

Global Citizenship | An Emerging Agenda in Education – Kosmos Journal

By Ambassador Choonghee Hahn

Violent extremism and radicalization are among the most serious and urgent concerns in international society. They cause instability, conflict, and violence within and between countries. The so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has reached out to or recruited up to 40,000 people from 100 countries to date, many of whom are highly educated. What can international society do to prevent recruitment to violent extremism?

Comprehensive global citizenship education offers real hope toward a long-term solution by building young people’s resistance to extremist messages and narratives, and by cultivating a positive sense of identity, empathy, and inclusion.

Introduced at an early stage of child development, global citizenship education enhances mutual respect and understanding, tolerance, and cultural literacy, while substantially weakening the power of radicalized messages. A sense of belonging to the wider world community reduces susceptibility to extremist narratives and generates powerful messages for a more hopeful future.

In 2015, for the first time in the United Nations system, the emerging concept of “global citizenship” was introduced through the historic summit declaration, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” And, in his 2016 report, *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*, Former Secretary-General of the U.N., Ban Ki-moon, suggested practical and comprehensive solutions, including global citizenship education, to confront the challenge of violent extremism.

Extremist groups deal in the currency of image, reputation, and perception. Swift countermeasures are required. Training in media literacy that includes recognizing false reporting, hate speech, and cyberbullying equips students with capabilities to navigate the increasingly turbulent media waters. Interspiritual education facilitates mutual understanding and respect for others. All religious activities and practices should uphold the basic universal principles of peace, understanding, tolerance, and compassion.

Combined with interspirituality movement, global citizenship education provides a new framework for young men and women to think critically, reject grievance and hatred, and develop capacity for dialogue and tolerance. We should not leave our children unprepared to confront the increasing volume of radicalized messages, nor leave them insensible to the global challenges and realities our world faces: terrorism, inequality, climate change, and population displacement.

A Global Citizenship Curriculum

“Learning to live together” is an important principle not only in education, but in society and the international community. Promoting an ethic of global citizenship, a culture of peace, and

nonviolence equips young people with tools of tolerance and respect.



A pillar of global citizenship is the empowerment of women and youth to recognize their dignity and rights, particularly the rights of adolescent girls regarding their own bodies. Due to refugee crises in many parts of the world, the number of unaccompanied children, who are particularly vulnerable to violence and violent messages, is increasing.

A global citizenship curriculum is needed by all—not only the privileged, but those in rural villages and refugee camps as well—to help restore positive identity, dignity, and self-esteem, and to provide clear information about the rights reserved for every human being by the international community. Students should learn first and foremost that every human being has the right to live in dignity, free from fear.

Understanding our interconnectedness and interdependence, as well as strategies for peaceful coexistence and reconciliation, is a recipe for building peaceful societies and “learning to live together.” The proposition that one community member’s pain is everybody’s pain is a guiding narrative.

Understanding our relationship with our planet teaches that we jointly have the responsibility to protect and care for Mother Earth. People and planet are integrally connected and cannot be separated. Our global commons—air, oceans, fresh water, and cyberspace, among others—belong to us all and should be treated as a single ecological body.

A global citizenship curriculum is concerned with dignity, human rights, media literacy, and the planet that sustains us.

A standard prototype or curriculum model that takes into account cultural differences, while focusing on building the critical skills and concepts required by all learners, is needed. Universal values as described in the Charter of the United Nations should be considered in an initial curriculum. States and local educational authorities can develop their own curriculum-based and culturally-appropriate variations on this model. Intercultural and interdisciplinary collaboration are key, with guidance from universities and academic institutes.

Critical thinking, interactive dialogues and debates, project-based learning, sports, and the arts should all be included. Learning journeys and meetings with peer groups from different cultures

should be explored. Learning objectives and evaluation strategies should be developed so that global citizenship can be embedded as a formal subject in the public education systems around the world.

Avenues, an alternative school in New York, provides a curriculum called the World Course from kindergarten through 12th grade. This curriculum addresses questions about the human condition such as: *How do people organize themselves? How are societies formed? How do people struggle with adversity? Why do people migrate? How do our actions, choices, and beliefs shape the world around us?* Questions like these help students make sense of the world through the lens of global identity.

The private sector could invest in this area as an expression of corporate social responsibility. Corporations could—independently or collectively—envision a global or national initiative to support global citizenship from local to international levels.



While governments and education authorities drive the policies that make global citizenship in the public education system possible, civil society organizations can and should lead projects to raise awareness about, and foster, global citizenship. NGOs and civil society organizations are encouraged to form global and regional coalitions like New York-based Coalition for Global Citizenship 2030 or Helsinki-based *Bridge 47* so that this goal can be realized.

There is an increasing trend in foreign policy and international politics to focus on values.

This is the time to reflect on our values and determine the best foreign policy or global compact to make this world more peaceful, more inclusive, more just, and more sustainable. As such, a values-driven vision should be the core of foreign policy now and in the future.



Working example | Global citizenship education: topics and learning objectives from UNESCO. Learn more

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232993>

Global citizenship education, if it is well-connected to a values-oriented approach in

international relations, could be introduced as one of the comprehensive and fundamental shifts in thinking to tackle violence, radicalization, and intolerance. In 2016, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, “We want the world our children inherit to be defined by the values enshrined in the UN charter: Peace, justice, respect, human rights, tolerance and solidarity.” This is in line with what global citizenship education envisions.

Former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon recently launched the Ban Ki-moon Centre for Global Citizens in Vienna, Austria. This organization could serve as a main platform for an international discussion on global citizenship as it clearly demonstrates that Ban Ki-moon, after ten years of service as the U.N. Secretary-General, recognizes global citizenship as an overarching goal of the U.N. agenda.

In the volatile, extreme, and unpredictable context of the 21st century, we need creative and innovative leadership, both nationally and globally. People-centered, values-driven, globally-conscious, relationship-oriented, compassion-focused, and planet-sensitive leadership with a focus on global citizenship can make our next generation real agents for change.