

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND THE SUBVERSION HUMAN INJUSTICES: A PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY

C. August-Mowers

Two Oceans Graduate Institute

Pinelands, South Africa

<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-3476-9389>

Y. Waghid*

Emeritus Professor, Department of Philosophy of Education

Stellenbosch University

Stellenbosch, South Africa

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2565-824X>

*Also Affiliated with UNISA, Pretoria, South Africa

ABSTRACT

Literature on Global Citizenship Education (GCE) abounds, spanning a wide range of theoretical, pedagogical, and policy perspectives. Our own work accentuates GCE as an autonomous, deliberative, and decolonial praxis aimed at cultivating social and democratic justice through critical engagement and ethical responsibility. Yet, when one surveys the existing body of scholarship on global human injustices, what emerges is a sobering pattern of persistent and systemic violations of human rights, particularly evident in regions such as Northern Africa, Palestine, and Ukraine. These contexts expose the tensions between the aspirations of GCE and the realities of structural violence and geopolitical domination. In this article, we therefore revisit and reconceptualise a plausible notion of GCE, arguing that the continuing atrocities and gross human rights violations across the world undermine the legitimate enactment and transformative potential of GCE as a vehicle for justice and solidarity.

Keywords: Decolonial approaches, ethical responsibility, global citizenship, human dignity, human justice

IN DEFENCE OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

There is extensive literature on Global Citizenship Education (GCE) that continue to expand across multiple academic and policy domains. GCE is strategically placed as one of the fundamentals that contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goals, due to its commitment to combat poverty, injustice, exclusion, violence, and environmental havoc

(UNESCO, 2015, 2018). Over the years, GCE has been promoted from various perspectives such as neoliberal approaches and the critical/ decolonial approaches. Neoliberal approaches have been around for some time and have emphasised the skills students need to adapt in a globalised world to suit the purpose of economics (Aguilar-Forero and Salazar, 2023). However, critical and decolonial GCE has seen a significant increase in recent years, due to its relevance and stance to confront social injustice and reproduction of global and local inequities by questioning power and knowledge of colonial supremacy and advance and promote critical thinking (Aguilar-Forero and Salazar, 2023).

As alluded to, our own work emphasises that GCE is not a passive or purely theoretical endeavor but is rather an autonomous, deliberative and decolonial praxis aimed at cultivating democratic justice and fostering a more humane global order (Waghid, 2025a). With that said, GCE extends far beyond the curriculum design and classroom instruction. It is transformative in nature as it seeks to develop critical consciousness, ethical responsibility and active engagement in and around the world. In addition, Bosio and Waghid (2025, 1) argue that “GCE aims to equip students with the values, knowledge, and dispositions necessary to become critical, responsible, and engaged global citizens”. However, it is evident through literature that there are numerous occurrences of systemic and recurring violations of human rights against particular groups of people, specifically in Northern Africa, Palestine and Ukraine. Examples of such violations are evident in the protracted conflicts and abuse of gross human rights against the aforementioned groups of people as the persistent violence, exploitation, displacement and dehumanisation continue to disrupt their human dignity (Human Rights Watch, 2012; Amnesty International, 2022; United Nations, 2023). These cruel acts are in direct conflict with the principles that GCE stands for and purposefully try to uphold. This article aims to revisit conceptual underpinnings of GCE and seek to interrogate the ways in which ongoing violation of human rights subvert the implementation and efficacy of GCE. Though GCE seeks to promote justice, equality and solidarity, we argue that its principles and ideals are persistently confronted with structural inequalities and geopolitical dynamics that perpetuate injustices. We contend that in order for GCE to remain intact and meaningful, it must be grounded in both pedagogical and political dispositions that purposefully confront global injustices through critical and compassionate engagement.

The twenty first century has seen GCE emerged as one of the most prominent educational frameworks. In the past GCE was more focused on the nationship aimed at producing good citizens and promoting the country’s interest (Papastephanou, 2023). GCE is promoted by international organisations, national education systems and scholars that are keen to cultivate students who are aware of their interconnectedness in a globalised world. With its stature, GCE

is often presented as being educationally responsive to conflict, inequality, systematic oppression and even global warming. UNESCO (2015) elucidates that GCE is aimed at developing the following capacities in learners:

- a cognitive understanding of global issues;
- a socio-emotional capacity for empathy and solidarity, and
- a behavioral commitment to ethical action.

In essence, GCE is more than just transferring knowledge, but a transformative venture aimed at enabling students to view themselves as part of a human community that will readily stand up against injustices. Papastephanou (2023, 231) opines that GCE is supposed to spark students' curiosity about the whole world and cultivate their desire to know more about different contexts outside their frontier. However, the question remains: Is GCE genuinely concerned with subverting human injustice, or is its transformative potential undermined by the persistence of structural violence, geopolitical conflict, and entrenched inequalities?

Asking these questions is rather obscure because in theory GCE is grounded in principles of social and democratic justice, recognition of human rights and, critical engagement with global issues. Unfortunately, this vision of GCE is overshadowed by the landscape of global injustices. It is crucial to understand that GCE should not be viewed as an awareness campaign but must function as a critical pedagogy that challenges systemic oppression, colonial legacies, and unequal power relations (Andreotti, 2011). In the 1970s Freire's impactful concept of praxis highlighted the importance of reflections and action and is core to GCE's vision. In this instance, GCE's relevance and meaningful impact is dependent on the ability to foster and intervene meaningfully in the world to confront human injustices rather than just the cultivation of critical consciousness. We accentuate thus that GCE must move beyond rhetoric into action, serving as a powerful tool to resist exploitation, violence and oppression.

Still today, the world is marked by persistent violations of human dignity although there is widespread declarations of human rights and proliferation of a plausible GCE discourse. Northern Africa is shackled for the longest time with authoritarian rule, civil conflict and ethnic violence which have devastated societies with atrocities such as extrajudicial killings, forced displacement and systemic discrimination (Human Rights Watch, 2012). Palestine continuously face prolonged occupation and escalation of violence where people are deprived of their fundamental human rights such as education, healthcare and mobility to the extent that a genocide is taking place (Amnesty International, 2022). In addition, decades of occupation restrictions and military assaults have deprived children from access to schools and universities. The invasion of Russia in Ukraine has produced widespread war crimes, displacement of

millions of people and the destruction of civilian infrastructure (United Nations, 2023). The persistence of these gross injustices in the above-mentioned regions reveals the limits of educational interventions in the face of systemic violence. Torres and Bosio (2025, 5) attribute this civilizational crisis to gun violence, immigration, multiculturalism, fiscal constraints, climate change, and epistemological crises. Bosio and Torres (2025) argue that gun related violence threatens the right to life, which is the most fundamental human right, which in turn, signals a crisis of values. However, Bosio and Torres (2025) posit that crises can serve as catalysts for opportunities rather than sources of despair depending on the agenda.

Libya is another example where Libyans have suffered for decades under the authoritarianism of Gaddafi who left behind a gruesome legacy of extrajudicial killings, torture and public executions that targeted both ethnic minorities and political opponents (Human Rights Watch, 2012). Sad to say these atrocities in Libya did not end with the fall of Gaddafi, but descended into further conflicts. These inhumane actions present stark examples of how educational conditions are disrupted by systemic human right violations. The afore-mentioned actions subvert the principles of GCE. These profound challenges underscore that ongoing violations pose direct threats to the vision of GCE. We accentuate that if education ought to be a force for justice, it must respond to injustices systemically and enduringly.

In sum, our argument for GCE as a transformative, decolonial, and justice-oriented pedagogical project begins by acknowledging the expanding literature and policy influence of GCE, particularly its alignment with the *Sustainable Development Goals* and its dual promotion through neoliberal and critical/decolonial paradigms. Whereas neoliberal approaches focus on market adaptability, critical and decolonial GCE foregrounds social justice, critical consciousness, and resistance to colonial and systemic inequities. Thereafter we asserted that GCE is an autonomous and deliberative educational practice dedicated to nurturing democratic and social justice, ethical responsibility, and humane global citizenship. Yet, despite its transformative potential, the persistence of global injustices in Northern Africa, Palestine, and Ukraine demonstrates the fragility of GCE's ideals in the face of violence, displacement, and systemic oppression.

We contend that GCE must transcend rhetoric by embodying critical pedagogy and Freirean praxis, integrating reflection with concrete action against exploitation and domination. The ongoing violations of human rights, authoritarian regimes, and civil conflicts such as those in Libya, Palestine, and Ukraine expose the limitations of educational interventions when structural violence prevails. Ultimately, the argument is that GCE must be both pedagogical and political, serving as a sustained and courageous response to global injustices if education is to remain a genuine force for democratic transformation and human dignity. It is educational

practices that provide the pedagogical leverage through which societal violences can be critically resisted and subverted. Such practices cultivate the intellectual, ethical, and political capacities necessary for learners to question domination, expose structural injustices, and imagine more humane forms of coexistence. In this sense, education becomes not merely a site of knowledge transmission, but a transformative praxis aimed at dismantling the conditions that sustain oppression and cultivating solidarity, justice, and peace.

CRITIQUES OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION (GCE)

To understand the critiques of GCE, we think it is important to contextualize the politics of globalization as understood by Wiseman (1998, 1) who argues the following:

“Globalisation is the most slippery, dangerous and important buzzword of the late twentieth century. It is slippery because it has many meanings and can be used in many ways. It is dangerous because too often it is used as a powerful and simplistic justification for the endless expansion of unregulated capitalist relations in whatever part of life and in every corner of the globe “

Wiseman’s (1998) argument portrays the ideological clash between neoliberalism and critical/decolonial approaches. These approaches caused ongoing debates questioning the understandings of globalisation that have been blindly accepted worldwide and is often embedded and justified within collective consciousness (Taylor 2004).

As a result, many scholars have critiqued the notion of GCE over the years specifically in relation to its potential to reproduce colonial dynamics that perpetuates societal injustices. As such Andreotti (2011) alerts us to what she calls “soft” versus “critical” approaches to global citizenship. The assumption of the soft approach is that global inequalities can be solved by raising awareness, intercultural exchange and through charitable actions. Though these approaches are often the basis for empathy, it poses a greater risk reinforcing paternalistic relations between the Global North and Global South. It might mean that the more privileged students of the North may view themselves as the helpers of the disadvantaged South. On the contrary, the critical approach is assumed to foreground privilege and historical responsibility and questions of power. The critical approach forces students to interrogate and examine how colonial histories, structural violence and economic exploitations created and sustained global inequalities and widened the global divide.

Scholarship of GCE as decolonial action has underscored the importance of challenging Eurocentrism in educational discourses. Mignolo and Walsh (2018) argue that education must recognise that Western epistemologies are carriers of colonial knowledge as it is privileged as

the universal and objectified, while the Global South's knowledge systems remain marginalised. It is for this reason that decolonial approaches to GCE call for an epistemic shift. This shift would value indigenous knowledge and local perspectives that recognise marginalised voices as valid and necessary for addressing global challenges. We contend that if decoloniality is placed at the centre of GCE, students will be able to critically interrogate and examine how the histories and legacies of colonialism continue to shape contemporary global inequalities, particularly through patterns of economic dependence and cultural erasure. This approach redefines GCE not merely as an educational pursuit but as a political act of resisting epistemic injustice, a deliberate effort to challenge dominant ways of knowing and being. We accentuate that, by locating GCE within a decolonial framework, it can be reconstituted as an explicit and transformative project that subverts human injustices at epistemic, structural, and cultural levels, thereby reclaiming education as a practice of freedom and global solidarity.

Moreover, one should also interrogate global hierarchies of suffering and the unequal distribution of empathy. To do so, we can use the lens of an ethics of care. An ethics of care foregrounds empathy, compassion, and relational understanding which is the foci in educational practice (Bosio, 2025). For example, the war against Ukraine has seen massive global responses where humanitarian, international solidarity and even strong media coverage have been foregrounded (United Nations, 2023). However, what we often fail to acknowledge are the similar acts of violence and human suffering occurring in other parts of the world, such as Ethiopia and Yemen. How can we, in the name of justice, permit and perpetuate selective solidarity, where empathy and outrage are extended only to certain peoples or regions? The role of Global Citizenship Education (GCE), in this regard, is to equip students with the critical awareness to interrogate how global media discourses shape public consciousness, advancing political interests and racialised narratives that determine which injustices are amplified and which are silenced. When situated within an ethical framework of GCE, education becomes a moral and political practice that encourages learners to cultivate empathy, humility, and critical perception, developing the capacity to see and understand the world through the eyes of others (Bosio, 2025). In doing so, GCE moves beyond rhetorical commitments to justice and becomes a lived, ethical engagement with global humanity. Invariably, this would cultivate sensitivity to the lived experiences of marginalised communities and social justice (Bosio, 2025, 115). If we apply the approach of ethical care, we are not only responding emotionally but foregrounding both moral and political commitment to the wellbeing of others specifically those people affected by global inequities (Bosio, 2025).

RECONCEPTUALISING THE PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF GCE

GCE is grounded in the idea that education should not only prepare individuals to participate in national societies but also foster a sense of awareness of their interconnectedness with the global community. GCE is explained by UNESCO (2015) as an educational response to global challenges, particularly focused on human rights violations, inequality and environmental crises that cannot be solved on a national level. GCE's underlying philosophy reflects an ethical commitment to humanity at large. This suggests that students should be empowered to see themselves as global citizens with responsibilities that transcends borders. In this instance, GCE is positioned as both a cognitive and moral endeavor: cognitive as students gain knowledge about complex global issues and morally it calls on learners to align their actions with principles of justice and solidarity.

There is a close alignment between GCE and Freire's (1970) pedagogy of the oppressed which underscores education as the cultivator of critical consciousness. Freire (1970) contends that education must not transmit facts or skills but must serve as a process whereby students reflect, act, recognise and resist systems of domination. This means that GCE seeks to equip students with the ability to critically analyse global systems of inequality, understand historical and structural forces that perpetuate them and engage in collective action to bring about change (Bosio and Andreotti, 2020). We contend that if GCE does not enhance critical and activist orientations, it faces a greater risk of becoming meaningless and superficial. This means that students will be trained to be passive bystanders that are aware of the global problem but have no tools to challenge, confront and act against it.

Further, scholars have different interpretation of GCE. Firstly, Bosio (2025, 114) argues from a Freirean perspective, that GCE is "rooted in the ethical imperative of praxis (reflection and action directed at transforming the world) and emphasises solidarity, critical consciousness and the co-creation of just social realities". From a neoliberal perspective, GCE is framed by policy makers as preparing students to succeed in a global economy, exhibiting skills such as digital literacy, adaptability and intercultural communication (Oxley and Morris, 2013). This implies that the neoliberal interpretation foregrounds GCE as a tool that produces workers for the global market economy rather than a framework for justice and emancipation (Shultz, 2002). On the other hand, critical scholars such as Andreotti (2011) and Pashby et al (2020) argue that GCE must not be instrumentalised by agendas aimed at creating cosmopolitan elites who thrive in global capitalism but produce students who question global inequalities, resist systemic injustice and seek transformative change. It is evident that the divergent interpretations underscore the contested nature of GCE and further highlights the importance of maintaining a critical and justice-orientated focus. Bosio and Waghid (2025, 2) calls for critical, decolonial,

and ethical approaches to GCE and emphasise the “growing need for scholars to critically engage with GCE as a practice rooted in ethical relationality, critical consciousness, and social transformation”.

Therefore, Waghid and Bosio (2023) propose six pedagogical priorities for GCE to cultivate students’ critical consciousness and resist neoliberal and Western-centric approaches of education. These priorities include: praxis, reflexive dialogue, decolonialism, ecocritical awareness, caring ethics and empowerment. These authors’ work also underscores the importance of context and stress that in order for GCE to remain meaningful, it must consider histories, struggles, aspirations and even lived experiences of learners in the Global South (Bosio and Waghid, 2024).

Thus, to summarise a reconceptualized notion of GCE, the following three claims emanate from the above elucidations: Firstly, a reconceptualised GCE shifts from merely imparting knowledge about global issues to cultivating critical consciousness and ethical responsibility. Grounded in Freirean epistemology, it envisions education as a praxis, that is, a dynamic interplay of reflection and action, through which learners recognise and resist systems of domination. GCE thus becomes both a cognitive and moral endeavour that equips students not just to understand global injustices but to act collectively toward their transformation. Secondly, against neoliberal interpretations that frame GCE as a means to produce adaptable, market-ready global workers, a reconceptualised approach positions GCE as a political and emancipatory project. It rejects the instrumentalisation of education for economic competitiveness and instead foregrounds ethical relationality, solidarity, and social transformation. Through critical, decolonial, and ethical engagement, GCE challenges the reproduction of global hierarchies and affirms the dignity and agency of learners, especially those in the Global South. Thirdly, a reimagined GCE must be context-sensitive, recognising the histories, struggles, and aspirations of diverse communities. Drawing on Waghid and Bosio’s (2023) six pedagogical priorities such as praxis, reflexive dialogue, decolonialism, ecocritical awareness, caring ethics, and empowerment, GCE becomes a transformative educational framework embedded in learners’ lived realities. By situating global citizenship within local contexts, it nurtures a relational understanding of humanity that is attentive to ecological balance, cultural plurality, and social justice.

Pursuant to the above, democratic justice is not an abstract ideal but an evolving praxis that emerges through the ethical, deliberative, and transformative encounters made possible by GCE. Democratic justice, in this sense, is inseparable from education as action, that is, a commitment to deliberation, care, and solidarity that transcends the limits of national belonging. Through GCE, students are not only invited to think about justice but to enact it by engaging

critically and compassionately with the world. Such enactment entails the cultivation of *phronesis* (practical wisdom) whereby individuals deliberate about what is just and act toward sustaining conditions that make human flourishing possible for all. When education is understood as deliberative praxis, it invites learners into spaces of deliberative engagement where difference is not suppressed but affirmed as a source of mutual growth. Waghid (2025b) argues that democratic justice evolves through acts of compassionate imagination, the ability to listen, to empathise, and to respond responsibly to the suffering of others. GCE thus becomes a moral and political project that nurtures such responsiveness, enabling students to reflect on how global systems of inequality constrain human freedom and dignity. By doing so, GCE generates conditions for cooperative reasoning and shared responsibility, both of which are foundational to democratic life.

Moreover, democratic justice within GCE emerges from the interplay between autonomy and relationality. Learners act autonomously when they think critically and question domination, yet their autonomy is always exercised in relation to others, that is, a recognition that justice cannot exist without care, nor freedom without accountability. This dual orientation reflects Waghid's (2025c) notion of democratic education as being-with-others, where the moral worth of each person is affirmed through participation and shared deliberation.

Therefore, a reconceptualised GCE cultivates democratic justice not through compliance with institutionalised ideals, but through the lived practices of reflection, deliberation, and ethical action. As learners engage in decolonial and compassionate inquiry, they begin to see themselves as co-constructors of a more humane global order, constituted by justice, responsibility, and solidarity. Democratic justice thus evolves as the ethical horizon of GCE: a continuous striving to transform both self and society through education that is at once critical, caring, and just.

THE ROLE OF GCE TO ENHANCE HUMAN JUSTICE

Scholars such as Giroux and Bosio (2020) highlight the problematic times we live in, especially considering the rising right-wing populist governments, growing racism, and police brutality. In recent years the tragic killing of George Floyd in the United States exemplified global struggles that require all our attention and call us to action. It is clear that neoliberalism has for the past four decades waged a significant attack on the structure and role of public education (Giroux and Bosio, 2020). This places an enormous task on scholars who have the task of advancing GCE and, social and democratic justice from a critical perspective.

We emphasised in our work that GCE is an autonomous, deliberative and decolonial praxis aimed at social and democratic justice. In addition, Waghid and Bosio's (2024, 2023) recent scholarship significantly advances the critical debates on GCE as they foreground its ethical, decolonial and justice-orientated dimensions. Waghid (2025b) accentuates the importance of multidimensional approaches to education as it should prepare learners to navigate complexities of the increasingly interconnected world while promoting empathy and responsibilities. Bosio (2024) elucidates that in order for GCE to be autonomous, it must resist being instrumentalised by neoliberal or state agendas that seek to depoliticise it by modeling it as a soft- skills programme rather than a justice-oriented pedagogy. Mignolo and Walsh (2018) opine that GCE is deliberative, that is, democratic dialogue should be fostered where diverse voices, especially from marginalised communities come together to shape collective futures. These authors also refer to deliberative GCE as a tenable action to dismantle Eurocentric epistemologies and recognise the validity of knowledge systems from the Global South that are often silenced in mainstream educational discourses. Through the lenses of these three notions, GCE can be viewed as a radical political project rather than a neutral educational reform.

Scholars such as Pashby et. al (2020) cautioned that a superficial implementation of GCE can reproduce the very inequalities it seeks to dismantle. It is evident that there is a risk that GCE can become symbolic rather than substantive. To ensure GCE remains radical and actionable, we need to critically reflect on the persistent human injustices in context such as Northern Africa, Palestine and Ukraine. These injustices force us to ask pertinent questions such as whether GCE has the capacity to confront the realities of injustice and/or if it remains an aspirational discourse that is disconnected from the lived realities of the people. In addition, the work of Bosio (2021) underscores the need for reflexive dialogue and critical enquiry as this will enable students to recognise injustices and at the same time act in ways that will challenge oppressive systems and inequitable global structures. It is thus clear that GCE can be a deliberative intervention against human injustice if basing it on ethical reasoning, critical consciousness and practical engagement with global inequalities (Bosio, 2021).

Moreover, Papastephanou (2023) draws our attention to the notion of double politics of the global in GCE. She underscores the blurriness in vision and prism. On the one hand there is advocacy for critical democracy viewing the world from a transformative visible lens that will bring a better world future. On the other hand, there is advocacy for neo-liberal semantics and politics of the global that reflects a hegemonic and homogenizing vision (p 230). This is often associated reproduction as the vision is based on effectiveness and achievement rather than transforming the world.

THE POTENTIAL OF GCE TO SUBVERT HUMAN INJUSTICES

If GCE ought to be transformative it is imperative that it is assessed against the realities of contemporary human rights transgressions. GCE should be deliberative in addressing the root causes of authoritarian violence, highlighting the symptoms of deeper inequality fuelled by colonial histories, global capitalism and geopolitical rivalries. It is our stance that for GCE to be genuinely concerned with subverting injustice it must confront structures of inequalities directly. In doing so, GCE must move beyond the superficial level awareness of humanitarian crises and tackle the root causes head on. To illustrate, for an example, instead of teaching students about the Ukrainian-Russian war, GCE should enable them to critically examine and analyse how global order regimes encourage and sustained forced displacement and mass killings. A total shift needs to happen from only having empathy for victims to questioning the systems of powers that perpetuate violence and ultimately stand up against it to envision alternative futures for the oppressed.

Making this shift will mean that GCE will be viewed as both an educational and political project. Standing on the shoulders of Freire (1970), we are reminded that education is never neutral. Education can either serve the interest of the dominant forces or it contributes to liberation and emancipation of the oppressed. For GCE to advance liberation, it must be explicit in its commitment to dismantle and even eradicate oppression and advance social and democratic justice for all. In doing so, it insists that educators take risks, challenge forces through enhancing critical thinking and foster spaces where students challenge the status quo. The role of policy makers should not be silent; they should support education that is not focused on regurgitating knowledge for economic productivity but producing active global citizens who stand up against all forces of injustice in all its forms.

The implementation of such a critical, deliberative and decolonial GCE may face both challenges and opportunities. It is imperative that schools and universities must balance curriculum demands with the ethical imperative to engage students with global justice issues (Oxley and Morris, 2013). Teachers must be re-trained in critical pedagogy, intercultural competence, trauma-sensitive approaches especially in contexts where conflict and oppression is prominent. In addition, Bosio and Andreotti (2020) emphasise the importance of decolonial and context specific approaches to GCE, especially in the Global South where local histories, cultures and socio-political realities shape the thinking and understanding of global issues. To add, digital literacy skills is also fundamental as this can either offer new avenues for connection or risk perpetuating inequalities (Oxley and Morris, 2013). To illustrate, some people have access to Internet to garner diverse perspectives and others that don't have access to technology

or connectivity can reproduce existing disparities which may limit participation for marginalised people and widen the digital divide.

Some scholars argue that critical pedagogy can advance GCE to oppose the forces of neoliberalism. Giroux and Bosio (2020) posit that GCE can be advanced by drawing on civic engagement as a political practice. The role of civic engagement projects, participatory learning strategies, service-learning projects and community-based projects can be a plausible avenue where students connect theory and practice (Development Education Review, 2021). For example, students engaging in service-learning projects in higher education serving both local and global communities, demonstrate that GCE can foster solidarity, critical consciousness and ethical action. Bosio (2021) also proposed an ethical GCE approach that considers values-creation, collective engagement, intergenerational thinking, identity progression and glocal (global plus local) disposition. He elucidates that this approach could cultivate responsible global citizens capable of reflecting critically and engaging in deliberative actions (Bosio, 2021). Shultz (2007) concur with Bosio's sentiments and argue that critical GCE is a persuasive strategy that can directly confront and subvert human injustices (Bosio, 2021). Engaging in civic and community-based projects can transform hope and politics into an ethical space. This implies that individual and collective actions worldwide can confront and disrupt the flow of everyday experience and lift the weight of human suffering with the force of legitimate resistance.

TOWARDS A CONCLUSION

Reviewing literature on GCE shows trends that the practice is concerned with subverting human rights violations. However, one can argue that its effectiveness is conditional as the capacity of GCE to subvert human injustices is dependent on its ability to integrate critical theory, decolonial epistemologies and practical intervention and action. It is almost impossible to subvert human rights violations if we focus on awareness, empathy and knowledge only. Preparing students with skills to fearlessly taking on the task to challenge inequalities and resist injustices, ethical responsibility should be the guiding principle of GCE.

The persistence of human rights violations in Northern Africa, Palestine and Ukraine and beyond underscores the enormity of the challenge. It is without a doubt that GCE has the potential to cultivate students who are conscious and critically aware of structural inequalities, empathetic towards oppressed people and capable of confronting issues in an ethical manner. We accentuate that to truly realise the transformative potential of GCE, one must combine cognitive understanding, socio-emotional engagement and practical intervention within a

framework that is autonomous, deliberative and decolonial. This will hopefully eliminate any chances of GCE becoming symbolic. This scenario underscores the necessity of GCE as a moral, political and educational imperative. If we locate education within the realities of systemic injustice and prepare students to act and respond critically, we can confidently say GCE can responsively contribute to the ongoing struggle for global justice.

REFERENCES

- Aguilar-Forero, N. and F. Salazar. 2023. "Critical/decolonial global citizenship education and libraries from the Global South". *Prospects*, 54(1): 1–13.
- Amnesty International. 2022. *Israel's apartheid against Palestinians: Cruel system of domination and crime against humanity*. Amnesty International. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2022/02/israels-system-of-apartheid/>
- Andreotti, V. 2011. *Actionable postcolonial theory in education*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bosio, E. 2021a. *World-centred education: A view for the present*. London: Routledge.
- Bosio, E. 2021b. "Ethical global citizenship education: From neoliberalism to a values-based pedagogy". *Prospects*, 51(3): 439–456. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-021-09571-9>
- Bosio, E. 2025. "Ethical global citizenship education for the common good". *Journal of Public Value*, 4(1): 113–120.
- Bosio, E. and V. Andreotti. 2020. "Towards a pedagogy of critical hope: Global citizenship education as an emancipatory practice". *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 18(2): 129–142. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2019.1704482>
- Bosio, E. and Y. Waghid. 2023. "Cultivating students' critical consciousness through global citizenship education: Six pedagogical priorities". *Prospects*, 54(2): 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-023-09652-x>
- Bosio, E. and Y. Waghid. 2024a. "Global citizenship education as decolonial praxis: Reflexivity, dialogue, and solidarity". *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 58(3): 421–439. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9752.12811>
- Bosio, E. and Y. Waghid. 2024b. "Guest editorial: Critical and creative practices of global citizenship education in the digital age of information and communication technologies". *Journal of Educational Thought*, 58(1): 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09732586231211397>
- Bosio, E. and Y. Waghid. 2025. "Embracing the decolonial, critical, and ethical shift in global citizenship education". *Prospects*, 55(1): 1–5.
- Development Education Review. 2021. "Civic engagement within global citizenship education: An antidote to despair". *Development Education Review*, 37: 1–22.
- Freire, P. 1970. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Giroux, H.A. and E. Bosio. 2021. "Critical pedagogy and global citizenship education". In E. Bosio (ed.), *Conversations on global citizenship education*. London: Routledge, pp. 3–12.
- Human Rights Watch. 2012a. *World report 2012: Events of 2011*. New York: Seven Stories Press.

- Human Rights Watch. 2012b. *Libya: Human rights violations under Gaddafi regime*. Human Rights Watch. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2012/country-chapters/libya>
- Mignolo, W. and C. Walsh. 2018. *On decoloniality: Concepts, analytics, praxis*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Oxley, L. and P. Morris. 2013. "Global citizenship: A typology for distinguishing its multiple conceptions". *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 61(3): 301–325. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2013.798393>
- Papastephanou, M. 2023. "Global citizenship education, its partial curiosity and its world politics: Visions, ambiguities and perspectives on justice". *Citizenship Teaching & Learning*, 18(2): 229–243.
- Pashby, K., J. da Costa, S. Stein, and V. Andreotti. 2020. "Critical global citizenship education: Contesting neoliberalism and coloniality". *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 18(4): 449–464. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2020.1789396>
- Shultz, L. 2007. "Educating for global citizenship: Conflicting agendas and understandings". *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 53(3): 248–258.
- Taylor, C. 2004. *Modern social imaginaries*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Torres, C.A. and E. Bosio. 2025. "Global citizenship education as a planetary ethics: Embracing humans and non-humans in the pursuit of global solidarity". *Prospects*, 55(2): 1–19.
- UNESCO. 2015. *Global citizenship education: Topics and learning objectives*. Paris: UNESCO. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232993>
- UNESCO. 2018. *Preparing teachers for global citizenship education*. Paris: UNESCO. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000265456>
- United Nations. 2015. *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development*. New York: United Nations. Available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>
- United Nations. 2023. *Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine*. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/ukraine>
- Waghid, Y. 2025a. *Living African philosophy of higher education*. Cham: Springer.
- Waghid, Y. 2025b. "Navigating complexities: Global perspectives on education and society". *Citizenship Teaching & Learning*, 20(1): 3–5. https://doi.org/10.1386/ctl_00179_2
- Waghid, Y. 2025c. "Reflecting on democratic citizenship education: Compassionate and imaginative action, educational encounters, and civic reconciliation". *Educational Theory*, 75(4): 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.70059>
- Wiseman, J.R. 1998. *Global nation? Australia and the politics of globalisation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.