

Global citizenship education—diverse perspectives: Introduction

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<https://doi.org/10.18296/cm.0043>

This special section of *Curriculum Matters* provides the opportunity to consider the topic of global citizenship education from diverse perspectives. Global citizenship education (GCED) is one of those terms that can polarise people. Is it a fresh and new approach to engaging children and young people in global issues or is it merely inducting them into a world view captured by neoliberal and global interests?

These and other views were shared and debated in August 2019 in a panel discussion sponsored by the New Zealand National Commission of UNESCO. Prior to the panel presentations, the five speakers were commissioned to write a short position paper on GCED in which they highlighted what the concept meant to them from a personal, professional, cultural, or other perspective. While not wishing to describe their insights too narrowly or imply that they are speaking for all members of the group(s) they identify with, the papers cover academic, cultural (Māori and Pacific), practitioner, and youth perspectives. While the planning for the panel was done ahead of the March terror attacks, the public debates that followed that event highlighted that there was a need for open and frank discussion on where we stood as citizens of Aotearoa New Zealand in an increasingly fraught and fragmented world.

The five panelists presented a shortened version of their papers at an open event at the National Library in Wellington followed by a question and answer session. The size and engagement of the audience showed that there was keen interest in the topic. This special section of *Curriculum Matters* has provided the opportunity to disseminate the edited papers more widely. The set of papers offers a unique insight into varying perspectives on GCED and its relevance to the Aotearoa New Zealand context. It is our hope that they provoke further thought and discussion.

Bronwyn Wood sets the scene by attempting to explain what GCED is, its origins, and its contested nature. She highlights critiques that problematise

how GCED can be seen as supporting imperialist, capitalist, and neoliberal agendas. Wood, however, feels that there is a need for better understanding of the multidimensional and multispatial nature of contemporary global citizenship policies and practices. She sees that there are challenges with implementing a consistent GCED approach in schools due to the lack of a unifying definition and the open nature of the curriculum.

Sonja Macfarlane considers a Māori world view has much to offer the discussion of GCED in Aotearoa New Zealand. She poses questions about GCED's compatibility and relevance for tangata whenua. By exploring existing Māori values and constructs, she concludes that global citizenship is a shared and universal responsibility but one in which we must tread carefully with respect for the rights, jurisdiction, and authority of others, especially first nations peoples.

Jacoba Matapo provides a Pacific lens on the topic. She agrees that we belong to a broader community and global humanity. In her view, we need to acknowledge our political, cultural, economic, and social connectedness. Any framework we design, however, should be based on human rights and strive for a socially just and democratic society. She concurs with Macfarlane on the importance of protecting Indigenous rights against the domination of Western constructs that privilege some sectors of society and marginalise others.

Maria Perreau focuses on what GCED means for educators and provides a definition of GCED that is a process rather than an abstract concept. It is a process that “enables people to understand their lives and experiences in relationship with the planet, each other, and the systems and structures of the societies in which these relationships exist”. Education should empower young people to critique systems of injustice and take action towards transformative change.

Peter McKenzie concludes the set of the papers with the voices of the very young people whom Perreau wishes to empower. He challenges the myth of young people as disengaged and apathetic. He offers examples of the transformative changes that young people have achieved. McKenzie explains that young people have to strike their own path because of the bias and self-interest that they see in our public institutions. In order to move forward, he suggests reforming the political system and strengthening the curriculum.

In looking over the set of papers, I am struck more by the commonalities than the divergence. I will conclude with some underlying assumptions that the writers display and offer these as a set of provocations to be held up to scrutiny as we forge a way forward.

The authors assert that:

- we are living in a globalised interconnected world and that we need to come to terms with our global roles and responsibilities
- a form of democratic governance underpinned by human rights and social justice is the ideal
- Indigenous values and concepts have a valuable place in our world and in understanding global rights and responsibilities
- we need to be wary of self-serving agendas that might derail the vision of transforming our world to one that is fairer and more just for all
- education, including education for global citizenship, can be an important contributor to preparing our young people for their roles and responsibilities in a globalised world.

In conclusion, the diverse perspectives of the invited authors highlight that there is much common ground on which to foster dialogue around who we are as citizens of Aotearoa New Zealand, what we stand for, and how we might contribute to broader visions of a socially just world through GCED. We encourage the discussions and debates to continue.

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