



# Preparing teachers for critical global and democratic practice: shifting inquiries into the teaching of democracy and global citizenship in teacher education

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## Abstract

There is an ongoing and increasingly pressing need to prepare teachers and students for a still globalising world. Such work requires that we contemplate how we are preparing learners to think globally and embody critical practices of citizenship. Much work has been done in this space yet there is little work that focuses on teacher educators and their respective views of global citizenship education, the primary paradigm through which the global context and civic action converge. Recognising the important role that teachers play in this educational process and the evolving nature of the notions of citizenship and democracy, this project focuses on Initial Teacher Education (ITE) to understand how teacher educators envisage their roles in preparing pre-service teachers (PSTs) to teach about democracy in schools. To learn how teacher educators understand global citizenship education as part of their research and teaching, we undertook a small case study wherein we interviewed teacher educators to solicit their views of global citizenship education. Through a presentation of the voices of teacher educators, we argue that there is a pressing need for those working in global citizenship education to consider how to better support teacher educators to navigate what we argue are two consistent themes: (a) a complex and unclear conceptual terrain that teacher educators find themselves navigating and; (b) an ever increasing set of regulatory and institutional hurdles that make enacting critical global citizenship challenging.

**Keywords** Global citizenship · Teacher education · Teaching practice

“The Australian Curriculum is designed to prepare young people for the future world in which they will learn, and prepares them to respond to the challenges that will continue to shape their world” (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2023a, para. 2)

Students are to become “confident and creative individuals who understand their responsibilities as global

citizens and know how to affect positive change” (Education Council, 2019, p. 6)

Since the 1970s, Australian education has shifted towards an increasingly global focus due to economic and demographic changes (Campbell & Proctor, 2014). The shift towards global considerations is evident through the language of educational policy seen above in the epigraphs. The *Australian Curriculum* positions preparation “for the future world” and the challenges that “shape their [students’] world” as key focal points for teaching and learning. This is further supported by the *Mparntwe Declaration* (Education Council, 2019) – the broad philosophical goals for education across the nation-state – that highlights the need for education to foster “confident and creative individuals” who can engage as global citizens. In large part, the ascendancy of the Asia region as geopolitically and economically central in the Australian context shapes ‘global’ thinking, evidenced in curriculum priorities such as the *Australian Curriculum’s* focus on “Asia and Australia’s Engagement with Asia” whereby the organising ideas of this curriculum priority are

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positioned as helping teachers and students, “explore how active connections between young people and Asia’s diverse communities can be deepened and contribute to global citizenship” (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2023b, n.p.). Here, global citizenship makes an appearance that, while not very clearly defined, does situate it as a necessary lens for teaching and learning.

Policy-makers are not alone in presenting a vision of cultivating globally aware citizens as an educational goal. Scholars have articulated a vision of global citizenship education (GCE) meant to develop an epistemic and conceptual foundation for the thinking required to achieve those goals. While the meaning, history, and purpose of global citizenship education (GCE) is shaped by a series of political and conceptual challenges (Buchanan et al., 2018), scholars broadly agree that GCE is an important lens to inform knowledge, dispositions, and skill development. As a result, significant effort is invested in educational policy and curriculum towards positioning GCE as a central goal of teaching and learning in schools. Yet, there remain two problems. First, behind the rhetoric, there exists a real absence at work in the *Australian Curriculum* which doesn’t always and effectively operationalise key tenets of global citizenship (Reynolds et al., 2019, 2020) or even make it clear what it is (Peterson, 2020), posing challenges for how student-teachers and teacher educators might translate broad ideals into concrete conceptions and practices. Second, much scholarly and policy work fails to explore how teacher educators – those responsible for preparing teachers for working in schools – conceptualise and understand GCE as part of their work preparing future teachers. Teacher educators themselves may hold a range of positions on and/or interest and investment in GCE. Yet, there is little evidence available on how (or if at all) teacher educators include GCE or in what ways (if at all) they frame GCE as a central goal of education in the way that policy and curriculum do. If GCE is to support thinking about the future challenges and prospects for learners and young people, we, as a field of GCE scholars, need to better understand how future teachers are taught to engage GCE as part of their professional development in initial teacher education.

In this paper, we argue that there remains a scholarly lacuna in that, as a field, GCE researchers prioritise questions about teaching and learning in school contexts or in theory. In doing so, the field has largely overlooked the question of how and to what extent teacher educators (can) develop global citizenship knowledge, dispositions, and skills in future teachers. We argue, then, that we need to shed a light on how, or if, teacher educators conceive of and operationalise GCE as a scholarly and pedagogical ambition. As part of our commitment to understanding what this might look like, we detail the findings of a case study of teacher educators and their understandings of global citizenship

education and its role in their scholarship, teaching and learning. Explored below, we highlight how teacher educators negotiate complex epistemic commitments against the backdrop of institutional and political pressures, resulting in an eclectic “definitional terrain” – a term used to denote the complex and rather unclear understandings of GCE that draw on varying ideas of “global” and “citizenship.” This complexity requires us, as GCE scholars, to broach new conversations about how to better support the inclusion of GCE in teacher educator thinking and practice and how we might respond to the unclear or absent conceptualisation at work in the curriculum that guides both teacher educator and student teacher relationships with knowledge production.

Our work here seeks to build on the small but growing body of literature that looks explicitly at teacher educator views (eg. Kopish, 2017; Waghid, 2023), with an explicit focus on how the very vocabulary of GCE is understood across a wide range of teacher educators with varied disciplinary and epistemic commitments to education. Here, we seek to direct attention away from the well explored views held by pre-service teachers and in the positioning of GCE in teacher education more generally (eg. Andrews & Aydin, 2020; González-Valencia et al., 2020; Goren & Yemini, 2017) towards the views and voices of those who translate what can be an ambiguous discourse into something pedagogically workable. We do this work aware that anxieties and ideals of global citizenship do not emanate solely from teacher educator efforts as the institutions themselves often establish attributes or outcomes at program or institutional levels that are also meant to guide discourse and practice. In that light, we acknowledge that teacher educator views don’t exist in a vacuum or beyond the influences of institutional imperatives but argue that an analysis of these pressures is beyond the scope of this paper.

### **Defining and teaching global citizenship: the murky landscape**

Before exploring how teacher educators conceive of GCE and its constituent components, we look to how GCE is defined and what we know of its inclusion in teacher education. We do so noting a few challenges. First, we acknowledge that the terms “global” and “citizenship” are often nebulous concepts, as is their conceptual marriage in the form of “global citizenship.” Indeed, as Thomas and Banki (2021) note, “‘global citizenship’ is a deeply fraught notion, comprised of two terms that, on their own, warrant careful consideration” (p. 733). Such a sentiment is echoed by Peterson (2020) who argues that, “similar to its ‘parent’ concept ‘global citizenship’, global citizenship education represents something of an enigma to the extent to which the term is now fairly ubiquitous within academic discourse

yet defies clear, precise and—perhaps more importantly—consistent definition” (pp. 1–2). Second, as various scholars have argued, the language of “global” and/or “citizenship” is plagued by colonial logics and assumptions about the world and belonging (Andreotti, 2011; Sabzalian, 2019; Smith & Rogers, 2015). As scholars living and working in a settler-colonial state, we argue that any of the work below is inescapably shaped by our relationships with this nebulous conceptual landscape that nonetheless normalises and reproduces colonial logics of a universal global citizenry. We further acknowledge that tensions exist between various forms of global citizenship education and that the dichotomies that position GCE as either critical or neoliberal often fails to acknowledge that both conceptualisations can frame practice and action at the same time (Hameed et al., 2023). Further, questions exist about what global citizenship is, with some suggesting it is, for example, a virtue (Dzwonkowska, 2022) or an identity with psychological connections (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013). What something like this ambiguity reminds us of are the challenges with being clear on the meanings of our language and the need to provide a sense of what GCE means for both our scholarly and pedagogical work. With this in mind, we offer up a framing of GCE below, doing so recognising that this framing to situate our thinking is necessarily a particular articulation of a broader landscape of meaning that is rather murky.

### Defining the murky landscape of GCE

Literature on GCE widely acknowledges the role that ideologies and values play in shaping what GCE looks like in different contexts, how GCE often reflects societies’ views of themselves and how they want young people to see them, and the national and regional relationships with the global context (Goren & Yemini, 2017; Kennedy, 2013). In the last ten years, the increasing influence of nebulously defined yet powerful (rising) right-wing populist governments, resurgent nationalisms and neoliberalism on education has formed the backdrop to discussions about GCE (Biesta, 2022a; Giroux & Bosio, 2021; Pashby et al., 2020). Consequently, many scholars and educators acknowledge that democracy, in its various forms, are under threat (Biesta, 2022b; Giroux & Bosio, 2021). This threat has prompted an urgent need to reflect on the existing purposes and practices of GCE and its potential impacts on global relations, and to reconceptualise how GCE can be redesigned to respond to the dynamism and complexity of global citizenship effectively and appropriately. Moreover, GCE’s articulation in classrooms has to respond to the murky expression of populism, nationalism, and neoliberalism that consistently shifts what it means to live and participate in a global community. Grappling with these challenges takes place against the backdrop of a proliferation of frameworks, maps and classifications of existing

purposes of and approaches to GCE alongside attempts to highlight similarities, distinctions, complexities, paradoxes and intense conflicts in the characterisation of educational responses to contemporary global challenges (Pashby et al., 2020).

To preface the discussion on the expanse and ‘murkiness’ of GCE, we will anchor our contribution in foundational explanations of global citizenship. Giroux and Bosio (2021) provide a succinct explanation of global citizenship as “a globalised notion of citizenship,” conceptualised as the extension of the “social contract beyond the boundaries of the nation-state” (Giroux & Bosio, 2021, p. 5). They further relate GCE to a broader notion of “democracy in which the global becomes the space for reaffirming and exercising civic courage, social responsibility, politics, and compassion for the plight of others” (p. 5). From this perspective, global citizenship is comprised of a moral/ethical and political dimension (Crick, 2013; Veugelers, 2021). A key complexity in thinking about the purposes and form of GCE lies in considering what constitutes the ideas ‘moral’ and ‘political,’ particularly given their contested meaning. This contestation of key terms sits in stark relief against the critiques in the field centred on the assumption that discussions about GCE are fundamentally underpinned by explicit Western assumptions, hence the relevance to ‘non-Western’ societies are challenged (Andreotti, 2010; Peterson, 2020; Sim & Krishnasamy, 2016). This raises questions about the extent to which it is realistic or even desirable to attempt finding common threads of GCE across diverse contexts. Yet, the very recognition of increasing diversity within and across contexts, and the consequent deliberations about inclusivity, necessitates “a certain civic virtue and ethical value in extending our exposure to difference and otherness” (Giroux & Bosio, 2021, p. 4). Some hold the view that basic beliefs that transcend differences exist (Banks, 2018; Davies, 2013; Landwehr & Steiner, 2017) and that there is value in identifying a globally relevant definition to act as a universal reference point to enable GCE to be discussed from a transnational perspective all the while it can and ought to be understood in the “richness of its local contexts” to recognise “commonalities, shared values and aspirations in developing an intelligent citizenry” (Kennedy & Fairbrother, 2004, p. 289).

A review of research and literature in light of this tension points to several key characteristics of GCE, including:

*Dispositions* including ethical/moral values of mutual worth, dignity, ethical responsibility, understanding, tolerance and the accommodation of a global public sphere where authority can be questioned, held accountable and where dissent is regarded to be a positive value (Giroux & Bosio, 2021), mutual respect, non-violence, and openness to dialogue (Starkey et al., 2014), humility and open-mindedness (Peterson, 2018), justice, democracy, peace

(Hoskins, 2006), human rights (McGregor, 2023) and a vision of being part of a global community of humanity as a whole along with a moral consciousness to act for the good of the world (Dill, 2013).

*Skills* to critically examine contexts, including histories and societal issues, to expand possibilities for self-knowledge and critical and social agency, a culture of questioning, reflection and taking informed action/participation across a range of spheres including the political, cultural and environmental on local, regional, national and global levels (Biesta, 2022a; Giroux & Bosio, 2021; Neoh, 2019; Veugelers, 2021; Westheimer, 2015). In an increasingly neoliberal global context, the skills to “achieve prosperity in a highly competitive” and dynamic global marketplace are also raised (Dill, 2013, p. 4).

*Knowledge* of history, Indigenous knowledges, of one’s birth, origins and specificity of place, the dynamic and complex nature of the global concept of democracy (Giroux & Bosio, 2021), knowledge of formal institutions and processes of civic life (including voting in elections), opportunities for participation and engagement in civic and civil society (Schulz et al. 2010), knowledge of ‘global content’ including about people, places and issues (Poole & Russell, 2015) and an awareness of diverse perspectives (Dill, 2013).

Central to these characteristics of GCE lie the notions of transformation (Giroux & Bosio, 2021), dynamism (Biesta, 2023), diversity and inclusion (Banks, 2021) and active and informed participation in multiple spheres (civil, social and political) and at multiple levels (Print, 2013; Westheimer, 2015). These characteristics align closely to what is often identified in literature as the critical conception of GCE (Pashby et al., 2020). The critical conception, whether it be directly or indirectly related to the notion of democracy, is widely identified to be desirable to support a greater sense of inclusivity within contexts of growing diversity. Yet, this conception is also widely recognised to be the most challenging, unsettling, and uncomfortable, as it stands in competition to the current dominant neoliberal societal discourse (Biesta, 2022a; Veugelers, 2021). Neoliberalism, broadly speaking, refers to a theory of political and economic practices that proposes that

human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. (Harvey, 2005, p. 7)

While the critical conception seeks to extend citizenry participation across multiple social, economic, political and geographical spheres, the neoliberal conception attempts to narrow this realm of participation by portraying societies as apolitical, thus minimising the recognition and place of diversity as an important focal point for thought. While the critical conception of GCE encourages critical discussions about societal issues (Westheimer, 2015), the neoliberal conception limits and discourages this through the prioritisation of developing personal capacities for self-reliant members of society who contribute through individual and/or charitable enterprises (Alviar-Martin & Baildon, 2016). We note that same or similar competencies often relate to both conceptions, particularly the competencies of critical and creative thinking skills. Therefore, some argue that neoliberal and critical conceptions of GCE are not necessarily distinct (Hameed et al., 2023). However, it is important to recognise that tensions between the two exists and the key point of contrast is in distinguishing the purpose of developing the competencies (Neoh, 2017).

Depending on the ideological context, the critical conception of GCE can inform the vision of what a ‘global’ citizen should be and serve as the basis to imagine future forms of GCE. In other contexts, the critical conception may be challenged. Therefore, it is important to note that while these characterisations provide useful analytical bases to understand GCE, they cannot reflect the complexity and nuances of the different discourses and practices that shape GCE (Neoh, 2021; Peterson, 2020). For instance, many scholars have identified the importance of critically examining the potential problems and pitfalls with the moral sources that undergird the dominant characterisations of GCE, highlighting the need to consider how understandings of GCE can potentially serve neoliberal, colonial and nationalising agendas (Dill, 2013; Peterson, 2020; Smith & Neoh, 2023), mirroring the similar discourses of neoliberalism reflected by international frameworks published by the OCED (Neoh, 2021).

The concerns articulated above are evident in the Australian educational context, seen in how the *Australian Curriculum* is deeply invested in nationalising and neoliberal ends through its lack of explicit reference and commitment to a critical and liberal democratic form of GCE (Smith & Neoh, 2023). Exacerbating this further is “the marginal place of GCE in the school curriculum” that sits alongside other concerns including the coloniality of global thinking, the murky or contested language of GCE, and varied agendas (Buchanan et al., 2018, p. 52). The marginalisation of GCE is no doubt facilitated by the lack of a specific focus on GCE where the *Australian Curriculum* focuses on priorities that are more regional, specifically Asia, or narrowed to necessary but limited global concerns such as sustainability.



Following the *Melbourne Declaration* that guided the development of the *Australian Curriculum* currently taught in schools, the *Mparntwe Declaration* was released in 2019 to supersede the *Melbourne Declaration*. The most notable change in relation to GCE is the change in the term active and informed ‘citizens’ in the *Melbourne Declaration*, to active and informed ‘members of the community’. The motivation of the change was not specified, and we speculate that this can signal a possible broadening of a sense of ‘community’ that transcends national boundaries. Yet, the additional elaboration of ‘civic participation’ as “connecting with [citizens’] community and contributing to local and national conversations” (Education Council, 2019, p. 8) emphasises national priorities.

The eclectic conceptual terrain of the field of GCE explored above no doubt influences the forms that initial teacher education takes, as teacher educators draw on Australian educational policy, scholarship that broaches questions of GCE and/or curricular documents as a guide to prepare preservice teachers to teach the *Australian Curriculum* in schools. While some disciplinary areas might better support teacher educators in thinking with a focused approach to GCE such as geography, history or civics & citizenship (or be more amenable to such discussions), no discipline area of learning can guarantee a better interrogation of global citizenship and even these disciplines will not share a vision for GCE. In what follows, we explore how this murky conceptual landscape plays out with teacher educators who find themselves navigating this complex field of thought and the policy landscape that attempts to consolidate thinking to something operational.

## Methods

The aim of this research was to explore teacher educators’ conceptualisations of global citizenship education. As an exploratory qualitative study, we were interested in how teacher educators from a range of (sub-)disciplines and working in a range of contexts articulated their own understandings of both what global citizenship might be, and how they did or didn’t bring these ideas into their everyday practice.

To do this, we recruited teacher educators from various Australian universities across multiple states. In total, nine teacher educators took part, all of whom had continuing or fixed-term positions. The teacher educators came from a range of curriculum and specialist fields within teacher education. Curriculum areas included mathematics, science, humanities, literacy, and creative arts. Specialist areas included curriculum theory, professional experience,

early childhood education, Indigenous education, sociology of education, educational psychology, and linguistics. Many teacher educators in this study taught across undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and many taught across multiple facets of initial teacher education degrees. Whilst a small sample, this range suggests that the participants came with a variety of experiences to discuss. What is important to note from this sample is that participants work in spaces with not only differing levels of engagement with ‘global’ and ‘citizenship’ work but that their views on what these terms mean are mediated by their disciplinary and specialist areas (more on the implications of this below).

Using online videoconferencing software, we interviewed the nine participants using a semi-structured interview protocol, in conversations that took between about thirty and sixty minutes. Interviewers asked participants to talk about their teaching areas before more specifically asking for their understandings of terms such as ‘thinking globally,’ ‘citizenship education,’ and ‘global citizenship education,’ and how these applied to their teaching practice. Participants were also asked to reflect on statements from the *Mparntwe Declaration* that made reference to issues reflected within global citizenship education. Each researcher transcribed and de-identified the interviews that they led before we collated all transcripts for analysis.

Analysis took place over several stages. Initially, our analysis was guided by Pashby et al.’s (2020) meta-review of global citizenship education, as our original analytic focus was based on a deductive approach. We all read and annotated a single transcript, before coming together to discuss. At this first data analysis workshop, the decision was made to go ahead and read each transcript against Pashby et al.’s themes. At the second data analysis workshop, however, we agreed that individual participants’ answers did not neatly fit against this meta-typology, something that perhaps reflects the challenges of mapping varied responses against a murky conceptual landscape. Instead, teacher educators expressed responses that mapped across multiple typologies, and in many cases were shaped by their disciplinary and institutional contexts. We instead developed four provisional themes, as detailed below in the findings. At this stage, each researcher re-coded their transcripts against the four themes. A third data analysis workshop provided an opportunity to discuss the fit of data against the new themes, which were confirmed. This inductive approach guided our final reading of the transcripts, where each researcher checked their coding and extracted relevant excerpts to present in the written analysis. At this stage, we collapsed the four themes into two, as presented below.

## Findings

Organising our findings thematically, we argue that there are two key themes (broken into sub-themes) that warrant further attention beyond the specifics of this study:

1. There exists an eclectic definitional terrain (where varied and personalised definitions make consolidation and consistency challenging) that provides for a healthy and robust scholarly conversation but which has the effect of making for uncertain ideas about what GCE might look like in initial teacher education and;
2. There remains a tension at work between the desires to advance critical lines of thought in initial teacher education and the neoliberal and regulatory practices of state bodies that prioritise technical skills and easily packaged liberal ideals over more ambitious practices that can make for richer and critical approaches to the world.

As we argue, each of these themes present a series of challenges for GCE scholars to help support individual teacher educators making sense of a broad conceptual landscape and a regulatory regime that shapes and determines much of their work that runs counter to the core critical purpose of GCE.

### Definitional terrain: varied

Our first theme concerns the ways that teacher educators navigate the constituent vocabulary of GCE: ‘global’ and ‘citizenship.’ Principally, we argue that the legacy of a field that embraces a dynamic definition of both ideas (and their coming together) makes for an equally varied set of ideas around GCE. While those with experience in civics and citizenship education and cognate disciplines such as history might have a richer sense of each term, it’s not necessarily the case that all participants will have exposure to the rhetoric of GCE, meaning that there is a circumstance in which there is a mix of people with vague familiarity and those who might otherwise embrace the ambiguity of each term, leading to a further varied set of terms. In that light, we began by asking participants what they made of the constituent terms – global & citizenship – and their coming together to develop a sense of what they knew (or didn’t) and thought about the terms.

Some participants focused on how thinking globally was a matter of broadening student views of the world and exposing them to new perspectives. On what it means to think globally, one participant suggested that,

*everything we think about is pretty much thinking globally if we get everyone's perspectives like, um, and what I'd like is that we can all live together.*

Elsewhere, one participant argued that,

*it means having a broad perspective on the world....it means a curriculum that is broad based.*

The participant further connected the notion of perspectives with the notion of learning about global issues:

*...it also means recognizing global issues, the global perspectives. And we're all in this together... this is something that can be taught from any childhood right through you know, right through to the end of one's life, really to develop the sense of thinking globally. So it's a global awareness. I would say, it's also about understanding different cultures, which is which is one way to approach the early childhood global thinking, introducing them to different cultures and understanding different histories.*

Finally, one participant brought together the language of cultural competence and global perspectives together:

*So I think in terms of cultural competence and working in a global context, that valuing of different perspectives is really important.*

We might identify this focus on perspective and learning about the ‘Other’ as a reflection of the influence of intercultural thinking, a common vocabulary in scholarship (eg. Baker & Fang, 2021; Zapata-Barrero, 2020), suggesting a strong focus on ‘knowledge’ as a core component of GCE (Dill, 2013; Poole & Russell, 2015). Moreover, the *Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2023c), in prioritising intercultural understanding as a necessary capability, echoes the importance of ‘knowing’ about others and the world generally, a focus that likely informs the kinds of ideas held by our participants (tacitly or otherwise).

Some of the participants also spoke broadly and thematically about global thinking and citizenship. One participant focused less on soliciting and engaging perspectives, preferring instead to position global thinking as existing in a form of ‘productive conflict’:

*Thinking globally means existing in conflict, and I don't mean conflict in the level of, um, of physical conflict of war or anything in, in that sense. I mean, that, ah, daily ongoing conflict that is necessary to enabling the dynamic nature of community of, living with people, living with people beyond your chosen circle. Um, so, that necessitates then the ability to listen, to communicate, to negotiate, to think outside the box, to think analytically, to think critically, to, um, to be open minded, to be willing to...what*

*Dewey talked about in terms of sitting with suspense, of the uncertainty of not knowing because, uh, you've opened yourself to the reality that there are so many ways of seeing, of knowing, of doing, of being, that you can't possibly know all of that, and you can't possibly know another way just by stepping your foot into it.*

This idea of productive conflict relates closely to Dewey's (1916/2009) work in *Democracy and Education* and more recently Giroux and Bosio's (2021) work that draws attention to politics in GCE, expanding it beyond knowledge to necessitate skills of critical analysis to expand possibilities of self-knowledge and critical and social agency. Echoing something similar, one participant anchored their view in a consideration of global thinking as thinking about and against existential problems, what might be viewed as a form of ongoing conflict:

*...when I think about it, I'm thinking about it in terms of the sorts of behaviours that one might do, the sort of relationships that people have beyond national borders, and the global sorts of challenges that we face in the 21st century in particular. There's also... an imperative that comes to mind that there are so many global challenges that we face today, some in particular that might have existential complications, implications for future generations.*

In a more concrete sense, one participant couched their understanding of the global context in the language of systems thinking:

*To think globally? I think it's participating in that global village which you can't seem to avoid. It's an online participation, but also in terms of systems thinking, I think we're part of a system, a global system.*

This last participant also spoke of the importance of problem solving in their thinking, drawing references to the need for young people to respond to the challenges and pressures of the twenty-first century, as reflected in the critical and creative thinking general capability of the *Australian Curriculum*. The participant noted:

*If we want problem solvers for the future, if they can see that they can think about real world issues.*

What is interesting here in their framing of 'problem solving' as a way of thinking about real world issues is their disciplinary and personal ideas about the 'global' and 'citizenship'. Shortly after introducing problem solving as a language relevant to their ideas of GCE, they argue that,

*it makes the mathematics relevant, but it also makes children relevant. It lets them know that you're going to be taking over the planet.*

Evidenced here are different conceptual foci for what global and/or citizenship mean, not just as something that is varied in terms of focus and conceptualisation but, and following from our last participant above, there is a personalised and sometimes disciplinary approach to thinking about language that informs and shapes global thinking.

### **Definitional terrain: personalised**

Argued above, we suggest that there is a wide-ranging conceptual terrain whereby scholars deploy and make use of different lenses to make sense of the components of GCE. Similarly, individual epistemic and disciplinary commitments shape how participants imagined the language and practices of GCE, to make sense of an unfamiliar idea and 'personalises' it through the comforts and familiarity of their own understandings.

One participant spoke to the disciplinary nature of GCE, noting that it transcends disciplines when considering the challenge of climate change:

*If you're talking about climate change...you can extend that globally because then you can talk about what happens in places other than your own backyard.... That's the first example that comes to mind for me. I guess all of and is it geography or is it science? I'm not sure. I think it probably science, all of... earth science can be globally understood....*

Another participant, when prompted to consider their reading of how GCE is alluded to in the *Mparntwe Declaration*, spoke to the tensions between emotions and mathematics, given that the former is an explicit vocabulary in the Declaration:

*Yeah, the emotional side... mathematics is the other side. It's not the emotional side...it's looking at the big picture. When you get global statistics, you're not focusing on a particular case or a particular situation or particular person that you know or a particular narrative for from a particular person. We're looking at the bigger picture....you know the emotional stuff is not something that we...although, maths is an emotionally charged subject, but it's more about, um, whether you think you're a mathematician or if you can do maths or you can't. That, that's very emotional. But the global issues are not the emotional side.*

Similarly, another mathematics teacher educator spoke to the need to decolonise their mathematics teaching:

*I have a lot of work to do on decolonizing the math course, that I teach [...] But I think that's what I'll do in the upcoming trimester, because I already have that decolonizing lens there for the second math course. I*

*think in terms of cultural competence and working in a global context, that valuing of different perspectives is really important.*

Another participant spoke to the place and role of a perspective rooted in history:

*I would say, it's also about understanding different cultures, which is which is one way to approach the early childhood global thinking, introducing them to different cultures and understanding different histories. The Australian Curriculum is so focused on Australian history. I would love to. I would like for children to get a global perspective on history, and again, global issues.*

Speaking to the place of citizenship in particular, one participant – a foundations teacher educator – spoke to the necessary pervasive reach of citizenship, reading the importance of it through a language and discourse that echoes the epistemic concerns that one might expect:

*I just don't understand how somebody can say I've done my citizenship lesson on Thursday afternoon, I've ticked that box and that, that's no longer a consideration. Citizenship should be something we're thinking about in every element of, of schooling practise from how we structure the physical environment to how we structure the, the pragmatics of the day to how we, um, how we acknowledge and work with student agency, student voice, how, ah, how that shapes all decision making through the school, from how their canteen runs to how we're learning maths to...citizenship to me should be absolutely foundational*

The language of this particular response, we argue, reflects a considered reading of citizenship through the vocabulary and discourses common to foundations, that is, one that centres a focus on agency, voice, and a consideration of the structural and institutional configuration of schooling (Biesta, 2022a).

Evidenced here is a rather important dynamism at work wherein teacher educators express a set of varied and personalised ideas of the “global,” “citizenship,” and their coming together in the language of global citizenship. There is a strength in such heterogeneity in understanding; a varied approach prevents a conceptual framing from becoming rather hegemonic in a way that precludes more varied and context-specific work and personalised understandings. Yet, while this dynamism helps to support robust and healthy scholarly debate, we question whether such eclectic and sometimes divergent views prohibit a workable idea that can be transferred across contexts in teacher education that doesn't reproduce a ‘murky landscape.’ We return to this point later but suffice it to say, we argue here that the tensions that define such a diverse

‘definitional terrain’ are primarily a result of GCE theorists and researchers insufficiently producing flexible yet coherent ideas that are easily operationalised across different teacher educator commitments. For this reason, we are inclined to suggest that language of critical theories of education (eg. agency, emotion, decolonising) come to operate as a drop in replacement for GCE specific use of critical vocabulary, particularly as critical theories and pedagogies are more common relative to critical GCE theories and conceptions. Part of the work moving forward, then, requires thinking through how we equip teacher educators with a critically textured idea of GCE that can be deployed as an epistemic lens within the sometimes burdensome political and institutional demands of Australian teacher education. It is to this challenge that we now turn.

### **Tensions: criticality and GCE**

Our second of two themes, much like the ‘definitional terrain,’ can be broken into two sub-themes. Our first concerns the place of critical readings of the ‘global’ and ‘citizenship’ that, while present as a way of thinking in considerations, runs up against the imperatives of neoliberal and liberal pressures from outside of the academy. There is, here, a gap between what scholars might hope and envision for teacher education & GCE and the contextual and systemic realities of teacher education practice that often detract from the critical possibilities that are acknowledged as needed.

Many teacher educators in this study were able to speak to the critical dimensions of GCE, perhaps reflecting the influence that critical theory has had on teacher educators as a whole. This included preparing pre-service teachers for a diverse student body:

*Our beginning teachers have to have a genuine understanding of how the lives of Australians impact the rest of the world, and what the students who are coming from different lives in other places bring. And yeah, the more they are able to teach in a way that's not just aimed at homogeneity.*

Teacher educators were aware that building global examples into their curriculum could help develop pre-service teachers' awareness about global inequities, such as “*the impact on communities of the way we use and waste energy...do we blissfully ignore what's going on in other places?*”. In doing so, GCE was seen as having a potential to mobilise action: “*We people, we global citizens, will need to take actions more proactively than perhaps some of our governments would.*” In many cases, GCE was seen as having transformative potential, enabling reflexivity and opening individuals up to the multiplicity of worldviews:



*As soon as you remove the reality of global perspectives, you start closing that down, you start closing thinking down, you start closing ways of being down, you start closing down the potential of learning.*

This multiplicity included the global knowledges and worldviews that teachers would face in their practice.

Again, many of the responses that teacher educators gave were shaped by their disciplinary areas. This is seen in an example of an Indigenous education teacher educator raising the example that global perspectives in the curriculum allowed students to better see patterns of colonisation and the similarity of impacts around the world. Under Pashby et al.'s (2020) meta-review of typologies, this would suggest a 'radical global citizenship,' as do several of the examples cited here. Here we see the relationship between the discourses in which teacher educators work and their constructions of global citizenship: the content area of Indigenous education lends itself clearly to a critical conception of GCE, involving critical examination of power structures, and of discussion of colonisation.

This impact of the familiar discursive fields goes beyond discipline, and arguably, reflects the broader tendencies of Australian teacher education. The evidence of critical theory and the sociology of education was clear in many, although not all, responses. What is less clear, however, is how teacher educators were able to move beyond the language of critical readings of GCE to bring this into practice. This is in part explained by the political and institutional constraints that affect teacher educators' practice.

### **Tensions: political and institutional constraints**

Our final sub-theme concerns a more specific focus on the disconnect between the ambitious and embraced goals of a critical program of teaching and learning against the backdrop of an increasingly neoliberal context of initial teacher education, involving accreditation and regulatory practices that are more concerned with technical skill practice & accountability to rigid standards than they are with making possible the promises of political rhetoric. Our participants highlighted that a key challenge in their contexts is overcoming regulatory constraints and the 'gap' between theory and practice which we argue highlights the chasm between the possibilities for better global citizenship thinking and the varied states' ideas of good teacher practice (enacted and enabled through excessive regulation and desires for instrumental rigidity over critical change).

This gap played out in multiple ways. Some participants spoke about GCE working against the approaches of their disciplinary area, both in tension with core tenets of their field (such as teaching to the local), and as battling a "crowded curriculum" where global citizenship would

"veer way... [from what] we want students to learn." One participant reflected on the structure of initial teacher education degrees, and how an artificial separation of foundation, curriculum, and practice areas contributed to this perception of irrelevancy. For other participants, GCE was seen as desirable, but simply too much to fit in, ending up "in the too hard basket":

*I don't feel that I've had the scope all the time to engage students in thinking about anything more than their own personal practice... aside from theoretically looking at a global perspective, I haven't actually had them engage with the local community or any sort of global community to do anything or be involved in, you know, any kind of action.*

*Teaching in a university context...[is] pretty fast paced. And when I first started I had about two weeks before two of my courses were starting, so I didn't change anything.*

GCE, as a cross-disciplinary idea, was also seen as working against an institutional imperative to focus on practice-based teaching, adding to the belief that it was one thing too many and could be left undone to focus on other issues. Meeting accreditation and program standards was seen as another factor influencing the perceived relevance of GCE:

*And if we weren't so constrained by the teacher registration bodies and the AITSL teacher standards.*

The fight for time to plan, design and implement GCE within a range of curriculum areas was not just seen as a practical issue, but also reflected a broader policy debate. As one participant argued with reference to the 2014 Abbott Government *Review of the Australian Curriculum* (Department of Education, 2014), the curriculum had "too much... for teachers to teach." This participant suggested that this perception meant that schools and curriculum agencies also devalued global perspectives in the curriculum, due to a lack of understanding of how to integrate ideas across curriculum areas. The teacher educators in this study argued that the *Australian Curriculum* did not provide enough support as to how to integrate global perspectives, despite the institutional importance given to GCE by including it in the curriculum:

*So, in the Australian Curriculum in particular, we were required to address Civics and Citizenship. It's part of the structure. The, the terminology is there. I don't think there's anything directly in the curriculum except a bunch of words that they don't give...they really don't give teachers any clues on how to do this.*

The contradiction presented here—that teachers (and therefore teacher educators) are mandated to address GCE within their teaching practice, but are given little direction in how to do so—helps to illustrate the effects of political

and institutional constraints that give shape to the murky landscape of GCE. Teacher educators perceive that they are at once both expected to and not supported in embedding global perspectives, left to their own devices to both define and envision a practice of GCE that might be relevant to their subject area. Teacher educators also recognise the tensions existing between expectations of neoliberal and critical aspirations of GCE and manifested within structures of education. Together, these tensions create an aspiration, but not always a practice, to engage high-quality GCE in their disciplinary fields.

## Conclusion

In the wake of a globalised era and evolving educational paradigms, the imperative for GCE has become increasingly prominent in Australian schooling. The *Mparntwe Declaration* underscores the urgency of nurturing confident, creative global citizens, positioning GCE as a cornerstone of educational policy. However, a significant gap persists in understanding how teacher educators integrate GCE into teacher education programs, thereby translating theory into practice.

In this paper, we have showcased the intricacies of GCE's definitional landscape, revealing a dynamic interplay of perspectives among teacher educators. The concepts of 'global' and 'citizenship' are understood in multifaceted ways, from broadening horizons to engaging in productive conflict, to addressing existential dilemmas to embracing systems thinking. These varied conceptual foci reflect not only a diversity of thought but also highlight the personalised and disciplinary lenses through which GCE is perceived. Moreover, a case could be made that this is an effort by teacher educators to discern how to navigate the 'problems' represented by curriculum that are then 'solved' by that same curriculum in places like the *Australian Curriculum's* cross-curriculum priorities (Salter & Maxwell, 2016); while we can't say for sure that this is true, it would be reasonable to infer that all teacher educators are helping students navigate the problems posed by curriculum and the ostensible solutions offered in the same policy.

Amidst this diversity, a further critical tension emerges—the challenge of translating critical GCE aspirations into tangible pedagogical practices. While teacher educators acknowledge (or recognise) the transformative potential of GCE, navigating political and institutional constraints within an increasingly neoliberal initial teacher education contexts proves to be a formidable task. Regulatory practices, crowded curricula, and the pressure to meet accreditation standards present significant hurdles. GCE's integration is further complicated by a dearth of clear guidance on incorporating global perspectives into the curriculum. Indeed, it appears at times that participants drew on critical

pedagogical ideals more broadly to define global citizenship, less global citizenship education theory itself to define what role global citizenship may have in teaching and learning. In light of these complexities, it becomes imperative to consider how we better support teacher educators to better understand not just what GCE is and means for their practice but also what work exists that teases out the specific concerns of thinking about the marriage of global education with citizenship. Their epistemological conceptualisation, strategies and resourcefulness in navigating the regulatory landscape bear profound implications for GCE in teacher education contexts. By understanding the nuanced ways in which teacher educators negotiate these challenges, we can unravel the potential for GCE to become a lived reality within teacher education.

From the findings of this small case study, we call for further exploration into how teacher educators, particularly those not specialists in GCE, enact the concept into their work with pre-service teachers. Here, we echo Waghid (2023): "it is suggested that more research be performed to determine the extent to which GCE is incorporated into the pedagogy and curricula of other institutions and a larger group of university lecturers" (p. 17). More so, however, we suggest a systemic effort on the part of GCE scholars to develop a tailored, contextually relevant understanding of GCE that can be readily applied within the intricate landscape of Australian teacher education. We offer this as an avenue going forward not in the spirit of asking for reductive and one-dimensional conceptions that might easily reproduce Western ideals rooted in liberal and colonial logics but, rather, one that serves to support the critical vocabulary and resultant pedagogical responsibilities that can help gesture teacher education students towards the justice and ethically driven ends of global citizenship. While we would like to offer up a version of this, we warrant that our work here, as a small case study, can only serve to provoke a field wide conversation about how we support teacher educators and help to translate the work of the field into something that unifies efforts towards the ends espoused through GCE scholarship.

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