacoba Matapo tōku ingoa. I am a Sāmoan, New Zealand-born Pasifika scholar, and I intentionally share with you my pepeha, honouring the reo (language) of the indigenous people of Aotearoa as well as sharing my ancestral connection to people and place. The term *Pasifika* is a collective reference to Pacific peoples who have made Aotearoa their home and is also inclusive of New Zealand-born Pasifika people (Matapo, 2017). Pasifika as a term can be framed in various ways: as a transnational concept it allows for Pacific ethnic-specific ties to ancestral lands in the Pacific regions, including collective responsibility that traverses oceanic boundaries. Pasifika has also been defined by Pacific scholars within Aotearoa as a diasporic notion, one that influences emerging identities and new relations to places, keeping ties to Pacific homelands and genealogy (Matapo, 2018). This is not to say that the concept of Pasifika is not contested. Pacific scholars have also documented the homogenising effect of Pasifika as an umbrella term, which disregards ethnic-specific identities and cultural differences.

Shifting to the definition of global citizenship framed by UNESCO (2015), there is an emphasis on a sense of belonging to a broader community and global humanity, whereby political, cultural, economic, and social interconnectedness and interdependency are grounded upon a common human-rights-based, socially just, and democratic ideology. The term “Pasifika” as a transnational concept, already demonstrates global border crossing of Pacific peoples in their responsibilities and obligations, particularly interdependency within the collective and the sustained intergenerational connection to ancestral lands. One such example I express in this discussion paper is my personal responsibility to my nu’u (village) and ancestral lands in Sāmoa. As a New Zealand-born Sāmoan, I journey daily in and with culture to inform my reality, my history, and belonging to place (both home

in Aotearoa and in Sāmoa). My contribution to the collective in Sāmoa takes many forms, from daily communication to the preparation I am taking to be bestowed a chiefly title which serves my aiga (family) and nu'u to secure links to people (past and present) and ancestral lands for generations to come.

I move now to the canvassing aspects of Pacific history. Globalisation in the Pacific is not new and, in fact, is deeply embedded in the histories of Pacific culture. Pacific oceanic navigators, for example, crossed vast distances to trade, to populate new lands, and generate new understandings in social and cultural exchange. So, I question how an understanding of Pacific indigenous knowledge may generate alternative understandings of global citizenship and global citizenship education (GCED). Referring back to the notion of common-human rights-based ideology that underpins global citizenship discourse, I am somewhat sceptical of the position of “human” and “rights” that may be presented as universal for all. I echo the call of Pacific indigenous scholars (Meyer, 2014; Thaman, 2003; Toso, 2011; Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017 to name a few), who argue for the importance of Pacific indigenous knowledge in education for Pacific peoples, rather than relying on dominant education ideologies to shape personhood and subjectivity of Pacific learners.

What it means to be human must be called into question first, then a critique of that particular human subject allows for a deeper understanding of who is marginalised, including whose knowledge systems, social structures, and politics are privileged in GCED and why. Not all human beings come from the same ontological position to start with; thus the foundation of a human-rights-based approach in GCED must be open to local Pacific ways of knowing and being, honouring different realities, and generating opportunities to first connect local knowledge with global. For Pacific peoples, I would suggest GCED fosters processes of decolonising education and the associated regimes of education. For Pacific peoples in the Pacific regions and in Aotearoa, GCED could create opportunities in education that honour history, culture, ancestors, connection to place, and a reconceptualising of indigenous personhood which has been subjugated and assimilated throughout Western education philosophy, programmes, and curricula.

There are particular conceptualisations present in the discourse of GCED. Two of the main features are neoliberalism and critical democratic traits—neither of which are reconcilable (Pais & Costa, 2017). Global marketisation pervades

education from bureaucratic interest to profit-driven corporate programmes. This is evident in Aotearoa and in the Pacific regions. Global education and economic trends, including future-focused innovations, run the risk of privileging global knowledge versus local knowledges. It is the local Pacific knowledges for Pasifika peoples that tie the collective to place, ancestors, and people. Such examples include foreign investors who fund education research in the Pacific region imposing normative ideals in education that are not conducive to local knowledges, language, or collective ways of being.

The fact is, education philosophy and policy within Aotearoa is fundamentally based upon the Western canon, where liberal and progressive ideals infuse particular identities of learners, and that is mainly the learner as an individual—autonomous, and self-directing. For Pasifika, the notion of individual as such is not so clear cut. The complexity lies in understanding how the Pasifika learner is situated in time and space (*vā*), connected to past, present, and future—the relationship extends beyond people and the here and now; it is open to ancestors, lands, ocean, and cosmos (Matapo, 2019). I wonder how this Pacific indigenous conceptualisation of human existence could challenge conventional understandings of human-rights-based approaches in GCED. What happens when the human subject is presented as a multiverse being, not only connected to earth but also to cosmos, and how does this challenge global education discourse and what it means to be a global citizen? These are fundamental questions for Pacific indigenous peoples who are traversing methodologies of GCED.

Personally, as a Sāmoan Pasifika scholar navigating education philosophy and politics, I am critical of how measures of education are constrained to individualistic conceptualisations, whereas in the spirit of the collective, a Sāmoan indigenous worldview would not assume knowledge or capacity of knowing as in individualised process (Tui Atua, 2009). In addition, from a Tongan worldview, Thaman (2003) has expressed that knowing and knowledge do not belong to one individual and is not only limited to humanity. When the individual is stressed in notions of success in education, a particular ethic of engagement in education is produced. Furthermore, I question how the principles of critical democracy, which are foundational to GCED, are disadvantaged as education continues to be shaped by an ever-increasing neoliberal agenda and priorities.

Returning to the aim of GCED, I wish to engage further with the possibilities for Pacific indigenous peoples—here, I am speaking both to Pacific Island peoples (Pacific region) and Pasifika (New Zealand Pacific peoples). For many Pasifika peoples, the ties to Pacific Island ancestral lands, villages, and genealogy remain integral to identity, ways of being, and knowing the world. I have been fortunate in my upbringing, to be taught fa’a Sāmoa (Sāmoan way of life) and gagana Sāmoa (Sāmoan language), to have an openness to Sāmoan collective understandings of personhood and to have learnt of the old ways of healing and spirituality unique to my ancestors. I recognise that not all New Zealand-born Pacific peoples have opportunities to connect and reconnect to their ancestral lands or nu’u (villages). I question what this means for the sustaining of Pacific indigenous knowledge and what the implications may be for Pacific generations to come. If GCED seeks to empower learners to be critical of their place in an interconnected world, then I would hope for education to engender indigenous philosophy, where Pacific peoples from all locations are encouraged to critique historical, social, and political inequalities to decolonise personhood and be secure in their sense of being in an interconnected world.

Another example I wish to provide as a provocation for this discussion aligns with the aims of GCED—that is, the concept of sustainability. I have chosen this specific concept because of the very real impact of global warming upon Pacific island nations. Whether it be the death of coral reefs or the rising sea levels, Pacific peoples are faced with drastic environmental shifts as their new reality. Contemporary Polynesian navigators have also explained how the signs (of waters, winds, earth) have changed over a short period of time and that the earth and ocean are in turmoil (Spiller, Barclay-Kerr, & Panoho, 2015). Unfortunately, the outcome of climate change has essentially stemmed from toxic infiltrations of neoliberal and capitalist politics affecting human conduct (ways of being in the world). GCED to re-imagine politics for peace, justice, and inclusion, could employ Pacific indigenous knowledge of world and human connection to world. I raise several examples here of Pacific indigenous concepts that confront notions of Western ownership or commodification of land. The genealogical and biological relation presented in the concept whenua (Māori), fanua (Sāmoan), fonua (Tongan), all directly suggest that land is placenta, the life-giving force before birth and the sustaining life force after birth and death. The human, here in relation

to land and its materiality, is not separate. What is contested through this indigenous concept is the hierarchy of relations, human ownership versus the life force of whenua. I ask, how could these examples encourage global change and a renewed conviction of humanity to the sustainability of earth, ocean, and cosmos?

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