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Future Teachers on Global Citizenship: Opening Up Conversations | Selina Schönborn and Shaidul Kazi

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The concept of global citizenship (GC) plays a central role in current internationalisation efforts of universities of teacher education. The underlying aim is that future teachers become global citizens so that they are able to prepare pupils for an ever-more networked world. In order to broaden and deepen the one-sided and predominantly neoliberal view of GC taken by national education policy in Germany, Schönborn (2021) focussed on the perspectives of those for whom GC is ultimately intended: teacher education students (TES). In her mixed methods study Schönborn investigated their subjective perceptions of GC at the University of Teacher Education Weingarten (Germany). These perceptions were linked to the neoliberal, liberal and critical frameworks of GC.

Global Citizenship as Cornerstone of Internationalisation Strategies

The recent tendency to internationalise universities of teacher education in Germany goes along with a desire to foster GC in students (Bölling 2014). The related paradigm shift from national to global citizens is grounded in the understanding that teachers need to prepare pupils to successfully live in a global community that is interconnected on various levels (Wintersteiner, Grobbauer, Diendorfer & Reitmair-Juárez 2015). While GC is considered as

highly important in the light of an increasingly interconnected world and its associated challenges (HRK 2014; UNESCO 2014), it remains a contested and ambiguous notion (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller 2013; Wintersteiner et al. 2015). However, the most dominant perspective of GC is the neoliberal one (Rhoads & Szelényi 2011) which prioritizes economic growth and competitiveness in global markets (Shultz 2007; Andreotti 2011; Pashby, da Costa, Stein & Andreotti 2020). This can also be seen in the vocabulary used by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research as well as the German Rectors' Conference to describe their internationalisation strategy with GC as its cornerstone.

Need for Multiperspective Approach to GC

As a result of the emphasis on competitive advantage through the acquisition of skills needed in a globalised world, the kind of GC that is likely to be anchored in the universities' strategies is conceptualised within a neoliberal framework. Yet, whereas national education policy promotes a narrow perspective on GC, several authors argue for more complex and deeper conversations about internationalisation and GC in order to take into account ethical considerations (Stein 2015; Andreotti, Stein, Pashby & Nicolson 2016; Pashby & Andreotti 2016; Stein, Andreotti, Bruce & Suša 2016; De Wit & Altbach 2021). Against this backdrop, the inclusion of multiple perspectives and an engagement with different typologies of GC (Stein 2015; Andreotti et al. 2016) can widen the framework used to respond to unprecedented global challenges.

Heterogeneous and Controversial Perceptions of GC

On the basis of Pashby et al.'s (2020) three key discursive orientations of GC, TES' perceptions are found to be heterogeneous and linked to the neoliberal, liberal as well as critical theory of GC. On the one hand, TES associate GC with universal values that are built around the global public good and the idea of a common humanity (liberal GC). Here their perceptions of GC refer to equality and human rights and are therefore in accordance with UNESCO's (2018) viewpoint on the basic principles of GC. On the other hand, the majority of them believe that GC is also about the acquisition of certain skills such as foreign language and intercultural skills in order to keep pace with globalisation (neoliberal GC). Hence, global economic and technological processes are perceived as a shaping force one needs to adapt to by filling gaps of skills. At the same time, TES perceive worldwide interconnections between humans as unjust due to asymmetrical globalisation which provides prosperity to a few and poverty to many (critical GC). In this context, Western supremacy and unequal distribution of power and resources worldwide are among the issues raised by TES. Figure 1 illustrates the three different orientations to GC with a space of ambivalence as interfaces at the centre.

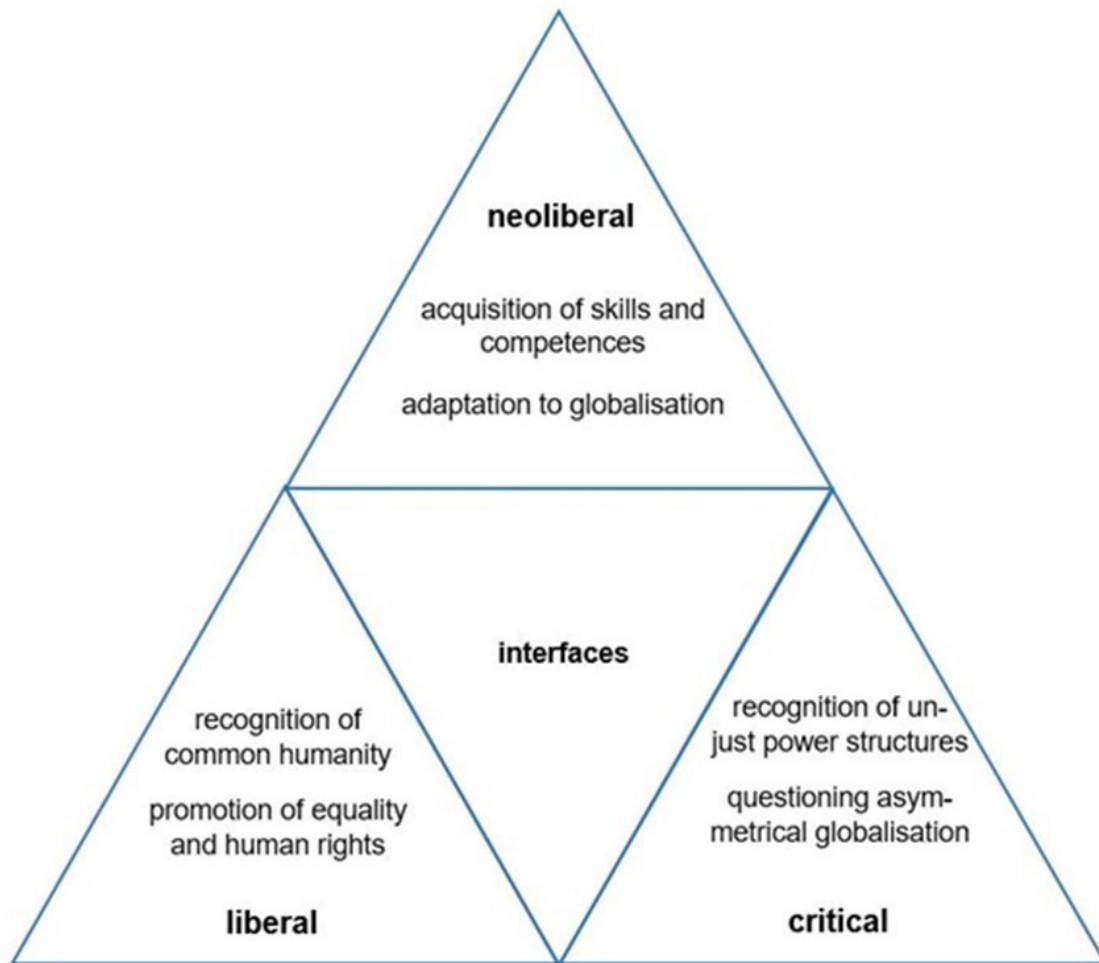


Figure 1 Three GC orientations (adapted from Andreotti et al. 2016)

These heterogeneous understandings of GC among TES that appear in mixed forms of neoliberal, liberal and critical GC are accompanied by controversial and paradox views. Such contradictions are mostly reflected in a felt feeling of “responsibility for” versus “responsibility towards” the other (Andreotti 2006, 47). In this respect, most TES consider less developed countries in the Global South as agents on equal footing and as recipients of moral support at the same time. Even though Western supremacy is criticised by TES, the existing hierarchical order of the world gets confirmed by their belief that the West should equip the Global South with education and funds. Paradoxes in the individual perceptions of TES like these are not surprising given that GC itself is a multifaceted phenomenon (Wintersteiner et al. 2015) with no globally agreed definition (UNESCO 2018).

Consider multiple perspectives on global citizenship and reflect on their implications for internationalisation of teacher education.

GC for Sustainable and Just Coexistence in the World

On top of the significance that is increasingly attributed to GC by national education policy, the great majority of TES at the University of Education Weingarten find GC important for their self-image as future teachers. For this reason, the concept of GC deserves a deep

engagement in the way that it gets approached from a multi-perspective and complex view. Instead of narrowing down GC to a neoliberal, depoliticised and market-oriented concept, it is recommendable to take into account various typologies of GC with their possibilities and limitations (Andreotti et al. 2016). Moreover, it is essential to recognize GC as a heterogeneous construct that can entail diverse perceptions and even conflicts. Against this background, it is indispensable for universities of teacher education to find a way to navigate through these complexities of GC together with TES and to critically reflect on their purpose of internationalisation as well as the related implications. The invitation is to use GC to open up to the global community, the rights and responsibilities beyond territorial borders in order to learn from and with each other about sustainable and just coexistence (Schönborn, 2021).

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