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Global citizenship education at the crossroads: Globalization, global commons, common good, and critical consciousness

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Abstract This article-dialogue addresses current criticisms of global citizenship and challenges frequent misinterpretations of Global Citizenship Education (GCE), while discussing what it means to educate for critical global citizenry in an increasingly multicultural world. It starts by considering the phenomena of globalization and the UN Global Education First Initiative (GEFI), which aims at furthering global citizenship, to highlight the relationship between GCE, "global-peace", global commons, and common good. Building on the assumption that GCE should be about learners' emancipation toward critical consciousness, the dialogue concludes drawing a parallel between the "mission" of GCE in contemporary educational institutions and Paulo Freire's notion of critical consciousness.

Keywords Globalization · Global citizenship education · Teaching and learning · Multiculturalism · Paulo Freire · Critical consciousness

The following is an ongoing dialogue on global citizenship education (GCE) in relation to research, teaching, and learning in the modern educational institutions that the authors of this article have been having since 2017. As it attempts to address the current criticism of global citizenship, this dialogue not only challenges frequent misinterpretations of GCE—a concept that neoliberals have often adopted to convey global market competence or even employment that implicates frequent international flights—but also embraces contemporary educational issues and discuss what it means to educate for critical global citizenry, in this increasingly multicultural world. The first section considers the phenomena of globalization and the proposal of the Global Education First Initiative (GEFI), which United

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Nations (UN) Secretary Ban Ki-moon launched in 2012, of furthering global citizenship—a pivotal motive of the UN agenda. Given the need for a theory to articulate the concept of global citizenship, the second section frames GCE as an intervention in search of a theory. The third section delineates the relationship between GCE, "global-peace", global commons, and common good. The article concludes by attempting to draw a parallel between the "mission" of GCE in contemporary educational institutions and Paulo Freire's notion of critical consciousness. This parallel rests on our assumption that GCE should be about learners' emancipation toward critical consciousness.

The many publications and the growing debate about Global Citizenship Education (GCE) over the past 10 years demonstrates that this notion is becoming increasingly relevant for contemporary educational institutions (Bosio 2019; Bosio and Gaudelli 2018; Bosio and Torres 2018; Yemini 2016). Researchers, educators, and even politicians have been contributing to the description, interpretation, and development of GCE, creating a highly diverse conceptual arena (Bosio, Ibe, Matsui, and Rothman 2018; Yemini, Goren, and Maxwell 2018; Bosio and Schattle 2017). GCE is intended to work at the crossroads of programs, education, and globalization for the preparation of young people (Bosio 2020), who will be living in an increasingly interdependent environment (Yemini, Tibbitts, and Goren 2019). Torres (2017b) sets a minimum of 3 justifications for including GCE in a modern educational institution. First, GCE supports global peace; second, it encourages interventions regarding economic, social, and cultural inequality and can reduce global poverty; third, it provides a solid framework and guidelines for the support of civic virtues that will result in more democratic societies. In this article-dialogue, we discuss GCE as more than service delivery—we view it as a means of "conscientization". Conscientization in Freirean terms refers to achieving an in-depth understanding of the world, allowing for the perception and exposure of social and political contradictions—and for identity development through a dialectic of local and global (Torres 2019)—which also entails transmitting to our learners such immaterial values as a strong spirit of solidarity and treasuring humanity, coupled with an understanding that our planet is our home.

Dialogue

Emiliano Bosio: In our recent publication (Bosio and Torres 2019), we defined globalization as a complex and multilayered phenomenon that has an impact on individual lifestyles, communities, and democratic engagement in society, and eventually on educational institutions, particularly schools and universities. We also implied that under the conditions of globalization and the pressure of neoliberal political values, democracy is very often defined as the right to cache material goods and the right to the dissolute pursuit of profit. In this perspective, Berger (2007, p. 113) suggests: "[N]ever before has the devastation caused by the pursuit of profit, as defined by capitalism, been more extensive than it is today. Almost everybody knows this". Why and in what ways is globalization a pivotal concept for the analysis of GCE?

Carlos Alberto Torres: Globalization, in all its faces and waves, marks the epoch of contemporary capitalism. Even if now it is being challenged by the

different authoritarian populist movements in the world—for example, Italy's Matteo Salvini has emerged as the dominant figure trying to unify Europe's nationalist parties at a European level—the globalization process may have diminished the inequality between countries, while increasing inequality within each country.

Let me also say that globalization is a central concept and foundational background for the analysis of GCE—it is intricate and multilayered. It takes different forms and it should be discussed in the plural. In past publications (Torres 2017b), I conceived several forms of globalization, which I graphically represent in Figure 1 below.
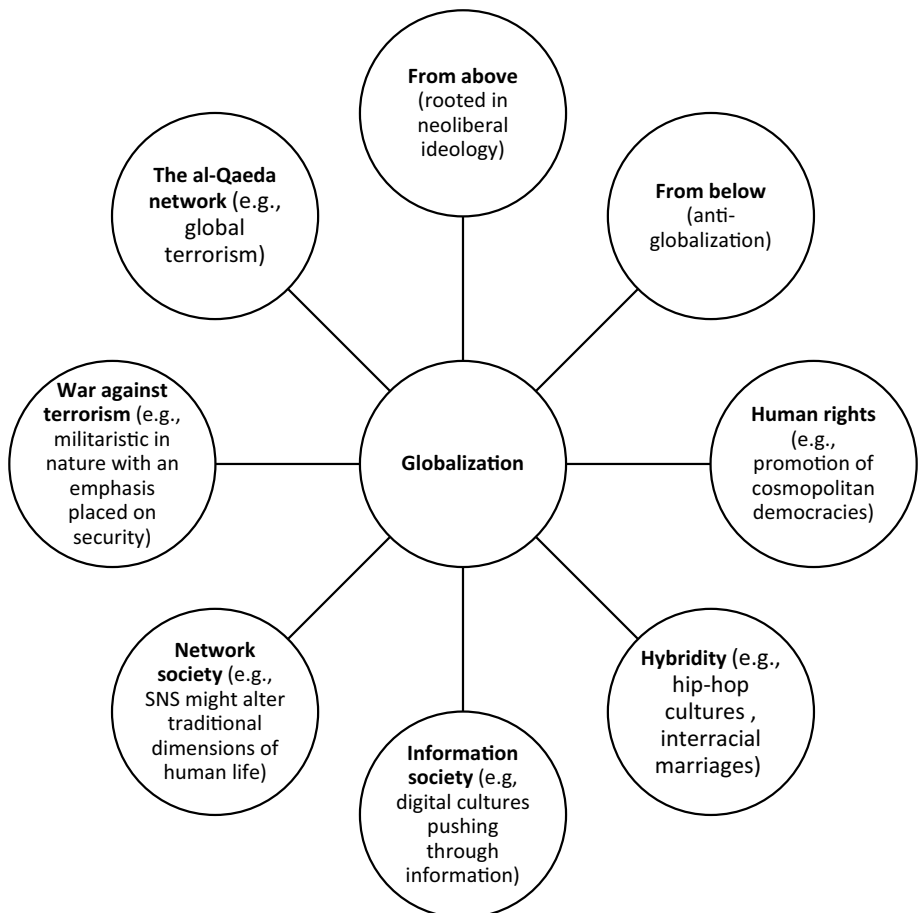

Figure 1 The plurality of globalization

To explain,

- Firstly, we can see a globalization from above. This is framed by an ideology of neoliberalism and calls for the creation of multiple regional markets, the proliferation of fast-paced economic and financial exchanges, and the presence of governing systems other than nation-states, particularly in the form of international trade agreements enforced by the World Trade Organization.
- A second form of globalization is from below, or anti-globalization. It is in contrast with the first. It takes the form of individuals, institutions, and social movements that are strenuously opposed to what they interpret as corporate globalization. Their motto is "no globalization without representation".
- Another distinct globalization-type concern refers more to rights than to markets. This is the globalization of human rights. The promotion of cosmopolitan democracies and pluralistic democratic, multicultural global citizenship is the theme of this version of globalization.
- Globalization can also be identified in the concept of hybridity. Forms of hybridity include hip-hop cultures that were born in the Bronx and that now have influences from Japanese, Indian, or Chinese practitioners and cultural modalities. They all share some form of opposition to the establishments and new ways for youth cultures to express themselves. Another growing form of hybridity is related to interracial marriages that create new categories not always classifiable within taxonomies of race and/or ethnicity in demographic surveys.
- A fifth manifestation of globalization relates to the idea of the information society. It connects with digital cultures and their abilities to push through information to all corners of the globe rapidly. This shapes the equation of time and space, while linked with the notion of a network society made possible by developments in digital-cultures technologies. Information society in the context of globalizations is impacting cultural and material productions. The emergence of the knowledge society (itself an outcome of robotization and digital cultures) is its twin. It influences the way we think of factors of production, which in the past were considered land, capital, labor, and technology. To these, the knowledge factor should now be added.
- The sixth dimension is the "network society". Social networks have been widely employed and discussed in our societies. The presence of social networks, however, alters some traditional dimensions of human life. Questions about academic authority and moral character

become central elements in discussing the credibility of messages, methods, research, data, analyses, and narratives that pullulate in the Internet.

- A seventh dimension of globalization is the international war against terrorism. It developed largely because of the events of 11 September 2001—interpreted by some as the globalization of the terrorist threat—and the reaction of the US to this event. This form of globalization has been militaristic in nature, with an emphasis placed on security and control of borders, people, capital, and commodities. It relates to the antiterrorist response, which has resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives. Tragic examples are the two coalition wars led by the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq. In this context, islamophobia can also be considered a theme of this globalization. In fact, the frequent juxtaposition of "terrorism" and "the terrorist threat" with "Islam" and "Muslims" has become an accepted norm internationally.

- Lastly, an eighth form of globalization is the al-Qaeda network, with several terrorist organizations. But also, alternatives to al-Qaeda such as ISIS, which manage to control large territories few years back, was dismantled but may be regrouping in the Middle East, while attracting voluntaries from several parts of the world. For example, we have numerous youngsters moving to Iraq and Syria to fight for what they believe is the sacred cause of social change with the creation of a new Caliphate in the Levant and Middle East.

While the above might not describe an encouraging scenario, we had some valid responses in recent years aimed at promoting harmony and contributing to the common good. For example, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, launched in 2012 the Global Education First Initiative (GEFI 2012).

Bosio: What is the value of GEFI and how does this initiative connect with GCE?

Torres: The GEFI initiative is based on three principles:

- putting every child into school;
- improving the quality of learning; and
- fostering global citizenship.

GEFI brought global citizenship as a central concept into the UN system and as a new commitment, well developed in Goal 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Particularly, the third principle—fostering global citizenship—which we discuss among other themes in this article, encourages global learning that is cultivated

by GCE. GCE can be, then, interpreted as the educational extension of global citizenship.

In this perspective, GCE becomes an essential tool to not only build understanding across borders and cultures but to advance our social, political, economic, and environmental interconnectedness necessary to address global and local issues. Raising the stakes by launching the GEFI, and linking education for all with quality of education, Ban Ki-moon spoke of global citizenship as a new model of intervention in securing peace and sustainable development in the global system.

Bosio: You describe GCE as an intervention in search of a theory (Torres 2017b). I conceptualize it as a "multi-vocal" symbol. The anthropologist Victor Turner explains that multi-vocal symbols are capable of being interpreted in multiple ways by different actors and, in some cases, can become the site of conflict as different interest groups compete to have their own interpretations accepted as the dominant one (Turner 1975).

As a matter of fact, GCE is characterized in multiple ways. There are discursive standpoints that contest limited, and typically Western-centric neoliberal, conceptions of GCE to call for more critical, transformative, and even spiritual postures. For example, some scholars believe that GCE should be based on postcolonial and critical theories; in this perspective, GCE should address the origins of global poverty and inequality (de Oliveira Andreotti, Stein, Pashby, and Nicolson 2016), contrast depoliticized conceptions of poverty, and attempt to subvert "continuation of colonial logics" (Stein, Andreotti, and Suša 2016, pp. 5–6).

For others, GCE should be transformative—e.g., multicultural, rights-based, universal, and collaborative (Bosio 2017a; Bosio and Joffee 2018; Gaudelli 2016; Tarozzi and Torres 2016; UNESCO 2014). These scholars call for a GCE-approach that aims to foster and promote values such as empathy, solidarity, and respect for differences and diversity, and actions to address human rights, poverty, and environmental issues.

Yet, other educators advocate a value-creating orientation to GCE (Sharma 2018) that highlights the need to address the persistent development of students' humanity through creative coexistence with others and the development of their capacity to find meaning (Bosio 2017b), to enhance one's own existence, and to contribute to the well-being of others, under any circumstance. With such conceptual proliferation and considering the need for a theory to articulate the concept of global citizenship, what shall we expect for the future in relation to sets of theories about GCE?

Torres: There are several problems for GCE in the global system, including the interaction with national contexts and national citizenships, the articulation of GCE with sustainability policies, or the cost of implementing GCE globally. Finally, in this regard, who is in charge of promoting GCE and who is in charge of evaluating its effectiveness are important questions, and require an alterity between the UN system, the global system, and the nation-state systems. There are many typologies but not a single theory that can encompass all the different interpretation in a holistic way. I believe what we need now is a meta-theory, such as the one I developed around the global commons (globalcommonsreview.org; see also Torres 2017a; 2019).

Bosio: Following the ethicist John Rawls (1971, p. 233), who states that "government is assumed to aim at the common good, that is, at maintaining conditions and achieving objectives that are similarly to everyone's advantage", we argued that global citizenship should strive to defend the global commons (Bosio and Torres 2019). Can you clarify the notion of global commons and how it possibly connects to GCE?
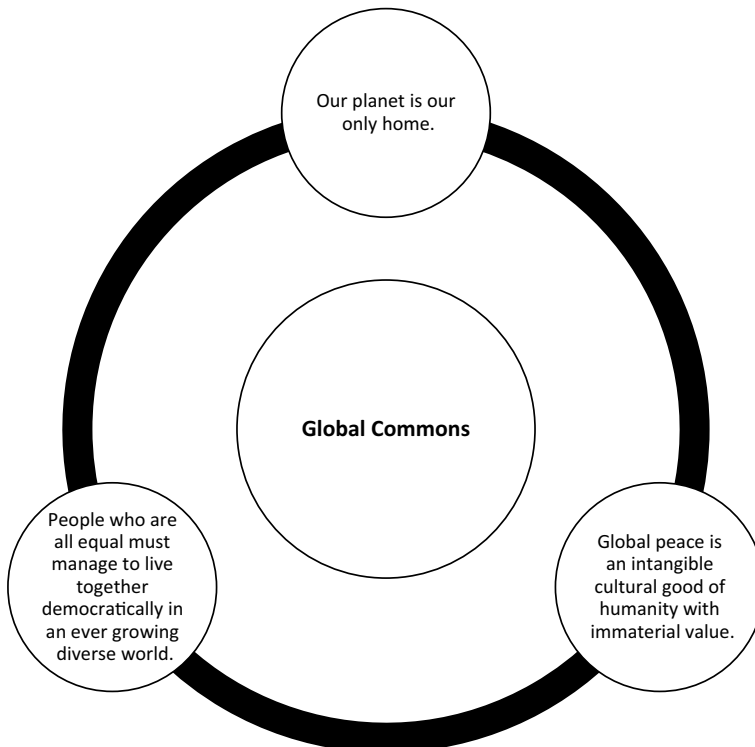

Figure 2 Global commons: Three propositions

Torres: Global commons is defined by three propositions, which I want to sketch in Figure 2, below. To illustrate, the first proposition is that our planet is our only home and we have to protect it through a global citizenship sustainable-development education, moving from diagnosis and denunciation into action and policy implementation. This principle is self-evident. In the context of the Anthropocene, we have few options left to sustain the world life of the planet, its biodiversity and viability for future generations. Secondly, global commons is predicated on the idea that global peace is an intangible cultural good of humanity with immaterial value. Global peace is a treasure of humanity. Thirdly, global commons is predicated on the need to find ways that people who are all equal manage to live together democratically in an ever-growing diverse world, seeking to fulfill their individual and cultural interests and achieving their inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Bosio: Can you clarify the second principle — "global peace is an intangible cultural good and a treasure of humanity with immaterial value"?

Torres: Since Kant and the idea of a perpetual peace, we have witnessed two great wars. A third great war is unthinkable, simply because war technologies have reached a point where the option of mutual destruction with a nuclear hecatomb cannot be ruled out. Simply given technological reasons, peace is our only option. This implies putting peace ahead of individual interests of nation-states and to create a model of self-regulation of the global order, through soft-power and some kind of "détente" that will preclude the use of global atomic technology to resolve conflicts. For a long time, it has been clear that regional conflicts, in this time and age, will quickly become global conflicts with absolutely unprecedented destruction. A nuclear winter will simply eliminate agricultural production for decades, if not centuries, for the survivors. It is attributed to Herodotos—by Halicarnassus, the historian who wrote about the conflict between Greeks and Persians—a maxim that is still applicable: "In peace sons bury fathers, but in war fathers bury sons". Let me ask rhetorically: what is the normal way of being a human being?

Bosio: This is a crucial question, indeed. In this view, you are also proposing through your third principle that human beings should strive "to live together democratically in an ever-growing diverse world".

Torres: The third global commons is, indeed, the central quest of human beings. Happiness is an undeniable quest for all of us, and a central global commons. It connects with the question of the sociology of the good life that is becoming more prominent these days (Rosa 1998). The question is what are the conditions for the good

life, and the good society, that will generate a sense of shared happiness and the search for global solidarity, which itself more and more continues to be a precondition for the "buen-vivir", as articulated by the indigenous groups that confronted the Spanish conquerors, the first model of colonization in the context of the global capitalism emerging from the expansion of the Mediterranean advanced countries.

Bosio: Carlos, you have been working with Paulo Freire on multiple occasions along your academic journey; he was your mentor. Paulo Freire's notion of conscientization or "critical consciousness" is often cited by scholars whose interest is in GCE. A possible reason is that Freire makes clear that conscientization or critical consciousness is the highest value of education; this is emancipation (Freire 1970). Freire (2018) explains that emancipation means becoming critically aware of social injustices and the global issues that maintain these injustices. In other words, emancipation has the function to liberate humans from social and global injustices.

In this perspective, he seems to suggest that education as emancipation comprises being able to "read the world" and "rewrite the world" (Freire 1970). By reading the world, individuals are able to critically analyze the global systems of power as well as their own position in those power structures (Freire 2018; Torres 2014). This also involves what Freire (1994) defines as denunciations and annunciations. While the notion of "denunciations" is concerned with the development of a critical consciousness about the globe that denounces the social injustices in the world, the concept of "annunciations" can be explained as the awareness of all peoples' humanity, dignity, and their potential (Freire 1994). In other words, when a person's eyes are open to societies through denunciations and annunciations, that person is ready to rewrite the world. In this perspective, what connections can you draw between Freire's pedagogy and GCE?

Torres: Freire was a precursor in understanding global citizenship, becoming himself, without perhaps his own willingness, a global citizen and a global intellectual. Professor Raymond Morrow, the first recipient of the Rob Rhoads Global Citizenship Education Award given by the UNESCO Chair that I have the honor to hold, provided a formidable set of arguments in our Fourth Annual Conference to prove this point. Soon, some of these arguments will be published in our *Global Commons Review* magazine (globalcommonsreview.com).

Let me say that Freire started as a typical provincial. He was raising awareness as a provincial, but he was a local-local person. He enjoyed very much being from the Northeast. He was somebody

who had an extraordinary perspicacity. He had an extraordinary capacity to observe. One of the things that impressed me about him is how he would look at reality in ways that not everybody will and discovered things in this reality, and then he'd make answers to himself in this course of exploration about this reality that he's observing that he could put in ways, because of his prose and his almost poetic epistemology, that will capture the imagination of other people. What Pierre Furter described as "the growing awareness of a provincial" in his portrait of Paulo Freire in the UNESCO journal *Prospects* (Furter 1985), which I cited in my new edited book *The Wiley Handbook of Freire* (2019, p. 11).

In that way, he began to move in very practical domains, being a very unpractical man. He never learned how to drive, for instance. Not a terrible thing, but I don't think he was practical in the ways that people are. But he was practical in the way that people are not. He knew how to induce social transformation.

He did that by inventing a system, I call it the "Paulo Freire System", and he himself and the group of early collaborators, in a famous journal of 1963 that was published at the University of Recife at the time, now the University of Pernambuco, call it the "Paulo Freire System". It is this: a system of bringing people back into school increasing access, but also letting them move on parallel levels, nonformal, informal, formal education, until they reach a pinnacle, which would be university.

This [type of] university already begins to show some of the elements of global citizenship. In short, I think Freire moved from being the local-local to be the global-global. In that dialogue between the global and the local, he himself became a global figure on what he called himself—a "pilgrim" of the obvious, being the old views that oppression and oppressed, oppressors and oppressed exist in the world.

Let me add one more point, which I developed slightly in my keynote and in my presidency with the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES), and was published in six languages online. There was this individual, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, very controversial man, self-made man, somebody who was an autodidact that created the concept of popular education and then applied it to public education. Sarmiento put this as a precondition for citizenship. Education and citizenship were immediately connected with the tradition of liberalism, and perhaps positivism, and this is the typical model of the tradition of positivism, politically connected with the tradition of empiricism, and particularly liberalism. Sarmiento was also a comparativist, perhaps the first comparativist in Latin America—I'm not so sure,

if not in the world. Because he would take what he knew what has been termed borrowing and lending, that is what he did is to apply knowledge from an experience of educational reform, to other areas of the world, to Latin America.

Sarmiento then promoted the creation of the postcolonial but liberal citizen. The problem with this liberalism is that it creates a homogenous citizen rather than a diverse citizen. This is, roughly, to put it around the 1860s to 1880s. That's the generation I'm talking about. Exactly 60 years to 70 years later comes in Freire.

Freire will not confront this tradition. He was pretty much a liberal democrat at heart at the beginning of his "pilgrimage". He will confront this element of a postcolonial tradition that was not postcolonial enough because Sarmiento didn't like the Spanish. He liked the French, he liked the Americans, but not the Spanish, because the Spanish were the colonizers. With Freire, we have a different—and the beginning of a new—tradition. The argument of the pedagogy of the oppressed was the precondition to make this liberal, democratic citizen a true global citizen in a radicalized liberalism, well informed by the Marxism of the epoch. That's the reason that Freire then become, perhaps unwillingly, a global citizen and a global thinker.

Freire in the last stages of his life came up with a beautiful sentence and not many people have really paid attention to it. It's a complicated sentence, so I may not be able to remember it all by memory. It says something like this: My recificity explains my pernambucality, my pernambucality explains my northeasterness, my northeasterness explains my Brazilianity, my Brazilianity explains my Latin Americanism, my Latin Americanism makes me a citizen of the world.

Then he says, "You will not be able to understand me if you don't understand Recife. You will not be able to understand me if you don't understand my other affiliations". Original sentence: "Recife is the context and origin, which has marked me, marks me, and will mark me. That is why I say that you cannot understand me if you do not understand Recife, and do not love me if you do not love Recife" (Torres and Noguera 2008).

Freire never believed that education was the lever for progress or development. Freire believed, and I endorse this point of view, that without education you cannot have this process or development. In other words, it's a necessary but not sufficient condition, as the sociologists used to say. The sufficient condition is always connected with public policy. It's always connected with the choices made in a connection between the civil society and the political society. The third element that I would like to emphasize

here is that it's not that we are in a growing neoliberal society. We are now facing three generations of neoliberal disciples, people that have been systematically bombarded with the idea on the one hand of possessive individualism and that you are solely responsible for your own success, and on the other hand the continuous underestimation and undermining of the networks of solidarity.

Bosio: To conclude our conversation, I would like you to comment and perhaps expand on a quote that really struck a chord with my educational philosophy and my interpretation of GCE as a values-based framework; in a dialogue with Paulo Freire (Freire and Pérez 1993), the authors discuss the challenges of "revolutionary educators" in creating the best possible value through their daily teachings. In this context, Freire says:

"I think that one of the great challenges of the revolutionary educators is to achieve the transition between the school that was useful to the dominant class before the revolution, and the school that is useful to the popular classes, to society right now". (p. 6)

Considering that "the challenge for global citizenship is not continue to speak to and for global elites" (Shultz, Abdi, and Richardson 2011, p. 14), what connections can you draw with Freire's words, above?

Torres: Let's put Freire in a clear perspective of his left-leaning libertarian angle. For him, the question is how to promote global citizenship in exponentially difficult contexts, such as with people, and one seventh of the world, as such, earning less than two dollars per day. How can one expect people in such deleterious lifeworld(s), to think about, let alone to behave as, global citizens? However, let me state an important point. Freire challenged and criticized traditional models of education built on the power of teachers in the classrooms through a teacher-centered pedagogy. Students are not empty vessels that need to be filled with knowledge, to use Paulo's words. One of the key challenges is to recognize that the students of all ages that come to our classrooms bring with them knowledge and experience, and they can make valuable contributions to teaching and learning, and societies at large. In this view, Freire posits this in the analogy of the teacher as a student and the student as a teacher. GCE should be a form of problem-posing education, which challenges learners with critical questions. Rather than speaking "to and for global elites", GCE must be dealt with by educators in a way that fosters the heart of the learner, and advances social justice and sustainability for all communities.

Conclusion

Global transformations and globalizing capitalism are the general headlines for some of the most profound and dramatic developments in our era that education must address. There is an urgent need to respond to the dramatic changes inflicted on/promised to our era philosophically, sociologically, culturally, ecologically, physically, aesthetically, and politically. In our dialogue, we addressed the challenge of global transformations to education in the broadest sense of the concept of education. That is, by treating this challenge from various perspectives, through different topics—within which the challenge of globalization is conceived as the most profound dynamic of this historical moment, a development realized on many different levels and spaces of human and natural existence.

Our dialogue addressed the richness and diversity of the challenge of globalization in relation to GCE. It tried to reconstruct historically, sociologically, and philosophically some of the roots, practices, and fruits of GCE as a threat—and as a gateway for new possibilities for education. This dialogue is not only analytical and critical. It also offers new roads and opportunities for education in the twenty-first century in the era of globalization.

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