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Global Citizenship Education and ELT?

A Survey of Pre-Service English Teachers' Views

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Abstract: In attempting to address the possibilities of challenging the confounding crises that currently plague the world, this article re-engages with global citizenship education as an educational framework. In particular, this paper examines the relation between global citizenship education and teacher education by interviewing pre-service English teachers. Using qualitative content analysis, the interviews reveal that pre-service teachers as experts-in-the-making show great enthusiasm towards global citizenship education in the context of English Language Teaching. Particularly the promotion of the global community as well as fostering their future students' capabilities to engage with an increasingly globalized world were shared goals among the interviewees. A lack of allotted time and resources due to restrictive curricula, flaws in teacher education, as well as availability of teaching materials were mentioned as challenges that may arise when implementing global citizenship education in the context of English Language Teaching. Comparing the interviewees' conceptions of global citizenship education to the dichotomy between soft and critical understandings of global citizenship education revealed that the pre-service teachers generally lean towards a soft understanding, which highlights the importance of critical reflexivity as a key competency to be promoted during teacher training and education.

Keywords: pre-service teachers; global citizenship education; English Language Teaching

1 Introduction – global citizenship education and the global polycrisis

Recent years have been marked by several converging crises occurring on the global stage: socio-politically, many countries have shifted towards increasingly authoritarian and right-wing forms of political leadership; ecologically, there is widespread inaction in the face of the escalating climate catastrophe; economically, countries are still grappling with the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic as trade relations between the US- and China-led blocs continue to worsen; militarily, previously non-violent or low-intensity conflicts are increasingly turning to armed conflicts as exemplified by the Russo-Ukrainian war or the recent escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian war in the aftermath of the Hamas attack on the 7th October 2023. British historian Adam Tooze refers to this convergence of confounding crises as the polycrisis. During a polycrisis, various problems may be unrelated, but their interaction creates a situation that is even more overwhelming than the combined impact of each shock – the whole is more than the sum of its parts (Tooze, 2022).

The circumstances above not only negatively affect global social justice issues, but they threaten the wellbeing of humanity as a whole. These global events emphasize the significance of equipping students with an awareness of global sensitivities and responsibilities and the ability to fight for social justice on a global scale. In this context, scholars have called for a return to and reexamination of global citizenship education (GCE) in order to challenge global injustice, growing inequality, and environmental issues (Aboagye & Dlamini, 2021a, pp. 5–6).

GCE is a highly contested field with different understandings of globalization and citizenship ranging from affirmative to critical (cf. Andreotti, 2006). There are many overlaps between GCE and educational concepts and approaches such as peace education, human rights education and sustainability education (cf. Wintersteiner et al., 2014, pp. 28–29). The same can be said about GCE in relation to this paper's subject of interest – English Language Teaching (ELT). While not explicitly mentioned as being part of the curriculum of English as a school subject in Germany, there is considerable overlap between the aims, interests, and perspectives outlined in the relevant curricula as well as those at the heart of GCE.

Torres underscores the crucial role of the education and training of teachers in realizing GCE goals (Torres, 2020, p. xvii). Despite increased scholarly interest in GCE, its connection and relation to teacher training and education as well as pre-service teachers' understandings of GCE remains underexplored. Recognizing and addressing pre-service teachers' conceptions of GCE is vital, as it not only shapes their pedagogical approaches but also influences the effective implementation of GCE principles in the classroom (see also Klaes's contribution on Language Teacher Identity, pp. 78–117 in this issue). Following Torres' appeal, this paper examines how pre-service teachers conceive of and evaluate GCE both as an educational framework in relation to ELT as well as in terms of potential challenges that may arise when practicing GCE. This paper is based on a study project conducted during the Praxissemester in 2023 (Koppel, 2023), which also examined the connection between GCE and Social Sciences as a subject. Due to its thematic focus, this paper will mostly outline findings which are relevant to ELT.

These research questions will guide the analysis of the semi-structured expert interviews conducted with three prospective English and Social Sciences teachers. All three participants have recently concluded their Praxissemester, an important part of their already advanced teacher education which allowed them to gain hands-on experience as teachers. The interviews will be analyzed

through inductive category formation, a method of qualitative content analysis following Mayring (2014).

Following the introduction, the paper presents a literature review of recent relevant studies on GCE, defining key terms and concepts (Section 2). This section also covers existing research on GCE, highlighting the paper's contribution to the field. Next, the methodological approach for the interviews and the qualitative content analysis are explained (Section 3). The results are then discussed by detailing the developed categories and subcategories (Section 4). Drawing on the broader available literature on GCE, the paper offers both an analysis and discussion of the results (Section 5) as well as a concluding outlook (Section 6).

2 Global citizenship education – precursors and current research

Including empirical studies as well as theoretical discussions, the existing body of research and literature on GCE has grown so large that gaining and maintaining a comprehensive understanding of the various discussions on the topic has turned into a formidable academic challenge. Keeping this in mind, this paper provides a broad overview of GCE in relation to relevant topics at hand, specifically pre-service teachers' understandings and attitudes, teacher training and education, as well as GCE in relation to ELT.

To begin with, Goren and Yemini's systematic metastudy of 90 peer-reviewed empirical papers on GCE published between 2005 and 2015 identified several gaps between theory and practice. While scholars eagerly use the term GCE, policymakers and educators reference it reluctantly and rarely engage in critical discussions. Theoretical literature emphasizes GCE's relation to supranational topics like peace education, but it is often adapted to local learners' needs. The authors critique much of the research for lacking a theoretical framework and barely engaging with the GCE concept (Goren & Yemini, 2017, p. 180). Following Goren and Yemini's critique of existing literature on GCE as lacking both in regard to their theoretical framework as well as their conceptual clarity, this paper includes an outline of GCE as well as its development and references the definition and conceptualization of GCE as established by UNESCO (Deutsche UNESCO-Kommission, n.d.; UNESCO, 2014).

2.1 The development of global citizenship education

Although not the focus of their paper, Goren and Yemini point out in their literature review that there is no agreed-upon definition of GCE, instead suggesting that its definition is inherently contested (Goren & Yemini, 2017, p. 170). Peters, Britton, and Blee agree and assert that "there can be no one dominant notion of GCE as notions of 'global,' 'citizenship,' and 'education' are all contested and open to further argument and revision" (Peters et al., 2008, p. 11). Indeed, the sheer amount of different scholarly approaches and fields of studies concerned with GCE and related concepts have made it thus far difficult to find consensus on a definition of GCE (Aboagye & Dlamini, 2021b, p. 25).

GCE's eclectic character and the difficulty of conclusively defining the concept can be partly traced back to its precursors – World Studies and Global Education (Hicks, 2003; Holden, 2000). World Studies emerged in the 1960s, focusing on the promotion of an international understanding by providing students with the necessary skills and knowledge. Rather than encouraging students to engage with the rest of the world, it emphasized learning and understanding issues such as oppression, conflict, and the environment in their global dimension. Similarly, Global Education emphasizes content such as the process of globalization, central universalist philosophical concepts, and awareness of cultural differences and commonalities. It targets skills such as critical thinking and values responsibility, open-mindedness, community engagement, and respect (Aboagye & Dlamini, 2021b, pp. 29–30). The evolution of GCE through its predecessors proved to be more non-linear as shown by Richardson's model of the five imaginaries of GCE. Ranging from the imperial to the ecological imaginary, this model stresses that GCE evolved and continues to evolve with various overlaps between the different imaginaries (cf. Richardson, 2008).

While it is evident that certain themes, such as cosmopolitanism or global thinking, are not new and existed before the advent of GCE, the renewed interest and discourse on these themes are more directly tied to GCE as an educational framework. The (re)emergence of GCE can be explained by the institutional support of the concept in recent agendas of international organizations, chiefly UNESCO (2014, 2016a). Although only recently directly influencing and inspiring UNESCO's policies, comparing the values associated with GCE with those found in important founding texts of UNESCO reveals many similarities in the points of interest between the two, such as achieving peace, protecting human rights, and fighting inequality (Akkari & Maleq,

2020, p. 4). The inclusion of GCE in the 2015 Incheon Declaration was a major milestone, now being explicitly included in UNESCO's 2030 agenda of promoting quality education around the world as one of the sustainable development goals. Specifically, target 4.7 mentions the promotion of GCE, among other things, such as education for sustainable development and appreciation of cultural diversity (UNESCO, 2016a, p. 19).

While the declaration was praised for its ambitions, scholars question the feasibility of achieving these goals by 2030 and critique its surface-level reference to deeply contested concepts such as citizenship or human rights (Akkari & Maleq, 2020, pp. 5–6). Another point of criticism that has been made of the UNESCO's definition is that it lacks a clear conception of what GCE even entails, leaving non-state and state actors in education to fill in these gaps themselves. This results in actors taking GCE in reference to UNESCO's policies in widely differing directions, with both critical and affirmative visions being enacted (Scheunpflug, 2022, p. 416). UNESCO has laid out several imprecise target indicators for fulfilling the SDG 4.7 target, which reflects this lack of focus (Akkari & Maleq, 2020, p. 6; UNESCO, 2016b, p. 79).

Although a singular UNESCO definition of GCE is often referenced, several formulations of this definition exist, all of which nonetheless exhibit the aforementioned flaws. For example, UNESCO defined GCE in a 2014 publication as the following:

> "Global Citizenship Education aims to empower learners to engage and assume active roles, both locally and globally, to face and resolve global challenges and ultimately to become proactive contributors to a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable world." (UNESCO, 2014, p. 15)

Despite the aforementioned flaws, this conception of GCE is the point of reference for this study, for two reasons: First, the definition's ambiguity prompted the interviewees to fill in conceptual gaps, thereby revealing their personal understanding of GCE as well as envisioned potentials and problems. In this regard, the lack of focus criticized above acts as a catalyst rather than a hindrance. Secondly, referencing this conception of GCE aligns the research findings more effectively with the broader scientific discourse, as UNESCO's definition has become a significant point of reference, frequently cited by both critical and supportive scholars.

2.2 Teacher education and teachers' attitudes in relation to global citizenship education

Taking the rather limited body of research on the engagement of in-service and pre-service teachers with GCE into account, Goren and Yemini suggest that these studies point towards a "pattern of disillusionment" when pre-service teachers enter the education system proper (2017, pp. 178–179). Both Appleyard and McLean (2011) as well as Carr and colleagues (2014) state that pre-service teachers, though concerned about the lack of resources including teaching materials, often enter the field with great enthusiasm for GCE, viewing it as an important educational approach. Rapoport (2010) and Schweisfurth (2006) add that in-service teachers are generally less optimistic than their pre-service counterparts and emphasize difficulties and barriers to teaching GCE.

These perceived barriers, rather than being tied to the availability of resources, are often cultural or contextual in nature, ranging from a school's particular environment to students' backgrounds. However, this is not to say that the availability of teaching resources and materials have no bearing on alleviating the cultural and contextual barriers teachers face. For example, Niens and others' (2013) study on teachers in Northern Ireland suggests that teachers who feel ill-equipped tend to avoid sensitive issues. One sensitive issue mentioned in multiple studies in explanation of teachers' aversions to teach GCE is that of nationalism or patriotism: Myers' (2008) study illustrates that teachers tend to avoid GCE or opt for a more narrow and depoliticized understanding of GCE because they fear being perceived as unpatriotic or overtly critical. Goren and Yemini argue that this reluctance might be in parts explained by GCE being associated with internationalist and universalist values which contradict "the traditional role of schools and teachers in developing feelings of national pride and identification among students" (Goren & Yemini, 2017, pp. 178–179). Niens and colleagues (2013) argue that this aversion as well as the teachers' lack of access to adequate teaching materials and resources might partially explain the rather vague understanding of GCE students possess.

2.3 Linking global citizenship education and English Language Teaching

As Lütge and colleagues put it in the introduction of their edited volume *Global Citizenship in Foreign Language Education*, GCE in the context of foreign language education and by extension ELT is a "comparatively recent development" (Lütge et al., 2023, p. 3), marked by the "interdisciplinarity inherent to GCE" (p. 4). As such, scholars coming from a range of different disciplines and fields of study engage with questions on the ties between GCE and (foreign) language education both in terms of theory and practice. This part of the paper aims to give a comprehensive overview of selected scholarly contributions in this still developing field by referencing both international contributions as well as those made within the German ELT context, in which this paper is situated.

Hosack (2011) argues in his account that ELT practices can be tied to GCE by addressing global issues and challenges, for example, climate change (pp. 129–130). However, Hosack stresses that ELT's primary contribution lies not in the engagement of learners with specific topics – in this case global issues – but in introducing young learners to cultures as well as ways of living and thinking that differ from their own (Hosack, 2011, p. 132). In this sense, GCE can also be understood as intercultural citizenship education stressing the importance of intercultural competencies as a major affinity between GCE and foreign language teaching of any kind (cf. Hosack, 2011, pp. 132–134). Finally, Hosack argues that communicative approaches to teaching in the foreign language classroom also serve to enable students to engage in dialogue and discourse with each other and, potentially, with people across the globe. The second major contribution of foreign language teaching – and by extension ELT – to GCE is in aiding students in their capacity to engage in public discourse not only limited to the speakers of their primary language (Hosack, 2011, pp. 134–135; see also Starkey, 2023).

Mastellotto (2023) provides an approach to teaching global citizenship in ELT with picture books while, again, stressing the importance of addressing global issues, fostering intercultural communication as well as "cultivating democratic consciousness and encouraging democratic participation" (Mastellotto, 2023, pp. 233–234). The genuinely new contribution to the field offered by Mastellotto's account is in demonstrating that GCE is not only something reserved for ELT in the context of secondary education, but can also be enacted in the context of foreign language learning within primary education (cf. Mastellotto, 2023, pp. 217–218, 226–233).

German ELT scholar Kramsch's (2023) account of foreign language education in the post-COVID-19 era stands out as a particularly impressive piece of scholarship and provides much needed substance by not only linking foreign language education and GCE, but also by advancing and tying the German ELT to the international discourse on ELT. Kramsch's analyses of different scholarly approaches in the field of applied linguistics range, among others, from Byram's (2021) model of intercultural communicative competencies to Pennycook's (2018) posthumanist approach to the study of language and are tied together and synthesized into a total of five questions which provide a roadmap for the reconceptualization of foreign language education in which language use is envisioned as a metaphorical crossing of different borders (Kramsch, 2023, pp. 25–31). While generally critical of the UNESCO's "lofty, idealistic goal" (Kramsch, 2023, p. 24) of 'true' global citizenship, Kramsch's roadmap for the future of foreign language education in the post-COVID-19 era nonetheless provides useful theoretical considerations and conceptual orientation for future contributions of scholars working on the intersection of ELT and GCE.

Two contributions of note made by German ELT scholars are those of Rauschert (2023) as well as Lütge and Merse (2023). Rauschert situates GCE practices within service learning and foreign language education. Using the Global Peace Path project, an initiative involving writing poetry promoting peace, as a practical example, Rauschert demonstrates the potential of combining service learning and foreign language education within the context of GCE (Rauschert, 2023, pp. 113–118) as means to develop students' intercultural as well as democratic competences.

Lütge and Merse (2023) examine the role of digitalization in GCE and its implications for foreign language teaching. They assert that the digital world has shifted from a tool to an integral environment for learning and teaching, offering both opportunities and challenges (Lütge & Merse, 2023, pp. 226–227). Lütge and Merse argue that digital citizenship redefines traditional concepts of citizenship by focusing on digital actions and self-construction. By reviewing key trends in foreign language education (cf. Lütge & Merse, 2023, pp. 239–240), the authors highlight how educators can rethink "global citizenship *through* the digital" (p. 245; original emphasis), emphasizing the importance of activism and creative participation in digital cultures as essential components of preparing future global citizens.

Another voice within the German ELT discourse on GCE is Ricardo Römhild who has published extensively on the intersection of GCE and ELT. His work

focuses not only on tying the discussion of GCE in the context of ELT to related discourses and topics such as human rights and peace education (Matz & Römhild, 2024; Römhild, 2023a), but also on exploring ways to implement GCE into ELT practice, for example, through cultural learning (Römhild & Meer, 2023) or film pedagogy (Römhild, 2023b).

Summarizing this section, much of the ELT discourse on GCE covered here is concerned with attempting to situate GCE and its aims within ELT on a conceptual level by, for example, emphasizing shared normative foundations or by identifying topics which are of interest and relevance to both GCE and ELT. Another focus is connected to the latter in that a lot of scholars are concerned with offering practical examples of how the implementation or enactment of GCE, for example, through service learning or film pedagogy, is possible or becomes more plausible. More critical contributions, as represented by the account of Claire Kramsch (2023) covered in this section, are rarely engaged in these more practical accounts on GCE in the context of ELT and seem to constitute a minority position within the field of German ELT in particular. A key takeaway from this review of recent literature on GCE in the context of ELT for this study is that both critical and practical considerations need to be examined as well as put into a dialogue with each other when engaging with GCE.

3 Research design and methodology

This paper's aim is to gain insight into the understanding that pre-service teachers have of GCE as well as the challenges and opportunities they foresee when putting GCE into practice. Because of this, the interview guide was designed keeping Bogner's elaborations on expert interviews in mind: The interview participants – being pre-service teachers still undergoing their teacher education – were conceived of as experts-in-the-making, providing various kinds of knowledge and insights based on still-developing expertise (cf. Bogner et al., 2018, pp. 657–658). The semi-structured interviews conducted can be characterized as both exploratory and interpretative since they aim to prompt the participants to elaborate on their perspectives of GCE (cf. Bogner et al., 2018, p. 660).

This study moves beyond traditional and narrowly defined understandings of experts and expertise by framing participants both as experts-in-the-making and as authorities in their own lived experiences (cf. Bogner & Menz, 2009, pp. 40–41). While this approach diverges from conventional practices in expert interviews, it serves two key purposes. First, it foregrounds participants'

lived experiences and accumulated knowledge. Second, it enables a clearer understanding of both the results and ongoing processes of professional development when participants (attempt to) speak as experts. The effectiveness of this approach in empowering participants to adopt the role of experts was varied, as suggested by the dynamics during the interviews. In some instances, interviewer and interviewee shared an understanding of themselves as co-experts-in-the-making, while in other moments, this mutual understanding unravelled, leading to hesitation on the part of the interviewee. This hesitation can be attributed either to the interviewer projecting too much authority or to the interviewee experiencing uncertainty when attempting to assert expertise based on their knowledge and experiences (cf. Bogner et al., 2018, pp. 50–60).

The three participants were mainly chosen on the basis of two criteria: For one, they are prospective teachers of the subjects of English and Social Sciences. This is due to this paper's focus being in parts on the conceptual overlaps of GCE with the traditional conceptions of these subjects as taught in school. Secondly, they had just undergone or were just undergoing their practical semester. This ensures that participants have had the opportunity to gain hands-on experiences teaching both of their subjects. These experiences – often acting as a common basis – also facilitate a shared understanding and a less hierarchical communicative situation during the interview. The interviews were conducted in a quiet and neutral environment with their duration ranging from roughly 30 to 45 minutes (see Table 1). The interviews were held in English.

Table 1: Supplementary information on the conducted interviews (own research)

Nr.	*Participant (Pseudonym)*	*Date of Interview*	*Length of Interview*
1	Lewis	4th July 2023	38:04
2	Nora	4th July 2023	47:25
3	John	10th July 2023	33:17

The interview guide was designed in reference to methodological considerations on expert interviews (Bogner et al., 2018). Most of the guide's questions aim to prompt the participants to elaborate on their view of GCE, including the dimensions they associate with GCE and how they envision it in relation to their respective subjects. Other questions prompt participants to offer contextual information, e.g., where they have heard of GCE before. The interview guide also contains three prompts: a definition of GCE by the German Commission for UNESCO (Deutsche UNESCO-Kommission, n.d.) as well as

short excerpts from the curricula of English and Social Sciences (MSW NRW, 2014a, 2014b) with considerable conceptual overlap to themes and aspects of GCE. The former was included as a point of reference for participants to discuss and evaluate the definition's conception of GCE. The definition was presented in a neutral way to avoid framing it as authoritative and definitive, but rather as one possible conception of GCE. The latter prompts were also included as points of reference, this time to guide the interviewees' judgment of GCE in relation to their subjects in order to make their statements more comparable to one another.

Using transcriptions of these interviews as data, a qualitative content analysis following Mayring's inductive category formation approach was conducted (cf. Mayring, 2014). This approach provides a clear framework for rule-based systematic analysis of the data at hand while being open enough for the qualitative interpretation of the data at hand. This approach's focus on the inductive formation of categories emphasizes the close examination of the subjective constructions – such as the interviewees' views on GCE – contained in the data (Mayring & Fenzl, 2019, pp. 633–634). The following chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the parts of the extensive coding frame that were deemed most relevant to GCE in relation to ELT.

4 Results

4.1 Aspects and dimensions of global citizenship education

The interviewed participants understand GCE as including the teaching of cosmopolitan competencies which focuses on promoting and enabling students to participate in the global community by promoting multiculturalist attitudes and cultural exchange.

These cosmopolitan competencies include students being able to take action in the sense of problem-solving (Lewis: ll. 269–274), socio-political involvement (Nora: ll. 53–54) – and communicating in a globalized world (Lewis: ll. 139–143). These skills hinge on students' capability for global thinking, i.e., being able to take a global rather than national perspective on issues:

> *We just need to analyze where this problem originated from. And I think in very often [sic!] cases, it originated in a different community, in a different part of the world and affects other parts of the world at the same time. So, if we look at these issues, we need to see where the origin is from this problem and what effects that has on the world.* (Lewis: ll. 119–122)

This capacity for global thinking requires students being equipped with enough knowledge about global issues and processes such as climate change or colonialism to serve them as orientation. Students being able to properly participate in the global community necessitates these abilities. The exchange between cultures was identified as one of the ways in which global community building takes place. Following the participants' statements, teaching GCE not only means highlighting the exchange already happening between cultures as a by-product of globalization but also actively promoting tolerance and acceptance. This suggests that the participants' perspectives on language learning and teaching puts an emphasis on interculturality. In this context, (national) cultures are understood in the holistic sense – exchange between different cultures in the culinary arts is understood to be happening as a sort of cross pollination between the different national cuisines (cf. John: ll. 42–44).

Participants also suggested that GCE serves as a means to encourage students to identify as citizens of the global community, rather than solely as citizens of Germany:

> *I think to achieve a sense of global community, you have to understand where these people that you invite into your global village are coming from, the kind of history they have, why they may act in a certain way that is maybe different from yours. And so, this intercultural understanding is really important.* (John: ll. 143–146)

Without this feeling of belonging or self-identification, most will not participate in the global community. This points towards nationalist attitudes and worldviews among students being perceived as a major hindrance when teaching GCE.

The participants' conceptions of these aspects of GCE align closely with the German Commission for UNESCO's definition that was provided as a prompt during the interviews: Central to the participants' understanding of GCE are both the cosmopolitan competencies outlined above as well as the promotion of a globalized culture and community. This alignment between the participants' conceptions of GCE and the provided UNESCO definition is also reflected by the fact that the participants had little to no explicit criticism of the provided definition of GCE.

4.2 Evaluating global citizenship education

Participants generally saw strong ties between GCE and their teaching subjects. This goes for both the curricular demands of English and Social Sciences and their foci and aims on a more fundamental level. For example, one of the requirements found in the curriculum of English are the so-called intercultural communicative competencies, which participants related closely to some of GCE's aspects, such as its focus on intercultural understanding and communication:

> *So, if we look at intercultural communicative competencies, I mean, interculturality is already a word in it. So, it suggests that we look at different cultures and we look at global cultures, you know, and we look at the effects that cultural artifacts have or still have and try to analyze them and try to understand how we can communicate in a respectful way.* (Lewis: ll. 134–138)

Participants mentioned some aspects in which their conception of GCE does not align with those of English and Social Sciences. For the former, participants mentioned that there was not enough time and space allotted within the English curriculum to deal with issues of interest in the GCE framework.

Despite mentioning minor points of incongruence, the participants generally held a favorable view of GCE being taught in an interdisciplinary or cross-curricular manner. One participant even suggested a particular method of implementing topics related to GCE in an interdisciplinary manner:

> *And I think especially Social Science, it is really relevant. And in English, I think again, especially for the old, you could connect projects. So, I think if as we do teach, as we teach both Social Science and English, I think you could connect projects. So, if you do a certain topic like half a year earlier, you could sort of then translate this and focus on an English-speaking country for example and then use this as an example for a topic that you had focused on for Germany and, you know, raise it to a global scale.* (Nora: ll. 131–136)

Despite a general enthusiasm, participants mentioned being hesitant to actually practicing cross-curricular teaching, mainly due to a lack of training and experience in doing so as well as anticipated didactic difficulties that may arise when teaching certain complex topics associated with GCE in a foreign language.

In terms of challenges associated with the implementation of GCE, participants identified a number of problems when they considered GCE in a practical context. These issues range from their prospective students' lack of interest to the German educational system being deemed outdated.

Participants mentioned that it might be challenging to work with students who refuse core tenets of GCE because of their nationally oriented worldviews or to engage students who are disinterested in GCE. One participant, in particular, was concerned with the complexity they thought was inherent to GCE as an educational framework and the difficulties that arise due to this complexity and the fact that students have to engage with these topics in a language foreign to them:

> *And also, again, for English, if the students do not know the topic yet or do not have a good foundation from another subject, I think it might be too difficult subject to start in another language.* (Nora: ll. 265–267)

Other issues mentioned by participants are situated on the institutional level. The German educational system was assessed as being stuck with an outdated orientation, remaining within a perspective on the national level:

> *I think it is important, but it is undervalued. I still think the German educational system is very national and it is very focused on national interests and not so much on global interests. […] I think it is a political decision and probably also some historical reasoning behind that. Kind of this saying it has always been this way, so it remains this way. And I think changing the educational system is a big step in country.* (Lewis: ll. 84–85, 91–93)

Besides this overarching issue, participants also raised a potential lack of support and enthusiasm of their future colleagues as a concern because GCE is ineffective when only taught by a single teacher:

> *And you have to do a lot of convincing, maybe because I do not think it makes a lot of sense to just teach GCE individually, but as a whole school, right. To think that more in a systemic way than just in an individualistic way in my classroom. So, I need to get my colleagues on board with this concept.* (Lewis: ll. 210–213)

Another issue mentioned in this context is the high barrier of entry of teaching GCE due to the lack of reliable sources of information, teaching materials, as well as practical knowledge and expertise:

> *Well, it would be nice to receive information about the topic, because that's a problem that I've seen with a lot of teachers: they do not have time to research*

> *on their own. […] You know, the problem with that is that if information is provided to you by some organization, you always kind of need to research the organization where they come from, what political goals they might have in mind.* (John: ll. 219–224)

This lack of both time and knowledge were not solely identified as personal faults of the participants but were criticized as being rooted in flaws inherent in the German educational system.

5 Discussion

5.1 Soft or critical conceptions of global citizenship education?

In her 2006 publication, "Soft versus Critical Global Citizenship Education", Andreotti presented a general overview of both soft and critical understandings of GCE elaborating on differences in the basic assumptions of these two conceptions. Soft GCE focuses on universal interconnectedness, aiming for development and harmony through predefined ideals and awareness campaigns. In contrast, critical GCE acknowledges unequal power relations and advocates for addressing injustices, fostering reflexivity, dialogue, and ethical engagement with diversity. It empowers individuals to critically reflect on their cultures and imagine different futures, addressing complexity and power dynamics (Andreotti, 2006, pp. 46–47; see also Table 2 on the next page).

Comparing the results previously outlined to the characteristics that Andreotti proposes, presents a complex and multifaceted image of the participants' conceptions of GCE: Keeping in mind Andreotti's distinction between soft and critical GCE, the understanding of global interdependence implicit in the participants' conceptions of GCE aligns more closely with soft GCE. While the participants discussed issues such as climate change and colonialism by placing them into a global context – i.e., how causes and effects of these issues have played out and continue to play out on a global scale, was a significant point emphasized by all participants –, they largely omitted the power asymmetries and forms of structural and systemic inequality which characterize globalization processes as well as the relations between countries of the Global North and the Global South.

This omission of power asymmetries would also explain why participants eschewed issues of (illegitimate) cultural appropriation when discussing cultural exchange. This can in parts be explained, because cultural exchange was discussed in reference to national cuisines and culinary traditions (cf. John: ll. 42–44), as opposed to instances – such as the appropriation and desecration

of important religious or spiritual customs – in which (illegitimate) cultural exchange is commonly discussed more critically.

Table 2: Selection of contrasting criteria of soft versus critical GCE adapted from Andreotti (2006, pp. 46–47)

	Soft GCE	*Critical GCE*
Understanding of interdependence	We are all equally interconnected, we all want the same thing, we can all do the same thing.	Asymmetrical globalization, unequal power relations, Northern and Southern elites imposing their own assumptions as universal.
Aims ("What for")	So that everyone achieves development, harmony, tolerance, and equality.	So that injustices are addressed, more equal grounds for dialogue are created, and people can have more autonomy to define their own development.
Principle for change	Universalism (non-negotiable vision of how everyone should live, what everyone should want or should be).	Reflexivity, dialogue, contingency and an ethical relation to difference (radical alterity).
Goal of GCE	Empower individuals to act (or become active citizens) according to what has been defined for them as a good life or ideal world.	Empower individuals to reflect critically on the legacies and processes of their cultures, to imagine different futures and to take responsibility for decisions and actions.
Strategies for GCE	Raising awareness of global issues and promoting campaigns.	Promoting engagement with global issues and perspectives and an ethical relationship to difference, addressing complexity and power relations.

Participants identified values such as tolerance and equality as being universal and a prerequisite to intercultural understanding as a central aim of GCE. This is largely in line with the basic principle for change and aims of soft GCE, while issues concerning global injustice were either not mentioned or not discussed critically.

The goals and strategies of GCE, as outlined by the participants, do not fall neatly into either the categories of soft or critical GCE. As for the former, the interviewees emphasized individuals' capabilities to take action (*"taking an active role in society"*; Nora: ll. 53–54) and their ability to reflect critically on globalization. However, the participants did not discuss their own or their

future students' involvement and entanglement within the context of global structures of inequality as part of GCE. Speaking of the latter, the participants highlighted both awareness of global issues and engagement understood as problem-solving as part of their understanding of GCE (*"maybe they can already try to work on some solutions and present them to each other"*; Lewis: ll. 273–274).

It is important to note here that a 'soft' understanding of GCE is not necessarily seen as wrong, as it is appropriate in some situations. However, if left unexamined, GCE runs the risk of reproducing the same structures that it purports to challenge. One of the ways in which this can be avoided is through critical literacy. Critical literacy in this sense entails continuous engagement in reflection. Both teachers and students need to be able to reflect on and deconstruct their implicit assumptions and socio-political entanglement (cf. Andreotti, 2006, p. 49; for a more thorough account of critical literacy see also Luke, 2018). Within the German ELT context specifically, critical literacy is only just gaining momentum as part of a more critical approach to foreign language teaching and education (cf. Gerlach, 2020a; Louloudi et al., 2021) with the discussion even moving towards reconceptualizing teacher education towards a critical literacies framework (cf. Gerlach & Fasching-Varner, 2020, pp. 224–228).

5.2 Connections of global citizenship education and English Language Teaching

The participants saw strong ties between GCE and their subjects, which mirrors the assessment of scholars working on (foreign) language education and political education. To contextualize the results addressing the second research question, a more detailed elaboration will be provided on how scholars specifically situate GCE in relation to ELT, in particular in Germany.

The participants considered one of the goals of the English curriculum – the so-called intercultural communicative competences – to align with GCE's aim to facilitate intercultural understanding (*"[…] it suggests that we look at different cultures and we look at global cultures […]"*; Lewis: ll. 135–136). This matches both Hugh Starkey's (2023) as well as Hosack's (2011) assessment as both consider (foreign) language learning as a way to encourage intercultural communication. Language learning fosters the students' citizenship skills necessary for partaking in a democratic society as it requires students to listen, communicate, and discuss (Starkey, 2023, pp. 72–73). Considering these synergies between language learning and the aims of GCE

might change Nora's mind, who believed there was not enough time or space for the inclusion of these skills when teaching English (*"[…] and I think especially for topic like taking responsibility to do this properly, um, there isn't enough time and space in English."*; Nora: ll. 214–215).

Liz Jackson places a great deal of importance on reflecting on the historical role of English within colonialization. Language learning is often entangled with certain assumptions of the language to be learned. For example, within the colonial imaginary, English as a Western language was equated with progress and values. This entanglement must be considered when teaching GCE, as learning foreign languages is often paired with learning about foreign cultures. Critically reflecting on this is necessary to avoid reproducing stereotypes or perpetuating notions of certain cultures being inferior or superior (Jackson, 2023, pp. 55–57).

Connecting the discussion of the results to the current state of German ELT research, one can certainly identify connections as well as disparities between the results of this study as well as the existing body of research on ELT in relation to GCE. First, the results clearly mirror the strong leaning of the German ELT discourse to interculturality (as opposed to, e.g., transculturality or criticality) and the lack of deconstruction of holistic notions of national cultures (Römhild & Matz, 2021). Second, the participants' remarks are indicative of the deeply-rooted monolingual habitus of the German ELT community (see the contributions by Hopfendorf, pp. 15–41, as well as Pimentel Lechthoff, pp. 42–77 in this issue; see also Wilken, 2021), which rather acknowledges that the target language constitutes and remains a barrier to negotiating complex topics than recognizing the role which the students' full linguistic repertoires could play in that endeavor (see also Gerlach, 2020b, pp. 20–21).

Participants also noted that GCE – in line with understandings of interculturality common in language education – tends to go hand in hand with a superficial engagement with cultures different from one's own (e.g., *"[…] [GCE] suggests that we look at different cultures and we look at global cultures, you know, and we look at the effects that cultural artifacts have or still have and try to analyze them and try to understand how we can communicate in a respectful way."*; Lewis: ll. 135–138). By engaging with critical discourse on interculturality and the intercultural (e.g., Kramsch, 2011), future ELT discourse on GCE could advance towards a more critical understanding of cultural engagement in service of identifying, analyzing and taking action against existing biases and structures of inequality. Doing so would be beneficial because it would be in service of a major point of intersection between

the normative aims of (critical) language education and GCE, and thus it would also open a pathway for introducing a more critical global engagement to ELT. This would be akin to what participants referred to as global community building and what Yoon (2016) makes out to be part of the central dimensions of critical global literacies (pp. 46–52). Finally, introducing these critical notions to how GCE is and can be implemented into ELT practice will have to address existing structural barriers (e.g., the prescription of certain understandings of cultural engagement through curricula) which confine some of the critical potential outlined here. Here, as participants also noted (e.g., Lewis: ll. 73–88), teacher education might be able to play an avant-gardist role in opening up the discourse towards a more critical understanding of language education and teaching (König & Louloudi, 2024; Louloudi & Schildhauer, 2023, 2024).

6 Conclusion

As outlined in the introduction, this paper focuses on how pre-service teachers perceive GCE in greater detail. In doing so, it is part of a renewed effort to promote GCE initiated by scholars who see a growing threat by the intertwining crises that the world currently experiences. In particular, this paper investigates GCE in consideration of the subjects of English and Social Sciences and within the context of teacher education.

In their discussion of GCE in relation to ELT, the participants emphasized cosmopolitan competencies, such as problem-solving, socio-political engagement, and intercultural communication, highlighting the importance of orientational knowledge on global issues like climate change to foster global thinking. Cultural exchange and the values of tolerance and acceptance were seen as key to engaging respectfully with the global community, though this often requires students to identify beyond national boundaries. When discussing affinities between GCE and ELT, the promotion of intercultural understanding was identified as a major point of intersection between the two (cf. Starkey, 2023). However, language educators also need to be aware of the learners' implicit (cultural) assumptions in the form of biases and stereotypes as language learning also entails cultural learning (see also Volkmann, 2010). In this context, the role of English within the colonial imaginary as the language of progress and civilization cannot be ignored when teaching global citizenship so as not to reproduce stereotypes and beliefs of cultural superiority or inferiority (cf. Pennycook, 2017). Other challenges and barriers participants discussed include possible tensions between GCE's cosmopolitanism and the (traditionally) national or even nationalist orientation of schooling

(see also Myers, 2008; Niens et al., 2013) and students' lack of interest in or rejection of what the participants understood as the core values of GCE. Finally, participants also discussed a lack of support of GCE in the context of ELT on the various strata of the institutional level, including potentially disinterested or uncooperative colleagues in schools, Germany's educational system being deemed as outdated, seemingly limiting curricula, as well as GCE not being outright included into the core curriculum of teacher education and training.

While not explicitly mentioned by the interviewees, adopting a more critical understanding of both language and cultural learning as well as engagement is essential when attempting to integrate ELT and GCE. Doing so is necessary to prevent the reproduction of existing structures of inequality and power asymmetries in educational settings, which can arise from narrow, uncritical, and instrumental interpretations of GCE. The discussion of the results here has also shown that adopting a critical literacies perspective to GCE in the context of ELT proves highly fruitful and becomes necessary when attempting to move away from said narrow conceptions of GCE.

Further exploring this point of intersection is a promising avenue for future research – particularly the ELT discourse which focuses on the practical implications of integrating GCE into ELT practice could profit from a more engaged discourse with contributions from scholars such as Claire Kramsch (2023). Finally, teacher education, as noted by the participants, holds particular promise in fostering these critical shifts, creating avenues for ELT to contribute more effectively to the foundational normative aims of both GCE and ELT (König & Louloudi, 2024; Louloudi & Schildhauer, 2023). Subsequent research could benefit from exploring the potential of more closely connecting critical literacy approaches, ELT, as well as GCE – particularly in relation to teacher training and education – in greater depth.

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