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# Voices of Integration

A Collection of Articles on Education,  
Identity and Global Citizenship

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# Values and Frames: The Impact on Integration

## Introduction

We live in an increasingly interconnected world, where Global Citizenship Education (GCE) plays a crucial role in fostering understanding and cooperation. This article explores the fundamental values and cognitive frames that shape GCE, with a particular focus on their impact on the complex issue of migration and integration.

Values, our core beliefs about what is important, and frames, the mental structures we use to interpret information, profoundly influence how migration is understood, discussed, and addressed in policy and practice.

By examining these values and frames, we can gain insights into how they affect the integration of migrants into new societies and how GCE can promote more inclusive and equitable approaches to migration.





## What are my Values?

What's important to you? What principles guide your choices? What kind of world do you want to live in? Your values are your core beliefs. They act like an inner compass, guiding your actions and shaping your opinions. Understanding your own values is a key step in understanding global citizenship. While we are all different, people around the world share many core values. These values can shape how we see global issues and how we think GCE should address them. It's important to take some time to think about your own values: What things are most important to you?

We'll explore how these values connect to GCE in more detail later.

## A Framework for Understanding Values

So, you've been thinking about your own "cares" – those things that are really important to you. Now, imagine trying to organise all the different things people care about across the entire world. That's a huge task, right? Well, a researcher named Shalom Schwartz tackled this and came up with a really helpful model called the Schwartz Values Circumplex. Think of it like a map that shows the different types of values that are important to people in almost every culture. This map isn't just a random list; it shows how these values connect and sometimes even clash. For example, someone who highly values "Benevolence" (caring for others and being helpful)





might also likely value "Universalism" (understanding, appreciating, and protecting the well-being of all people and nature). These two values are close together on the map. On the other hand, someone who strongly values "Power" (social status and control over others) might be less focused on "Benevolence" – these are often on opposite sides of the map, suggesting a potential tension. The map also includes values like "Achievement" (being successful and capable), "Hedonism" (pleasure and enjoying life), "Stimulation" (excitement and novelty), "Self-Direction" (independence and creativity), "Security" (safety and stability), "Conformity" (following social norms), and "Tradition" (respect for customs and ideas). Understanding this "value map" can help us see why different people might prioritise different things when we talk about global issues and how we can better understand each other's perspectives.

## Connecting "Values" with GCE

So, how do these "values" actually relate to Global Citizenship Education (GCE)? Well, GCE aims to foster values like social justice, equality, respect for diversity, and environmental sustainability. These aren't just abstract ideas; they are rooted in the fundamental human values that Schwartz and others have identified.





For example, when GCE promotes "social justice," it connects to values like Universalism and Benevolence, emphasising the importance of caring for others and ensuring that everyone's rights are protected. Similarly, when GCE emphasises "environmental sustainability," it aligns with values like Universalism, highlighting the need to protect the planet for current and future generations. It's important to recognise that GCE is not a neutral process; it is inherently value-laden. The values it promotes, such as social justice, equality, and respect for diversity, are not universally accepted but are emphasised within GCE because they are seen as crucial for creating a more just and sustainable world. These values, along with others that fall within the "Benevolence" and "Universalism" areas of the Schwartz Values Circumplex—like compassion, helpfulness, and a sense of responsibility for the well-being of all—are very present in GCE discourse and practice. This means that GCE actively seeks to cultivate these values in learners, recognising their importance in shaping attitudes and actions towards global issues. Understanding these connections can help educators and learners to see that GCE isn't just about learning facts and figures; it's about engaging with deep-seated human concerns and aspirations.

## Values Coherence

It's also important to consider values coherence: how well actions match stated values. This applies not only to individuals but also to institutions, groups, communities, and governments. For example, the European Union promotes democracy and human rights, but its policies on migration



and asylum have been criticised for not always upholding these values, particularly in the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers at its borders. Some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that advocate for social justice and equality have faced internal criticism for a lack of diversity within their leadership or for failing to address issues of power and privilege within their own structures. Many businesses now state commitments to sustainability and ethical conduct, but their supply chains may still involve practices that harm the environment or exploit workers. These examples illustrate the challenges of achieving values coherence and highlight why GCE must encourage critical reflection on the alignment of actions with stated values, both individually and collectively.

## Framing

Just as values shape our understanding of what is important, "frames" shape how we understand information. Frames are the mental structures we use to interpret the world around us. They are the stories we tell ourselves about what is happening. As cognitive linguist George Lakoff explains in his book "Don't Think of an Elephant," these frames are not merely about the words we use; they are deeply ingrained in our minds and influence our reasoning. In fact, the power of a story does not lie in whether it is true, but rather whether or not it is believed. Think about a simple example: a glass of water. Is it half full or half empty? Both are factually correct, but they suggest very different interpretations. One is positive, suggesting abundance ("half full"), while the other is negative, implying scarcity ("half empty"). The way we frame the water glass influences our attitude about the situation.



Lakoff uses the example of an elephant to illustrate how framing works. He asks his readers, "Don't think of an elephant!" and observes that people cannot help but think of an elephant. This demonstrates how language can activate specific frames in our minds, even when we are trying to avoid them. So, let's use a practical example by examining a frequently used term "free market". How a society describes its economic system can significantly influence how people perceive it. For instance, the term "free market" carries a positive connotation, suggesting freedom and opportunity. In contrast, the term "unregulated capitalism" might evoke negative feelings, implying chaos and exploitation. Both terms can describe essentially the same economic system, but the choice of words frames it in fundamentally different ways. In the context of GCE, framing is equally important. The way information about global issues is presented—the language used, the images chosen, the context provided—can significantly affect how people understand those issues and whether they are motivated to take action.

## The Impact of Values and Frames on Migration in the EU Context

The topic of migration within the European Union provides a clear example of how values and frames interact to shape public discourse and policy. The EU, founded on values of human dignity, freedom, and solidarity, often struggles to reconcile these values with the practical challenges of managing migration flows.







For example, the term "migration crisis" frames migration as an exceptional and threatening event, potentially justifying restrictive policies that might conflict with the EU's core values. Different frames shape the narrative around migration. The economic frame emphasises the economic costs or benefits of migration, focusing on issues like labour shortages or the strain on public services. The humanitarian frame highlights the plight of migrants fleeing conflict or persecution, emphasising the moral imperative to offer protection. The security frame portrays migration as a threat to national security, linking it to terrorism or crime. The prevalence of each frame influences policy debates and public attitudes. A security frame might lead to stricter border controls, while a humanitarian frame might encourage more welcoming policies.

## **The Role of GCE in Developing Critical Thinking and Storytelling Skills**

GCE can play a crucial role in empowering young people and youth workers to navigate the complex interplay of values and frames, particularly in relation to marginalised groups. By fostering critical thinking and storytelling skills, GCE enables individuals to critically analyse portrayals, examining how marginalised groups, such as migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, are represented in media, policy, and public discourse. They can learn to identify the underlying frames that shape these portrayals and how these frames can perpetuate stereotypes or discrimination. GCE also encourages critical self-reflection, prompting learners to examine their own values and how these values influence their perceptions of others.



It also fosters critical examination of the values espoused by institutions, encouraging learners to question whether these values are truly being upheld in practice (values coherence). Furthermore, GCE empowers young people to become active agents of change by developing their storytelling abilities. They can learn to craft and disseminate counter-narratives that challenge dominant frames, offer alternative perspectives, and promote values such as empathy, solidarity, and respect for human dignity. These counter-narratives can take many forms, including personal testimonies, art, digital media, and advocacy campaigns.

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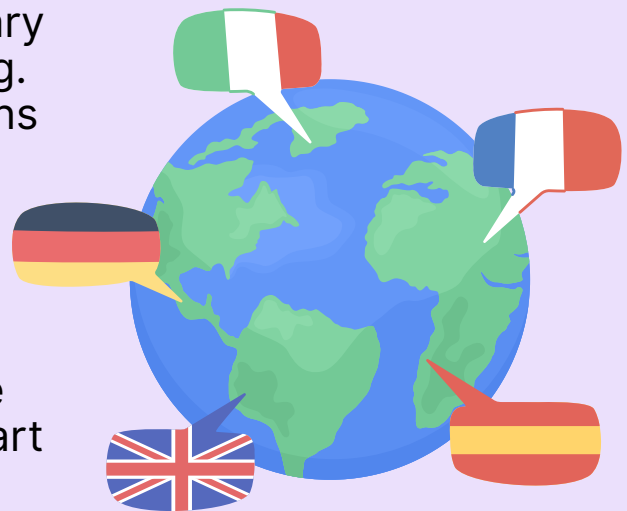
 **Development Perspectives**



# Beyond Words: Language Learning as Global Citizenship Education

**How language empowers migrant youth to connect, participate, and thrive in inclusive communities.**

In today's connection focused world, language is one of the most powerful tools that we have to foster inclusion, understanding, and participation. This is particularly true for young migrants that arrive in new countries, the focus of learning the local language is not just about grammar and vocabulary but a vital step towards belonging. It is often said that language opens doors. This is because it allows young people to form friendships, engage with their communities, understand their rights, and contribute meaningfully to society. When we approach language learning as part of global citizenship education, it becomes more than just a subject, it becomes a tool for empowerment, integration and social cohesion.





## Language as connection

When a young person becomes a migrant, often one of the first and biggest challenges they face is communication and language. If they don't speak the country's home language, everyday tasks like asking for directions, joining a conversation at school, or applying for a job can become overwhelming. But the consequences go beyond practical difficulties. Not being able to communicate can lead to isolation, anxiety as well as a sense of invisibility.

Language learning offers a way to connect and join conversations. When taught inclusively, it creates safe spaces where young migrants can express themselves, ask questions, and share their stories. It also provides the chance for them to listen to the stories of others, understand cultural nuances, and participate in shared experiences. This kind of interaction improve empathy and mutual respect, which are some of the core values of global citizenship

## Language learning as civic participation

Global citizenship is more than traveling or knowing world facts... it's about actively engaging in society and recognizing our shared responsibilities. For youth, this begins with finding your voice. Without language, the voices of migrants are often left out of discussions that affect them.



By integrating GCE into language education, we give learners the tools not only to speak, but to be heard. This means designing language lessons around real-life issues: understanding local laws and rights, how to participate in community initiatives or how to recognize and respond to discrimination. For example, having a language class that teaches them how to navigate a job interview or express an opinion in a youth council meeting will be beneficial not just to learn the language but also to equip students to take part in civic life.

## Empowering identity through inclusive teaching

Inclusive language education also means recognizing that migrant youth are not just learning—they are bringing rich knowledge, languages, and experiences with them. A global citizenship approach promotes the sharing of these stories into the classroom, encouraging learners to share their cultures, ideas, and perspectives.

This exchange supports the development of their identity. Young people often find themselves caught between two cultures, unsure of where they belong.

A GCE-informed classroom honors both their heritage and their future, making it clear they don't have to choose one over the other. This strengthens confidence and pride in who they are.







One successful example is the growing network of "language cafés" across Europe, particularly for youth. These informal spaces allow young people—especially migrants and refugees—to practice the local language through conversation, games, and creative activities. More importantly, they create safe environments where everyone learns from each other. Native speakers learn about other cultures, and newcomers build social and communication skills without fear of judgment.

## Conclusion

Language learning is much more than memorizing words or understanding grammar rules. When it is connected to global citizenship education, it becomes a meaningful pathway towards inclusion, belonging, and participation. For young migrants, language is not just a skill to acquire—it is a bridge that helps them navigate, express their ideas, and build relationships that help them feel part of the society they're joining.

By teaching language with an inclusive and empowering approach, we are not only helping young people communicate; we are giving them the tools to engage, to be heard, and to share their stories with confidence. This opens the door for true integration, one where migrants are not only present but actively participating in the communities they are a part of.

As a community, we have the responsibility to foster these spaces for dialogue, learning, and connection. Whether it's through formal lessons, creative projects, or informal spaces such as language cafés. We must ensure that young migrants have the opportunity to find their voice and use it to contribute



to a more inclusive, respectful, and interconnected world.

Because at the end of the day, going beyond words means creating a world where all voice matters and where every young person feels included and listened to.

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# Gamification in Global Citizenship Education

## Background

GCE covers a wide variety of social justice issues, from international development to racism, LGBTQ to women's rights, climate change to equality, all underpinned by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (GE Dublin Declaration)<sup>i</sup>. With the enormity of areas, this can be challenging to narrow down for both educators and learners.

With this in mind, the Integrate project has developed a suite of Global Citizenship Education learning materials and activities that educators and learners can freely access. These are available to use directly online, for downloadable and are printable, including the Card Game. Educators and Learners are thereby given the option to choose the best option to suit their learning objective.

To illustrate why the Integrate partners are using a gamified approach to learning, we wrote this article to explain what gamification actually is and the benefits of using this approach.



## Section 1: What is Gamification?

In 2002, the deliberately ugly term ‘gamification’, was coined by a game developer, Nick Pelling, who was designing user interfaces for ATMs (Pelling, 2011<sup>ii</sup>). The objective of the project Pelling was working on was not about learning or competing, but instead it was to keep people focused on their end task by selecting the right option on a screen without the need of human interaction.

Fast forward to 2024 where gamification has advanced to extreme levels. We live in a world where at any given time, there are almost 1 million people playing online games such as Grand Theft Auto as individuals or in teams all over the world, and an estimated 7 million users of World of Warcraft. The global hysteria of Pokemon Go in 2016 resulted in gamers sustaining physical injuries because people tried to ‘capture’ virtual Pokemon characters, and it still has over 150 million active users (The Business of Apps 2024<sup>iii</sup>).



Gamification was firstly described as a method of using game elements and mechanics in non-gaming contexts (Deterding et al, 2011)<sup>iv</sup>. The definition was enhanced further by Kapp, who described it as “using game-based mechanics, aesthetics and game thinking to engage people, motivate action, promote learning, and solve problems”. (Kapp 2012)<sup>v</sup>



Like all games, the end result is winning or receiving awards such as badges. In the case of gamification, it's to educate through achievements and competitiveness. But competitiveness in a learning environment is nothing new. Consider organisations such as in the Boy Scouts or Girl Guides, where badges are awarded for achievements that were not just based on learning but also social and civic engagement, such as visiting the elderly (which could also be categorised as service learning). This type of learning encourages the development of social skills and community involvement.

As a learning tool, gamification is not just about playing..."it is meant to motivate and encourage people to do something, whatever the designer of the application wants them to" (Kapp, 2013<sup>vi</sup>).

## Section 2: Gamification for Adult Learning

Knowles's theory in 1980 of andragogy on adult learning, prioritises problem-solving and experiential learning, and through active learning, learners gain feedback instantly. Knowles developed this further in 2005 and opined that technology provides several learning opportunities, further supporting his theory of andragogy. (Knowles, 2005)<sup>vii</sup>

Games in a learning environment have the potential to enhance the learning experience overall through increasing engagement and productivity (Grünewald et al, 2019<sup>viii</sup>).





Gamification objectives are not just to educate but to increase abilities, expand the rationale for learning that maintains and encourages learner engagement. (Dichev 2017)<sup>ix</sup>. As a method of learning, gamification provides an immersive world for people to learn in an engaging and enjoyable way (Ogamify 2023)<sup>x</sup> at home or in an educational setting, fostering holistic development that can develop critical thinking, leadership qualities, emotional intelligence, cultural sensitivity, social-emotional learning. Furthermore, these types of games promote inquiry-based learning ie applying real life solutions to real life issues, resulting in deeper learning purely because of curious minds (Gandara, 2019), also referred to as 'epistemic emotions' ie creating a person's knowledge (Shukla, 2024)<sup>xi</sup>.

The Smithsonian Science Education Centre<sup>xii</sup> identified 5 benefits of using gamification in the classroom:

1. Promotion of cognitive development;
2. Promotion of physical development;
3. Increases level of engagement;
4. Increases inclusivity in the learning environment;
5. (Gamification) is not limited to the classroom

These are not restricted to a specific age profile, essentially meaning that the benefits are applicable to everyone from early learners to adult learners.

In the adult education sphere, using the term gamification reduces the perception that the learners are 'playing' (Henry and Arnab 2024) <sup>xiii</sup>, provided the links to the learning outcomes are clear and the content appropriate for mature audiences. This learning method can also be used for team building exercises, providing an added layer of value.



As with all traditional learning content, games are tailored to achieve a specific learning outcome (Eng 2024)<sup>xiv</sup>. Games use a variety of thematic tasks and activities rather than rote learning or essay writing - learning by doing in an engaging and fun way, which in turn increases motivation and retention as it does not feel like a mammoth task or homework.

It's worth noting that educators must be aware that gamification may not be the solution to enhancing the learning experience (Markus, Benjamin 1997)<sup>xv</sup>.

Educators must determine not just the suitability of the methods, but how or if, it will contribute to the measurable learning outcomes, or if it is merely a distraction from traditional learning. The use of

games, digital or otherwise, should enhance learning, not just a replacement of traditional learning (Huotari/Hamari 2017)<sup>xvi</sup>. Adult learners may have a preference for, or have only experienced traditional learning and find it challenging or not beneficial to participate in gamified approaches, from board games to using apps.



Digital games can be accessed any time, anywhere in the world and easily translated, dramatically increasing learning opportunities whilst also increasing digital literacy skills. Studies confirmed that the use of gamified methods, does in fact contribute to deep learning as users are motivated to share the scores or outcome of the task, just like games for entertainment (Castillo et al 2020)<sup>xvii</sup>.



## Conclusion

The use of gamification in global citizenship education is as productive as it is necessary in the promotion of social justice and equality in our world today and cannot be underestimated. Ultimately, Gamification has the potential to transform the mindset of people through using immersive and interactive games that introduces users to issues that affect individuals, communities, and states around the world and empower them to actively apply their new skills to highlight social injustice in their communities and around the world.

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# The Importance of Microlearning in Youth Work: Empowering Youth Migrants and Workers Through Global Citizenship and SDGs Training

In an era of rapid globalization and digital transformation, the need for effective learning strategies in youth work has never been more critical. Traditional learning models often struggle to engage young people, especially youth migrants facing linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic barriers.

Microlearning—a method that delivers content in small, focused bursts—has emerged as an innovative approach to equipping youth workers and young migrants with the knowledge and skills needed to embrace **Global Citizenship principles** and achieve the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

This article explores the significance of **microlearning** in the context of youth work, emphasizing its role in **global citizenship education and SDG training** for youth migrants and youth workers.



## Understanding Microlearning in Youth Work

**Microlearning** refers to a pedagogical approach that delivers content in short, digestible segments, often using digital tools such as videos, infographics, podcasts, and interactive quizzes. Unlike traditional educational programs, microlearning focuses on bite-sized lessons that can be accessed anytime and anywhere, making it highly adaptable to **the realities of youth workers and young migrants** who may have limited time, mobility, or access to formal education.

### Key Features of Microlearning

- **Short and Focused:** Lessons typically last between **2 to 10 minutes**, making them easy to consume.
- **Accessible & Mobile-Friendly:** Content can be accessed on **smartphones, tablets, and computers**, accommodating young people with varying technological resources.
- **Engaging & Interactive:** Uses multimedia tools such as gamification, storytelling, and scenario-based learning to maintain learners' attention.
- **Self-Paced & Personalized:** Youth can learn **at their own speed**, revisiting lessons when necessary.
- **Instantly Applicable:** Focuses on **practical skills and real-world knowledge**, making learning **immediately useful** for youth migrants and youth workers.



## Microlearning for Global Citizenship Education (GCE)

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is a transformative approach that fosters awareness, responsibility, and active participation in global issues such as **human rights, democracy, environmental sustainability, and social justice**. For **youth migrants**, GCE serves as a bridge between cultures, empowering them to integrate into their new communities while maintaining a connection with their cultural identities.

### Key Features of Microlearning

#### Breaking Language Barriers

- Youth migrants often face **language barriers** in formal education settings. Microlearning, with its **visual and auditory aids**, allows for **multilingual and easy-to-understand content**.
- Interactive tools like **subtitled videos, infographics, and quizzes** help learners grasp complex concepts in a simple way.





## Cultural Adaptation & Social Inclusion

- Microlearning modules on **intercultural dialogue, anti-discrimination, and community engagement** help youth migrants understand their **rights and responsibilities** in their host countries.
- Short courses on **civic participation and local governance** enable them to become active members of their new communities.

## Fostering Critical Thinking & Active Citizenship

- Scenario-based learning and micro-case studies encourage critical thinking on global issues like climate change, gender equality, and social justice.
- Youth workers can use interactive storytelling to teach migrants about the importance of advocacy and community leadership.

## Microlearning for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Training

The **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** serve as a universal blueprint for addressing urgent global challenges, from **poverty reduction (SDG 1)** and **quality education (SDG 4)** to **climate action (SDG 13)** and **peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16)**.



# Why Microlearning is Ideal for SDG Training in Youth Work

## Engaging Youth in Sustainability

- Many young people struggle to understand the relevance of the SDGs to their daily lives. **Microlearning breaks down complex sustainability concepts** into short, interactive lessons on topics such as **sustainable consumption, renewable energy, and ethical decision-making**.

## Practical, Solution-Oriented Learning

- Rather than overwhelming learners with abstract theories, microlearning **focuses on solutions**, encouraging youth to take **small but impactful actions** in their communities.
- For example, a **3-minute video on plastic waste reduction** followed by a quiz can inspire immediate behavior change.

## Gamification & Incentives

- Integrating **microlearning with gamification** (e.g., badges, leaderboards, and challenges) increases motivation.
- Youth migrants and workers can **track their progress** and earn rewards for completing SDG-related learning modules.





## Collaboration & Peer Learning

- Youth organizations can **create microlearning hubs** where young migrants and youth workers **collaborate** through discussion forums, online challenges, and peer-to-peer knowledge sharing.
- Real-world examples of **youth-led SDG initiatives** can be shared via short, engaging case studies.

## Implementing Microlearning in Youth Work: Best Practices

To successfully integrate microlearning into **youth work, migrant education, and global citizenship training**, organizations should consider the following:

### Use Mobile-Friendly Platforms

- Ensure that content is accessible on widely used apps like **WhatsApp, Telegram, YouTube, and Learning Management Systems (LMS)**.

### Leverage Social Media for Learning

- Youth workers can create **Instagram Reels, TikTok videos, and Twitter threads** focusing on key SDG concepts and civic engagement strategies.



## Encourage Community-Based Microlearning

- Organize local meetups, online forums, and collaborative projects where youth can apply what they learn in micro-modules.

## Blend Microlearning with Traditional Methods

- Combine microlearning with **workshops, mentoring, and hands-on experiences** to reinforce learning.



## Monitor Impact & Engagement

- Use **quizzes, discussion groups, and surveys** to measure youth engagement and knowledge retention.

Microlearning is revolutionizing youth work by making **global citizenship education and SDG training more accessible, engaging, and effective for youth migrants and workers**. By leveraging **digital tools and short, interactive content**, youth organizations can empower young people to become active agents of social change, sustainability, and inclusion.

In a world where attention spans are shrinking and time is limited, microlearning ensures that **every lesson, no matter how small, has a lasting impact** on youth empowerment and global awareness.



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**It's time to embrace microlearning as a powerful tool to educate, inspire, and equip young people for a more inclusive and sustainable future.**

**Theo Mavrosavva**



**ONE THERRENE INTERNATIONAL GROUP**



# Digital Literacy as a Gateway to Global Citizenship

## Empowering Young People to Become Active Global Citizens Through Digital Skills Development

### Incipit

In today's interconnected world, digital literacy has become more than just a valuable skill, it's an essential gateway to global citizenship. As our daily lives become increasingly intertwined with digital technologies, the ability to navigate, evaluate, and create content in digital spaces directly impacts how we participate in the global community. For young people especially, developing digital literacy is not merely about technical proficiency but about gaining the tools to engage meaningfully with global issues, diverse perspectives, and collaborative solutions across borders and cultures.

Digital literacy empowers individuals to move beyond being passive consumers of information to become active, responsible global citizens who can critically assess media, engage in cross-cultural dialogue, and contribute to addressing shared global challenges. This transformation has profound implications for education, civic participation, and social inclusion in an increasingly digital world.



## What is Digital Literacy?

Digital literacy encompasses a range of skills and competencies that go far beyond simply knowing how to use digital devices. It includes the ability to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information using digital technologies. More importantly, it involves developing a critical understanding of how digital media shapes our perception of the world and influences our decision-making processes.

True digital literacy includes several key components:

- **Technical skills:** The ability to use digital devices, software, and platforms effectively
- **Information literacy:** The capacity to find, evaluate, and use online information responsibly
- **Media literacy:** The skill to critically analyze digital media content and understand how it shapes our worldview
- **Digital citizenship:** Knowledge of rights and responsibilities in online spaces
- **Communication skills:** The ability to communicate effectively across digital platforms with diverse audiences

For example, when a young person learns not just how to scroll through social media feeds but how to verify information sources, recognize bias, and understand data privacy, they are developing the comprehensive digital literacy that supports global citizenship.



# The Link Between Digital Literacy and Global Citizenship

Global citizenship education aims to develop learners who understand global issues, respect diversity, and take action toward a more peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable world. Digital literacy directly supports these aims in several ways:

## 1. Access to Global Information and Perspectives

Digital technologies provide unprecedented access to information and viewpoints from around the world. A digitally literate person can navigate this vast landscape of information, seeking out diverse perspectives rather than remaining in information bubbles. For instance, a student researching climate change can access scientific reports, indigenous knowledge, and community initiatives from across the globe, developing a more comprehensive understanding than would be possible through local resources alone.

## 2. Cross-Cultural Communication and Collaboration

Digital platforms enable direct communication with people from different cultural backgrounds. Youth from Italy can collaborate on projects with peers from Ghana, Japan, or Brazil, developing intercultural competencies through authentic exchanges. These connections foster empathy and mutual understanding—core components of global citizenship.







The European Learning Network project demonstrated this potential when it connected classrooms across five countries through digital storytelling. Students shared local environmental challenges and collaborated on solutions, developing both digital skills and global awareness simultaneously.

### 3. Civic Engagement and Participation

Digital literacy enables new forms of civic participation that transcend national boundaries. Young people can join global movements, sign international petitions, or support causes worldwide. The climate strikes initiated by Greta Thunberg demonstrate how digital platforms can mobilize global youth action on shared challenges.

Digital literacy also helps young people understand the mechanics of online civic engagement—knowing how to verify the legitimacy of causes, protect personal information while participating, and evaluate the impact of digital activism.

### 4. Critical Thinking in a Complex Information Landscape

Perhaps most importantly, digital literacy develops critical thinking skills essential for global citizenship. In an era of misinformation and filter bubbles, the ability to evaluate sources, recognize propaganda, and understand how algorithms shape information access is crucial.





For example, during recent global events, digitally literate individuals could distinguish between verified reporting, unsubstantiated claims, and deliberate misinformation—making them better equipped to form nuanced opinions and engage in constructive dialogue across divides.

## Challenges and Considerations

While digital literacy offers pathways to global citizenship, significant challenges remain. For example, access to digital technologies and quality digital education remains unequally distributed within and between countries. This creates new forms of exclusion that must be addressed through inclusive policies and programs. Community initiatives like mobile digital literacy labs in rural areas could help bridging these gaps.

Another challenge is related to online safety and wellbeing. As young people engage globally online, they may encounter risks including harassment, privacy violations, or exposure to harmful content. Comprehensive digital literacy must include safety skills and awareness of mental health impacts of digital engagement.

Effective global citizenship education through digital literacy must also balance global perspectives with local relevance. Digital engagement should complement, not replace, involvement in local communities and face-to-face interactions.



## Conclusion

Digital literacy and global citizenship education are naturally complementary, each strengthening the other. When young people develop the skills to navigate digital spaces critically and responsibly, they gain powerful tools for engaging with global issues, diverse perspectives, and collaborative problem-solving across borders.

Educational systems, youth organizations, and policymakers should recognize this synergy by integrating digital literacy and global citizenship education. This means moving beyond teaching technical skills to fostering critical digital literacy that empowers young people to evaluate information, engage respectfully across differences, and participate meaningfully in addressing shared global challenges.

In a world facing complex, interconnected challenges—from climate change to growing inequality—we need citizens who can think globally while acting both locally and across borders. Digital literacy provides essential tools for this engagement, opening pathways for young people to develop as informed, empathetic, and active global citizens ready to shape a more sustainable and just future for all.

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# What does it mean to be a 'Global Citizen' today?

**Global citizenship helps us to learn from each other, broaden our horizons, protect our planet, and think beyond borders.**

In our increasingly connected and complex world, the idea of being a 'global citizen' is becoming more important than ever. It is not just about travelling or speaking many languages, it is about understanding that we share responsibilities with people far beyond our own communities. We all live on the same planet, face common challenges and have the power to shape a better future together.

In addition to having this sense of 'togetherness', we also have to ask the question: What does it mean to 'belong' – not just to a country, but to the whole world. No matter where we come from, what language we speak, or how we live, our actions affect many other people, communities, and the environment around us. But how can we learn to think and act this way? The answer is through education – Global Citizenship Education.





People often view the world only from the perspective of our own culture, region, or country, which is natural, as these are the territories we know best, but if we want to solve global issues such as climate change, poverty, or inequality, we need to step outside of our circle and look at the whole picture. One example is the way that history is taught in different countries and societies: some curricula may focus mostly on national achievements, while skipping global contexts and details that are essential in other communities. But learning about shared and other society's histories – including the painful parts – helps us understand where society comes from, where it is going, and why certain things have developed the way they are. It reminds us that the past does not belong to one society alone, and neither does the future, but that all different experiences and histories, as well as different sides of the same story, make up the world's shared past – and, therefore, humanity's history.

## Culture

Being a global citizen means being open to other ways of life than our own – not just tolerating them, but genuinely trying to understand and learn from them. Good examples are food, music, and traditions. They may seem like simple things, but they carry deep meaning. When we taste dishes from another country, listen to songs in a different language, and understand traditional clothing from another culture, we connect to people beyond our borders – even more so, if we have the chance to actually participate in these cultural experiences ourselves. Projects such as student exchanges or international youth collaborations allow young people to experience life through another “lens”, learn new things,



and broaden their horizons in completely new ways. These experiences are not just fun – they shape attitudes for life, they promote respect, empathy, and intercultural understanding and can help to create more inclusive, calmer, and open society that supports others instead of putting them down. In short, it enables togetherness instead of oppression and counteracts a feeling of superiority.

## The environment

Similarly to culture, the environment also does not stop at borders: Pollution in one part of the world affects the air, water, and climate in many, if not all, other parts. This is why global citizens must also be green citizens. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a roadmap for a better, fairer world by 2030. The SDGs include 17 different goals from various areas that are, in many ways, interconnected. By linking Global Citizen Education to the SDGs, educators help young people understand that their choices, from what they eat to how they travel, have global impacts. As an example: Students in Austria studying SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) in school look at where their clothes are made. For this, they could research how fast fashion affects garment workers in Bangladesh or water supplies in India. This kind of learning connects local life to global systems and encourages positive action.





## Diversity

Another essential factor in global citizenship is diversity, equity, and inclusion (for short, DEI). It is important to know that diversity does not just mean variety – it is a strength that we have and can achieve through acquiring a more open and welcoming mindset. When we include people with different backgrounds, identities, and experiences, we gain new ideas and perspectives. Global citizenship is also deeply connected to equity: making sure people have what they need to succeed, keeping in mind that it is not the same for everyone – it is not enough to open a door, we need to help everyone to get through it. The third part of DEI, inclusion, is equally important and also does not happen automatically. Everyone needs to work for it, which means that we have to make sure that everyone, regardless of their gender, ability, language, ethnicity etc., can participate in education and society without fear or discrimination. Living in a world that enforces DEI means that many systems that have been in place for a long time have to be changed or, at least, adapted – a progress which could also be called progress.

## Looking forward without forgetting the past

Being a global citizen in today's world does not mean giving up your roots. On the contrary, it means knowing where you come from, while remaining open to new situations, new people, new ideas, and constant changes in many areas of life and society. It can be seen as an extension of the history of society and even every individual, remembering your own story while, at the same time, learning to appreciate the stories of others.





It is also crucial to remember history, especially the more difficult parts that society would prefer to forget, from colonialism to slavery to world wars, as the past has shaped the inequalities we see and experience today. Understanding this helps us change the status quo and move forward with more fairness and awareness.

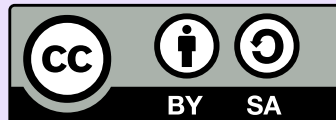
As the today's world faces rising nationalism, fake news, strong polarisation, and many other negative developments, Global Citizenship Education is needed more than ever and can function like a compass, reminding us of the values that bring people together: justice, respect, responsibility, love, and hope.

To be a global citizen today means to be informed, compassionate, and engaged. It also means thinking beyond borders, acting with empathy, and striving to make the world a better place, not just for ourselves, but for everyone who lives in it. Education is a main key to this transformation, as only through education, we can fight prejudice, protect the planet, and promote peace. We can learn to see the world not just as it is, but as it could be. Because above all, global citizenship is not a passport or a status, it is a mindset and a promise we make to each other.

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Co-funded by  
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2022-2-IE01-KA220-YOU-000097037

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