

Global citizenship: insights from universities in the Global North and Global South

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Abstract

Global citizenship (GC) has been defined and approached in very different ways by Higher Education Institutions (HEI) around the world. Considering the lack of ‘global’ consensus on the term, and criticism that the concept benefits more the Global North, this study aimed to explore if and how universities located in different parts of the world foster global citizenship among their students. To pursue that aim, a questionnaire with open and semi structured questions was administered to ten universities located in eight countries, six in the Global North (Europe) and four in the Global South (Latin America and Asia). The answers to the questionnaire were contrasted and analysed against the literature of the field, information collected in the universities’ webpages and an interview with a stakeholder. Overall results of the study show that the concept of GC is associated with that of internationalisation of Higher Education (IHE) and student mobility which in turn reflects discourses and practices proposed, practiced, and benefitting mostly students from the Global North. GC is still a *utopia* in the HEI investigated and the paper concludes with suggestion to foster local actions towards GC for HEI to contribute more globally.

Keywords: Global Citizenship. Global Citizenship Education. Internationalisation of Higher Education. Global South. Global North.

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1 Introduction

According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – Unesco (2015), Global Citizenship (GC) refers to a sense of belonging to a global community and common humanity. This view, in turn, emphasizes the political, economic, social, and cultural interdependency and interconnectedness of local, national, and global actors. As such, GC is related to a sense of awareness, understanding and ethical decision-making that transcends narrow nationalistic borders interweaving individual and collective efforts to address global challenges.

Regarding how GC can be developed, researchers, educators and national/international Education stakeholders have been using GC as a buzzword and in association with the notion of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) to refer to the context of internationalisation of Higher Education (e.g. Guimarães, Finardi, Amorim, 2021) and its relation to globalisation and citizenship. As will be argued here and has been argued elsewhere, both concepts (GC and GCE) are plagued with controversies. To cite one example, put forward by Mannion *et al.* (2011, p. 443), GCE has been seen as a “floating signifier that different discourses attempt to cover with meaning”.

Various perspectives of GC with different foci have been used (Bowden, 2003; Reysen, Katzarska-Miller, 2013; Lilley, Barker, Harris, 2015; Aktas, Pitts, Richards, Silova, 2017; Massaro, 2022). Despite these efforts, no consensus can be found around the concept of GC. Indeed, and perhaps, ironically, a *global* consensus of the concept of GC seems to be lacking.

Despite the “global” appeal and lack of “global” consensus around the terms GC and GCE, these concepts have been challenged on the grounds that they mask national/local responsibility in the guarantee of universal rights such as, for example, the delivery of Education (Piccin, Finardi, 2019). More recently, GCE has also been questioned by Banerjee, Shaw and Sparke (2023) in relation to its (im)possibility of addressing problems of social exclusion, disenfranchisement and sub-citizenship revealed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Notwithstanding the fuzziness of the terms GC and GCE, it is possible to see an increase interest in how Higher Education Institutions (HEI) can foster GC (Schattle, 2010; Oxley, Morris, 2013; Aktas, Pitts, Richards, Silova, 2017; Pashby, Costa, Stein, Andreotti, 2020; Massaro, 2022) and deliver GCE (Guimarães, Finardi, Amorim, 2021). The term GC has been criticized on various fronts. One of them relates to the fact that the term GC was created by and benefits individuals mostly

from the Northern/Western region of the world (Massaro, 2022; Pashby, Costa, Stein, Andreotti, 2020). Like the criticism raised against GCE, others criticize GC for being an abstract concept that cannot be taught and/or measured (Jooste, Heleta, 2016), or that is problematic and undesirable considering its roots in Northern/Western academia (Bowden, 2003).

It follows from this that, if the concept of GC cannot be globally applied, as argued by Jooste and Heleta (2016), then a reflection regarding what GC may mean in different parts of the globe is at least, lacking. In that sense and in what concerns this paper, the understanding of how HEI located in different parts of the world foster GC motivates this study and represents an important contribution in that direction to fill in that gap.

Critical perspectives in Education (e.g. Stein, 2017) suggest that although HEI claim to form global citizens, they are at a loss on how to do that as the concept of GC lacks epistemological and ontological underpinning. What is more, and according to criticism raised by Lilley, Barker and Harris (2015), HEI promoting GC fall short in showing evidence of how they accomplish this objective.

Be it as it may, most HEI would claim to be aligned with Unesco's (2014) ideals to facilitate international cooperation and promote social transformation in an innovative way towards a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure, and sustainable world. Yet, and as it will be argued and demonstrated in this study, most of the strategies and approaches used towards GC are linked to notions of internationalisation of Higher Education (IHE) translated into strategies such as academic mobility (Killick, 2012), both physical and in the form of virtual exchange (Guimarães, Finardi, Amorim, 2021; Helm, Baroni, Acconcia, 2024; Mendes, Finardi, 2023) and Internationalisation at Home (IaH) (Ortiz-Rojo, Finardi, 2022; Finardi, Aşik, 2024), to give but some examples.

Following Dados and Connell (2012), the term Global North is used here to refer to central regions such as Europe and North America (United States and Canada) whereas Global South refers low-income and often politically or culturally marginalized regions broadly associated with Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Middle East.

A caveat is in need at this point. Notwithstanding the acknowledgement that these terms (Global North/South) are geopolitical and relational rather than geographical, for the sake of this study, they will be operationalized in reference to universities located in those geographical regions.

Given the panorama laid out so far, this study aims to understand how universities located in different parts of the world foster global citizenship among their students. More specifically, in this study we sought to contribute to the advancement on the discussion of GC, bringing evidence of how universities located in different countries (Global North/South) foster GC.

To pursue that aim, a questionnaire with open and semi structured questions was administered to ten universities located in eight different countries, six from the Global North (Europe) and four from the Global South (Latin America and Asia). The answers to the questionnaire were contrasted and analysed against the literature of the field, information collected in the universities' webpages and an interview with one participant representing universities' stakeholder.

2 Global Citizenship

A shift has been identified in Education discourse and practice that recognises the importance of Education and learning to resolve global issues in social, political, cultural, economic, and environmental areas (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2014). The definition of GC formulated by Unesco (2015), linked GC to a sense of belonging to a broader community and common humanity emphasizing political, economic, social, and cultural interdependency and interconnectedness between the local, the national and the global levels. However, different perspectives of GC have been proposed (Bowden, 2003; Reysen, Katzarska-Miller, 2013; Oxley, Morris, 2013; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2014; Lilley, Barker, Harris, 2015; Aktas, Pitts, Richards, Silova, 2017; Massaro, 2022) showing how fuzzy and difficult to nail down this concept is.

There are scholars who critique GC on the grounds that it stemmed from Northern/Western perspectives not shared or achievable for all people in the planet (Massaro, 2022). Bowden (2003) argues that for a citizen status there must be a citizen-state relationship. Then, it is reasonable to ask what happens with those places where there is an absence of such a relationship. Even in places where there is a citizen-state relationship, the concept of GC has been criticized for its link with cosmopolitan views that assume that everyone can be a global citizen with universal rights since those same rights are to be exercised or guaranteed by local (rather than universal) actors (Piccin, Finardi, 2019).

As such, there seems to be a contradiction in the essence of the GC concept, considering the sense of belonging to a broader community and common humanity, as stated by Unesco (2014). But, if this definition does not include everybody

(citizens and non-citizens), as argued by Jooste and Heleta (2016), then a reflection on what GC means to some or most and how it can be achieved, if desired, is lacking in the literature.

Oxley and Morris (2013) propose 8 categories of CG divided into two groups: the *Cosmopolitan*, which considers the political, moral, economic, and cultural types of GC, and the *Advocacy*, considering the social, critical, environmental, and spiritual types of GC. Schattle (2010) considers awareness, responsibility, and participation the primary characteristics of GC, with cross-cultural empathy, personal achievement, and international mobility as secondary traits.

Despite the lack of consensus on what constitutes GC, and according to Unesco (2014), there is a shared understanding that GC refers both to local and global aspects of citizenry. Perhaps this link and direction, from local to global, is where more efforts should be made given the fragmentation around the concept of GC and the impossibility of having a single GC status. Put differently, perhaps understanding how different players act locally towards GC can represent a contribution to a more global comprehension. According to Unesco (2014), GC is also a way of understanding, acting, and relating to others and the environment in space and time, based on universal values, through respect for diversity and pluralism. Therefore, everyone's life has implications in day-to-day decisions that connect the global with the local, and vice versa, where actions taken in one part of the world can influence people and nations beyond one's borders (Bowden, 2003).

Regarding the measurement of GC, some proposals have been made. Morais and Ogden (2011) validated a model that comprises three dimensions: social responsibility, global competence, and global civic engagement. Reysen and Katzarska-Miller (2013) proposed a model where global awareness and one's normative environment predicted identification with global citizens, and global citizenship predicted prosocial values like empathy, diversity, social justice, environmental sustainability, intergroup cooperation, and responsibility to act for a better world.

Van Rompay-Bartels and Tuninga (2023) propose a model for GC with a specific focus on the Business area. From the above-mentioned models and according to Massaro (2022), Morais and Ogden's instrument for measuring global citizenship among undergraduate students is the most used.

Massaro (2022) states that most studies of GC are made in the context of study abroad, also known as academic mobility. Scholars who study the process of IHE claim that this process – IHE – is often equated with academic mobility though, as previously stated, that view represents both a myth (Knight, 2011) and a misconception (de Wit, 2017). Even before the pandemic and for universities of the Global North, the possibility to study abroad is available to only a small percentage of students (Mendes, Finardi, 2023). In that sense, academic mobility can be compared to GC in the sense that neither reach all people in the planet and as such, are very exclusive and excluding concepts/strategies.

So as to offer opportunities for more people, especially during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, universities all over the world started to offer virtual exchange (VE) initiatives in exchange (pun intended) for academic mobility (Guimarães, Finardi, Amorim, 2021; Helm, Baroni, Acconcia, 2024), as an IaH strategy (e.g. Finardi, Aşık, 2024) or as social innovation for global health (Banerjee; Shaw, Sparke, 2023). Because VE is more inclusive than physical academic mobility, it also served to include more voices from the Global South in the so-called “global dialogues” (Guimarães, Finardi, Amorim, 2021).

3 HEI and Global Citizenship

The process of IHE has been equated with the concept of GCE on the grounds that both affect countries and HEI very differently, yielding more benefits for those universities and individuals in the Global North (Vavrus, Pekol, 2015; Piccin, Finardi, 2019).

HEI are expected to facilitate international cooperation and promote social transformation in an innovative way towards a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure, and sustainable world (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2014). It follows from this that GCE should empower learners to engage and assume active roles, both locally and globally, to face and resolve global challenges and ultimately become proactive contributors to a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure, and sustainable world (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2014).

Different approaches to IHE have been used for GCE too, such as academic mobility (Killick, 2012), virtual mobility or VE projects (Helm, Baroni, Acconcia, 2024) and IaH (Ortiz-Rojo, Finardi, 2022). However, little is known about how universities are using those approaches to foster GC or as part and parcel of GCE. Lilley, Barker and Harris (2015) claim that universities promoting the

idea of global citizenship present a scarcity of evidence about how they try to accomplish this objective.

Yet, HEI have a key role in the equipment of students/citizens for that global context. In this regard and according to Unesco (2014), GCE should be built on a lifelong learning perspective, including children, youth, and adults through holistic formal and informal approaches, curricular and extracurricular interventions with conventional and unconventional pathways to learning and participation.

Aktas, Pitts, Richards and Silova (2017) informs three main approaches in Education regarding GC: (1) the *neoliberal* approach with the understanding of global citizenship as driver to increase transnational mobility of knowledge and skills with the objective of linking GC to global economic participation. In this regard, Pashby, Costa, Stein and Andreotti (2020) states that the role of Education in the neoliberal context serves a human capital function that is linked to a wider knowledge society where expertise also serves economic development; (2) the *radical* approach, striving to expand the concept of GC beyond a competitive and economic pursuit, that recognizes the existence of global power dynamics and inequalities; and (3) the *critical* approach with a focus on self-reflection, awareness, and action, all necessary for challenging, rather than perpetuating, global power structures and that see it as a skillset and a mindset. In the same line, Pashby, Costa, Stein and Andreotti (2020) argue that critical approaches question the change of existing structures forging new ways of relating them.

Jooste and Heleta (2016) state that the promoters of global citizenship do not offer anything new to Higher Education once they just continue to incentive social responsibility, and good critical thinking skills, coupled with the knowledge, awareness, and care for global issues. In the above-mentioned view what HEI should do is develop “globally competent students ready to function, work, succeed, and make a difference in a constantly changing, diverse, and complex world” (Jooste, Heleta, 2016, p. 7). Yet, evidence of how HEI in different parts of the world is doing that is lacking and motivates the present study.

Bowden (2003) corroborates Jooste and Heleta’s (2016) claim that being a globally minded citizen is indeed only possible, when somebody is a citizen of a given state first. That argument is in line with Unesco’s definition of GC referring to its local, regional, and global contexts which may not be achievable for all (Massaro, 2022). Considering the key role of HEI in the development of a GC, on the one hand, and the fact that little is known about how universities interpret

and act upon this concept, on the other, it is important to produce more evidence of how HEI are approaching this term. To shed light on how GC is understood and promoted by different HEI in the world, the present study aims to look at how GC is interpreted in and promoted by universities located in different geographic and geopolitical points of the planet in the Global North/South.

4 Methodology

In this exploratory study (Lacruz, Leite, 2023), to understand how universities foster global citizenship among their students, a questionnaire with open and semi structure questions was administered to ten universities, six from the Global North – England, Switzerland, Portugal, Italy, Spain – and four from the Global South – Brazil, Malaysia and Turkey. Because of the link between notions of IHE, GC, GCE and international academic mobility, the questionnaire was built including questions related to those notions.

4.1 Sample

Purposeful sampling was used to select the universities based on their participation in a larger ongoing research project¹ whose aim is to analyse the role of academic mobility, languages (Finardi, Amorim, Sarmento, 2024), and innovation in the process of internationalisation of Higher Education. To preserve their identities, the universities participating in this study were identified as **A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I,** and **J** and coded according to the order in which they returned the questionnaire. Regarding the choice of universities, they were selected based on the criterium that they had to be part of the research project mentioned previously. As shown in Table 1, the sample has, in some cases, similar/comparable characteristics among HEI in terms of number of students (information in each university webpage and confirmed via email) and local ranking (Scimago ranking).

4.2 Data collection

The questionnaire was sent to the universities in November 2023 and was answered by participants of the project who were professors and, in some cases, staff of international office of the participating institutions. The answers were collected between December 2023 and February 2024. Data were also collected in each university webpage and through an interview with one of the stakeholders who had answered the questionnaire, for a more in-depth qualitative look at some of the concepts covered in the questionnaire to allow data triangulation.

¹ The project is financed by Fapes, led by the second author with the first author as a member.

4.3 Analysis strategy

Data from questionnaires can be systematically analysed to identify patterns, themes, and/or answers to research questions. In this study, data from sites/questionnaires were first coded and organized in tables (1, 2 and 3) to visually enable comparison/contrast among the different universities involved (Creswell, Creswell, 2017).

Then, a two-step contrastive analysis was used, first comparing universities in the same group (intragroup) and then between the groups (intergroup). After that, the result of the analysis made up to this point (data from webpages and questionnaire), was contrasted with the theoretical analysis of the literature. Finally, after the contrasting analysis, we selected the HEI that made most in terms of GC, according to their responses, to deepen the analysis through focus interviews with stakeholders of the universities involved. Two universities were selected for those interviews, one from the Global North (i.e., University from Switzerland) and one from the Global South (i.e., University from Malaysia).

5 Results

Table 1 shows descriptive and general information about the universities analysed. Universities were categorized according to their geographic location and geopolitical position (Global North or Global South), local ranking, size (number of students) and academic mobility in terms of incoming international students (mobility in, part of Internationalisation of Home strategy) and outbound student mobility (internationalisation abroad). The order of universities in the tables below follows the same order in which the answers to the questionnaire were received.

Table 1 – Universities analysed (2023 information)

University/ Country	Global North GN Global South GS	Local ranking (Scimago)	N. of students	Students’ mobility IN-OUT	Mobility/ N students
A – England	GN	83 ^o	35.000–40.000	11.000 (not confirmed)	n/i
B – Switzerland	GN	3 ^o	7.000–8.000	16–199	4,6%
C – Portugal. 1	GN	16 ^o	8.000–9.000	300–138	5,3%
D – Italy	GN	3 ^o	65.000–70.000	2.100–2.215	6,6%

Continue

Continuation					
E – Spain	GN	3 ^o	50.000–55.000	2.720–2.044	9,3%
F – Portugal. 2	GN	6 ^o	15.000–20.000	410–171	3,8%
G – Brazil. 1	GS	33 ^o	20.000–25.000	90–35	< 1%
H – Malaysia	GS	1 ^o	25.000–30.000	3.110–2.720	19,5%
I – Turkey	GS	9 ^o	35.000–40.000	21–100	< 1%
J – Brazil. 2	GS	15 ^o	20.000–25.000	320–436	3,4%

Source: By the authors (2025)

Observing in Table 1, the local ranking, number of students and mobility in absolute and relative terms, university **H**, which is in the Global South, stands out in its local ranking and in terms of number of students in mobility. A caveat is important at this point and in relation to this finding. As acknowledged at the outset of this paper, following Dados and Connell (2012), we classified university **H** as Global South in relation to its geographical position (Asia) though we admit that within Asia, university **H** may be seen as Global North, attracting international students from the region and acting as a hub. As a relational concept, the term Global North/South depends on who is looking as well as where one is looking at and where one is looking from.

A balance is observed, in relative terms, among HEI from the Global North when looking at mobility figures, going from 3,8% to 9,3%. Also, there are 3 of them occupying the 3rd position of their local rankings. Nevertheless, when looking at absolute numbers regarding number of students, two universities stand out in size and concentrate the most students, namely, university **D** with 65.000 and university **E** with 50.852 students in total.

Regarding the HEI from the Global South, they are similar in total number of students but quite different when looking at the percentage of students in mobility, where university **G** and **I** don’t reach even 1% of student mobility whereas university **H** stands out with 19,5%. More findings about the participant universities are presented in Table 2.

The rationale for building Table 2 was to gather information about each university infrastructure to promote GC also looking at related concepts such IHE and VE. It was important to know whether universities had an international office and how they promoted IHE, VE and GC. Because this information is not always

available in universities webpages, specific questions to tackle these issues were included in the questionnaire administered to the ten universities.

Table 2 – Institutional support for GC in the form of

University	International Office	Technologies/ platforms to promote VE	VE integrated in the curriculum and recognized through academic credits and/or recognition for professors	Promoting innovation and/or internationalisation of HE through Education for global citizenship
A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
B	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
C	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
D	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
E	Yes	Yes	No	Don't know
F	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
G	Yes	Yes	No	No
H	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
I	Yes	Yes	Don't know	Yes
J	Yes	Yes	Yes	Don't know

Source: By the authors (2025)

The investigated universities were asked about their infrastructure to foster GC. All the universities analysed have an international office that deals with international academic mobility and other internationalisation strategies. When asked about the use of technology in approaches like VE, again, all the universities answered positively. In the same line, when asked about innovation in processes and curricula through the offer of VE, COIL², and Tele-tandem³ projects integrated in the curriculum and institutionally recognised and supported through academic credits and/or recognition for professors, again, the answers were yes except for 2 universities one in the Global North (**E**) and the other in the Global South (**G**), and the respondent from university **I** who did not have information about those approaches. It is worth noting that perhaps the

² Synonym of VE, stands for Collaborative Online International Learning.
³ Synonym to VE and COIL.

respondent was not sure about the question though all respondents were given the possibility to check any information in the questionnaire they were not sure of, perhaps consulting with colleagues from the international office in their institutions.

Also, representatives from the universities investigated were asked whether they promote innovation and/or internationalisation of Higher Education through Education for global citizenship. Seven of the ten HEI answered affirmatively, whereas university **E** answered, “don’t know”, noting that they also answered “no” for the question about innovation through approaches like VE in the curricula, which help to understand already more about this HEI specifically. Regarding the other 2 HEI for this question, university **G** answered “no” like in the former question and university **J** said, “don’t know”. Taken together, more universities in the Global South answered “no” or “don’t know” suggesting that these strategies and terms are indeed more familiar or associated with universities in the Global North.

We also searched for information regarding international offices, student mobility and any direct or indirect mention to GC. All the HEI analysed have an international office in their webpages but, it was observed that in the case of HEI located in the Global North, information was displayed in a clearer way making it easier to find. The same happened with one of the universities from the Global South, university **H**, which has better information than the others HEI located in the Global South. We believe that the difference regarding international offices is related, in part, to the fact that HEI from the Global North are more economically dependent on external fees from incoming international students (e.g. Finardi, Ortiz Rojo, 2015) than those from the South that are public and financed by the government. In the case of our sample, this is clearly observable in terms of fees paid by students since some universities did not charge fees (e.g. G and J) whereas others did (e.g. A and B). We will return to this point again during the discussion.

Another piece of evidence checked in the webpages was the existence of information about or approaches to foster GC, where the result was negative for all the universities but, it must be mentioned that in the case of university **B** they have information about a global approach in the section dedicated to academic mobility.

Regarding the open question about how universities foster GC among their students, Table 3 summaries result to this question.

Table 3 – Actions to foster Global Citizenship

University	Actions to foster GC
A	Workshops, cross-continental seminars, professional development, visiting scholars, dissemination of good practice, COIL embedded in the institutional strategy with COIL targets.
B	Certificate, rooted in a portfolio idea, which is available for students from all programmes on under- and graduate level. Additionally, a basic motivation to promote mobility abroad is the acquisition of a more global perspective .
C	Courses with a focus on soft skills ; Innovation days; Entrepreneurship initiatives available to all the Academy.
D	Course for international students.
E	At a master’s level, when training future teachers, lecturers stress the fact that these aspects must be specified in syllabus, the initiatives conducted in the classroom and the day-to-day of the educational institutions. Also, a plan for University Cooperation for Development which involves strategic lines and partnerships with foreign institutions to collaborate in University Cooperation for Development.
F	No actions.
G	No actions.
H	Individual professors’ actions who are interested in the global citizenship promote GC .
I	Summer schools, it’s strategic and transformation plans.
J	Courses taught by professors.

Source: By the authors (2025)

As can be seen in the highlighted terms, most universities in the Global North used terms associated with GC, GCE, IHE, VE whereas only one university in the Global South (**H**), mentioned GC. Again, though we do not mean to generalize, we can say that, in our data, the concept of GC is linked to that of IHE and its strategies (VE, IaH, etc), which in turn, is more familiar to and developed by (and for?) universities in the Global North. Put differently and in relation to the literature reviewed here, if we go back to Aktas, Pitts, Richards and Silova (2017), we can say that in our data, universities located in the Global North seem to have a more neoliberal approach to GC, seen as a driver to mobility and human capital serving economic development.

5.1 Interviews

Invitation for interviews were made to two stakeholders who previously answered the questionnaire of this study and represent the two universities that, according to their answers, do more for promoting GC in the Global North and South, respectively. That is, the university from Switzerland and the university from Malaysia in our pool. However, we were only able to make the interview with the respondent from the university of Switzerland since the respondent from the university of Malaysia, did not accept our invitation until the moment of closing this analysis, that is April of 2024.

Results of the interview with the stakeholder from the university in Switzerland indicates that GC is fostered through a portfolio whose completion gives a certificate of GC. According to the respondent, the portfolio has different requirements in terms of knowledge, engagement, language and self-reflection. Some of the activities that count in the portfolio are courses with cross cultural communication contents, activities related to diversity in the labour market and mobility abroad, and some specific activities in studies of each student earning credits to achieve the certificate of GC. According to the respondent, a direct result of the GC certification is an increase in collaboration projects with different universities abroad, some of which have replicated the Swiss model for the GC portfolio.

6 Discussion and Conclusions

The analysis of data suggests that some of the HEI analysed in this study, mostly from the Global North, foster GC while others, mostly from the Global South, do not. Also, differences exist between and within the groups of universities analysed in Global North and Global South in terms of how they foster GC. Yet, although all the universities investigated have international offices and technology infrastructure to foster VE and other strategies to develop IHE and or GC, the strategies found were isolated and proposed by motivated professors rather than as part of an institutional plan or policy.

While we acknowledge that the pool of universities analysed in this study is not comprehensive, our aim was not to generalize but rather to generate empirical evidence from universities in different parts of the world. Having said that, we contend that our pool was evenly distributed with six universities in the Global North and four in the Global South, allowing the analysis of both intragroup and intergroup characteristics (Global North/Global South).

Intragroup analysis suggests that there is more intragroup variation in terms of student mobility in the Global South. Intergroup analysis suggests that universities in the Global North are more aligned with GC goals as translated into IHE strategies such as VE. Also, differences exist between and within the groups of universities in the Global North and Global South in terms of approaches to GC.

When we compare results of the empirical analysis with the literature brought to bear in this study, most of the criticism raised against the concept of GC and IHE is corroborated by our data. GC is not only a difficult concept to define, but also, one that is rooted in and flourishes mostly in the Global North. Indeed, we think that GC is still a *utopia* more than a reality among HEI and perhaps what needs to be done is to foster more local actions and strategies towards GC to contribute more globally (Bowden, 2003).

In fact, Leal, Finardi and Abba (2022), referring to the concept of IHE, usually equated with GC, claim that many are the challenges for universities of the Global South to find their own “internationalisation model” recognizing that, alongside the opportunities offered by this process, there are several political and ethical issues that are complex, contradictory, and contestable (Stein, 2017) and that hide mechanisms that maintain and reinforce power asymmetries and hierarchies between knowledges and people (Vavrus, Pekol, 2015). In relation to Aktas, Pitts, Richards and Silova (2017) classification of GC approaches, perhaps this could be related to the third approach, namely, the critical approach to GC.

Regarding a critical approach and to offer another possibility to interpret our results, we acknowledge that the terms used in our questionnaire were based in the literature which is biased towards Global North views of GC as IHE and as such, may not have been able to capture other strategies or actions taking place in the universities investigated. Indeed, authors working with critical perspectives in IHE have shown examples of how universities in the Global South (e.g. Brazil), are working towards global social justice (de Wit, Leal, Unangst, 2020) and the promotion of outreach activities that include societies (Ortiz-Rojo, Lacruz, 2025), to give but two examples.

We see that the lack of definition and understanding of GC is translated in poor actions (in our sample) to foster it and, agreeing with Jooste and Heleta (2016), nothing new is offered by HEI, understanding that when present, the

promotion of GC is related and embedded to the IHE. Yet, awareness is needed in terms of institutional positions regarding GC that can help to improve what has been done.

Considering that all the HEI analysed in this study have the structure required for developing initiatives like VE and given that physical academic mobility is not available for all students, we suggest that VE should be more promoted, specially by universities in the Global South. As put forward by Guimarães, Finardi and Amorim (2021), VE could be a way to recalibrate relationships between universities in the Global North and Global South. Also, and following Banerjee, Shaw and Sparke (2023), we argue that VE could be used as an important strategy to GC and to address problems of social exclusion, disenfranchisement and sub-citizenship as was revealed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

This study aimed to explore how universities located in different parts of the world interpret and foster global citizenship among their students. Our empirical and theoretical analyses suggest that the concept of GC is associated with that of IHE and student mobility which in turn reflects discourses and practices proposed, practiced, and benefitting mostly students from the Global North.

Although our goal in this study was not to generalise, but rather to bring evidence of how universities located in different countries foster GC, we recommend that future studies should attempt to increase the pool so as to accumulate evidence and, if desirable, to generalise findings.

Given the implications of this analysis, we argue that more studies are needed to shed light on and amass evidence of how universities can foster GC, especially in the context of the Global South. The fact that this study did not find many pieces of evidence for GC in the universities from the Global South does not mean that GC is not fostered there, and it is an opportunity for future studies to investigate how universities frame GC with different terms and strategies.

Perhaps the problem is that we are using a jargon that is not intelligible or relevant for different contexts. Awareness is needed to understand GC locally first and then take local actions that could contribute to the global scenario. In other words, universities must deal with the interweaving tensions involved in local/global Education.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of studies such as this one that had a reduced sample size. As previously mentioned in the text, the

sample size (ten universities) in this study does not allow us to generalize results. Notwithstanding this caveat, our main goal was not to generalize results but rather to produce evidence of how universities located in different geographic and geopolitical parts of the world foster GC and that goal was achieved.

Cidadania global: evidências de universidades do Norte e do Sul Global

Resumo

A cidadania global (CG) tem sido definida e abordada de maneiras muito diferentes por Instituições de Ensino Superior (IES) ao redor do mundo. Considerando a falta de consenso “global” sobre o termo e as críticas de que o conceito beneficia mais o Norte Global, este estudo teve como objetivo explorar se e como as universidades localizadas em diferentes partes do mundo promovem a cidadania global entre seus alunos. Para atingir esse objetivo, um questionário com perguntas abertas e semiestruturadas foi administrado a dez universidades localizadas em oito países, seis no Norte Global (Europa) e quatro no Sul Global (América Latina e Ásia). As respostas ao questionário foram contrastadas e analisadas em relação à literatura do campo, a informações coletadas nas páginas web das universidades e à entrevista com respondente do questionário. Os resultados gerais do estudo mostram que o conceito de CG está associado ao de internacionalização do Ensino Superior e de mobilidade estudantil, o que, por sua vez, reflete discursos e práticas que beneficiam principalmente os alunos do Norte Global. A GC ainda é uma utopia nas IES investigadas, e o artigo é concluído com a sugestão de fomentar ações locais em direção à CG para que as IES contribuam mais globalmente.

Palavras-chave: Cidadania Global. Educação para a Cidadania Global. Internacionalização do Ensino Superior. Sul Global. Norte Global.

Ciudadanía global: perspectivas desde las universidades del Norte y del Sur Global

Resumen

La ciudadanía global (CG) ha sido definida y abordada de maneras muy diferentes por Instituciones de Educación Superior (IES) de todo el mundo. Considerando la falta de consenso “global” sobre el término y las críticas de que el concepto beneficia más al Norte Global, este estudio tuvo como objetivo explorar si las universidades ubicadas en diferentes partes del mundo fomentan la ciudadanía global entre sus estudiantes y de qué manera. Para lograr ese objetivo, se administró un cuestionario con preguntas abiertas y semiestruturadas a diez universidades ubicadas en ocho países, seis en el Norte Global (Europa) y cuatro en el Sur Global (América Latina y Asia). Las respuestas al cuestionario se contrastaron y analizaron con la literatura del campo, la información recopilada en las páginas web de las universidades y una entrevista con un respondiente. Los resultados generales del estudio muestran que el concepto de CG está asociado con el de internacionalización de la educación superior (IES) y la movilidad estudiantil, que a su vez refleja discursos y prácticas que benefician principalmente a estudiantes del Norte Global. La GC sigue siendo una utopía en las

IES investigadas y el estudio concluye con la sugerencia de fomentar acciones locales hacia la GC para que las IES contribuyan más globalmente.

Palabras clave: *Ciudadanía Global. Educación para la Ciudadanía Global. Internacionalización de la Educación Superior: Sur Global. Norte Global.*

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