Global Citizenship Education (GCED) in The Digital Era:
The Unexpected Tool for Peacebuilding

How 21st-century fluencies can shape sustainable global peace?

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ABSTRACT

If education is unanimously recognized as a powerful and impactful tool for social advancement, its use in global affairs as a major component has not yet been fully acknowledged. The current world state, with multiplying challenges amidst a global crisis - caused by the fallouts of an unmanageable pandemic - exposed the limits of multilateralism, undermining international cohesion already struggling over geopolitical rivalries and bursting territorial conflicts.

Growing gaps between citizens and governing bodies are threatening the very essence of democracy, the quintessence of people representation, the act of being a citizen. If such struggles arise even within states' borders, needless to say, building a global citizenship feeling of belonging may prove difficult, requiring exceptional efforts and a strong driver, such as education, leaning on an innovative approach.

Peacebuilding through education to global citizenship is one of the pillars of the United Nations 2030 Agenda. In this regard this work is directly relevant to the Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 (Education for sustainable development and global citizenship, and the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence), an indicator building a basis for decision-making and institutional frameworks, reflecting on citizen political involvement on a local/global level, leaning on the tryptic pattern of foundation/adaptation/integration.

GCED could be one of the strongest peace advancement tools to think globally and act locally, by integrating emotional intelligence, creating a common shared value, tackling climate change and gender equity, as women are often in the frontline of rising challenges. This work will investigate and analyze the paradigms of GCED in peacebuilding using a cross-national analysis within the framework of digital humanities and peace studies research fields.

KEYWORDS: peace, education, peacebuilding, digital citizenship, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, global security, 21st century skills, peacetech, innovation, empowerment

1 GCED IN PEACEBUILDING: THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF A DEBATED YET UNIVERSAL NOTION

Territory, citizenship, and identity, these three historical forces for all their distinctiveness tended to be intertwined, the idea of citizenship took on meanings associated with state membership and nationalism, becoming a major force in shaping loyalties and identities in political communities. This conception is today challenged and overhauled by the increasing number of people exercising rights over borders. Trade and commerce "succeeded" in building a complex interstate interdependence as developed by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye in the 1970s, but these economic agreements did not manage to facilitate intercultural dialogue or promote peace, and somehow global governance was expected to keep pace. While there is much room for improvement regarding fair global political representation, unsurprisingly, democracy is still striving in many parts of the world.

Intergovernmental cooperation is struggling over interests and conflicts in a relatively broad scope of action. If pluralities and identities need to be protected as much as possible, education has always been a gateway between citizenship and global citizenship. GCED (Global Citizenship Education), in that regard, is not a call to elude cultural specificities but rather embrace and understand them, honing skills that will allow every citizen to be part of "collective considerations" mobilizing "multiple intelligences", asserting everyone's rights and freedom, contributing to various forms of international solidarity, openness, and interest in global issues, in view of building a sustainable and peaceful future (for everyone) making every view count, and empowering those voices, especially the voiceless, often on the frontline of crisis and conflicts.

This set of global competencies need teaching and learning methods aligned with global challenges, this includes not only "technical skills" but also socio-emotional competencies. They are meant to provide and secure environments not only in times of conflict but lay the ground for peace as well. Peace is not only the absence of violence as we will explore in this paper. Indeed, security and peace are often conflated. As an academic discipline, the interest in Peace studies started several decades ago, but gained significant prominence in the past decade. Peace education and GCED in the digital context are even more recent topics of studies with a substantially growing interest since 2019, sparked by the UNESCO 2019 Forum on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and GCED.

During the UN's mass public survey called *My World,* within the framework of the Millennial Goals, people voted on issues concerning gender equality, climate change, and many other global challenges. Unanimously, every part of the world designated education as paramount, confirming the universal character of education as a shared value and a rallying point for building the common good, GCED being transdisciplinary by nature. But can we really assume today that education is fully supported and valued as an agent of change and advancement? Is education up to the 21st century pressing challenges? Does it answer and wholly address deficiencies preventing the construction of a peaceful environment? Are citizens empowered for taking in hand these matters locally and globally? And how can GCED positively influence a multilevel and multidimensional approach to peacebuilding?

Many still consider "Global Citizenship" as an oxymoron with the association of two opposite notions, one deeply rooted and one uprooted. As a highly debated term, Global citizenship has gained considerable depth in theory with ideas such as cosmopolitan democracy and civil society but needs yet to establish a political ground in practice to be duly

efficient. It remains resilient as an aspiration yet is still highly uncertain about its materiality. GCED is a very wide-ranging concept that includes a plethora of notions from education to sustainable development to institutional and civic representation. If the concept is not novel it is facing horizontal and vertical inequalities where divides tend to be exacerbated, enforcing the need for a differentiated approach.

The UNESCO Progress Update Report on "The Futures of Education" describes the state of education today as "not fully satisfactory". Indeed, so far education has not held up to its promise to become an equalizer. The 2020 report of the International Commission on the Futures of Education titled "Education in a post-COVID World: Nine ideas for public action" states that "governments and citizens alike should be encouraged to demand strong responses in public education. The report also recommends that "curricula should be increasingly integrated and based on themes and problems that allow us to learn to live in peace with our common humanity and our common planet". Although military force and security enforcement can be quick and responsive tools in major crises, they have been proved insufficient. Sustainable institutions and rules of law are fundamental for peacebuilding, education being its supporting pillar for social advancement.

There lies the relevance of teaching 21st-century skills (or 21st-century fluencies), competencies we need beyond school borders, "soft skills" that mutually benefit open environments where education ecosystems thrive, enabling youth to acquire fluencies and skills that are not merely "academic". Learning communities, learning networks, and even mobilizing families and private spheres, creating infinite cooperation and collaboration possibilities, under the logic of co-development and co-agency.

In setting out the foundations for this paper, the relevance of technological skills, despite their ubiquitous aspects, will be considered in regard to their impact in the digital era or the information era. Digital citizenship being a segment of GCED for peacebuilding purposes, the latter comprises indeed a plurality of paradigms that we will explore henceforward.

1.1   Fostering Global Citizenry

The motto of UNESCO is "Building peace in the minds of men and women." UNESCO seeks to build a culture of peace through peaceful approaches, with education as a transversal principle to all the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals). However, education is usually based on performance and academic achievements, and sometimes even considered as being out of touch with the reality of pressing challenges, its quality has been increasingly questioned. Education today is the missing link, making "closing the literacy gap" the first imperative step, by extension, to prepare young generations to develop an understanding of global challenges, to become tomorrow's leaders, peacemakers and simply acting citizens.

If all countries around the globe are sovereign in their decision-making processes and political social contracts, GCED aims are not necessarily to be differentiated from the notion of "citizenship", they can share common grounds, and this probably is the most significant and efficient way to "think globally and act locally". GCED does aspire to "empower learners of all ages to assume active roles, (…) in building more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure societies". Embedding these actions in educational curricula from an early age allows young people to familiarize themselves with fair representation activities and build an understanding of social justice, facilitating the integration of cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral components in the educational experience. Enabling such an active position in the

learning process is a significant first step towards the achievement of Target 4.7 of the SDGs, that is to say, "ensuring that all learners are provided with the knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development", among others, through education for "sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, (…) and appreciation of cultural diversity.

Fostering such an ambitious vision will not only enable personal fulfillment but will also facilitate the co-construction of formal and informal networks through extended mobility, project-based learning, and digitally-enabled collaboration, fostering directly or indirectly a holistic approach to problem-solving, intercultural dialogue, and mutual understanding. Initiatives such as eTwinning and Erasmus+ do provide spaces for building convergences for the fulfillment of common visions with a shared strategy, allowing youth, not only to take an active part in reflecting on how to create safe spaces for dialogue, peacebuilding, democracy, and human rights action, but also to construct and emerge meaningful and structured ways through creativity, art culture and awareness.

1.2   Peace as a Universal Concept in Education

Education is tied to the very notion of development, with GCED being its major component for enhancing the skills to prepare for a very uncertain future, a future where citizens should be playing the role they were always meant to play, through direct and representative forms of democracy.

Fair access to education is certainly one of the most significant forms of social equity, offsetting persistent divides and gaps. The facts are these: education is acknowledged as a powerful tool but is still striving to be established as a "game-changer". That being said, in the 2020 Human Report development titled: "The Next Frontier: Human development and the Anthropocene", published by *The United Nations Development Programme*, the word "education" appears 301 times, which only emphasizes the call for asserting education and conceding its virtue as a unifying factor in the Global Actor-Network.

The peace and reconciliation education part of GCED is a very far-reaching area that offers everything from teaching peer mediation and conflict resolution skills, a curriculum about diversity and advocacy against poverty, as well as civic education. Cheryl Duckworth explains that as the field is developing scholar-practitioners still debate over its origins "as old as Confucius and as young as the United Nations". GCED and peace education have in common an inherently multi-disciplinary dimension, making the relevance of peace studies in the 21st century more up to date than ever, an indispensable first step in the life of every citizen towards cooperative internationalism. The work of Maria Montessori (see Montessori Pedagogy), in this regard, deserves credit. She stressed the importance of "the implicit and explicit" parts of every child (and adult's) education, and also acknowledged the values of global citizenship, personal responsibility, and respect for diversity, considering these "every bit as crucial as math, language or science learning".

The interactions between peace education and GCED are numerous and as multiple as the challenges the global society is trying to solve. Whether related to cognitive, affective, or behavioral domains, the two fields share a common interest in building a culture of sustainability, peace, and the common good, extended by the information era, making these two notions evolving and scalable, and consequently hard to institutionalize, but at the same time relevant and easy to grasp.

GCED is relevant in conflict resolution, conflict prevention, and conflict reconstruction, yet it does require a set of skills for educators and a stable quality educational system to support processes such as intercultural dialogue and critical thinking, especially in the digital age where social boundaries can be blurred. It requires a positive dialogue setting, within a framework where the values of equity and diversity are already integrated, providing a "safe and peaceful space" to reflect upon peacebuilding, not as an abstract notion, but as a shared responsibility. This directly refers to the concept further developed by Johann Galtung, known as "positive peace". That is to create peace-friendly environment, through structural and institutional reforms, to produce a ripple effect, to activate means of peace and advocacy, and not to only maintain a precarious status quo of "non-violence".

2   CITIZENSHIP 4.0: FROM ACTIVISM TO SLACKTIVISM

The internet and social media have brought new forms of empowerment that are deeply reshuffling relations between citizens and states, with significant impacts on global and local levels, as the Arab Springs demonstrated. ICT (Information Communication Technology) tools have also emerged as instruments to support more effective humanitarian response and improve peacekeeping, as many refugees depend on apps such as *YouTube*, *Facebook,* and *WhatsApp* as their only source of information.

According to a 2017 Intercultural Trends Survey of the Anna Lindh Foundation, online and social media are the second most trusted sources of information, behind television, for young people, in the Southern Mediterranean. So social media and other forms of cyber-enabled communication do facilitate new openings for civic participation and engagement, but also remain spaces for disinformation, hate speech, propaganda, and cyber-bullying. These negative manifestations are harmful to democracies and fuel mistrust in institutions of governance around the world. If the temptation of avoiding these expression spaces for the reasons stated above is too strong, we should not, in any case, leave the field free for such practices. It is necessary to take over the public eye and orient policies towards digitally enabled youth actions. It is a legitimate question to ask, can social media be a space for positive social action and change?

"Slacktivism", a combination of the word "slacker" and "activism" has increasingly been used to refer to action through social media, with varying degrees of commitment, and this is often the criticism received. If it is not the school's duty to assign causes, it is the role of the educational system to equip students with skills and knowledge to educate politically aware citizens.

It is imperative to study and analyze the role of social media for (and with) students and decode the consequences and ramifications behind one single mouse click and attempt to explore commitment and activism beyond that. Jennifer Casa-Todd refers to a very compelling example when explaining the difference between activism and slacktivism, quoting a sign declaration on social media saying: « A 👍 (like) is not an action. A signature is. Sign this student petition!". Today, technology and social media can help students develop a voice and become actively involved in causes about which they care and are passionate about, an extension of their commitment which makes GCED an important feature of the student's development, as summarized by the Framework for citizenship Education in the Canadian World Curricula (Figure 1).
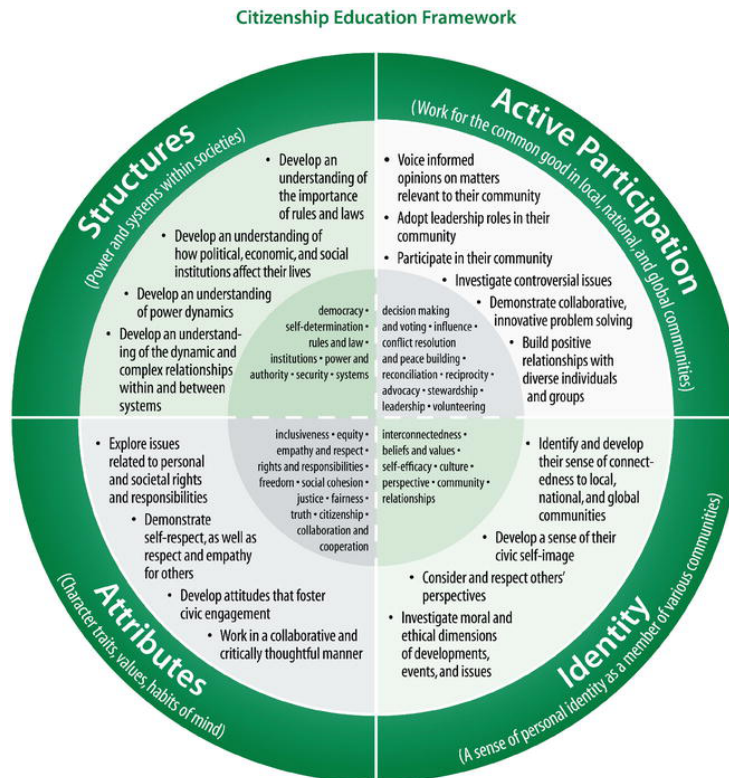
Citizenship Education Framework

Structures (Power and systems within societies)
- Develop an understanding of the importance of rules and laws
- Develop an understanding of how political, economic, and social institutions affect their lives
- Develop an understanding of power dynamics
- Develop an understanding of the dynamic and complex relationships within and between systems

Active Participation (Work for the common good in local, national, and global communities)
- Voice informed opinions on matters relevant to their community
- Adopt leadership roles in their community
- Participate in their community
- Investigate controversial issues
- Demonstrate collaborative, innovative problem solving
- Build positive relationships with diverse individuals and groups

Attributes (Character traits, values, habits of mind)
- Explore issues related to personal and societal rights and responsibilities
- Demonstrate self-respect, as well as respect and empathy for others
- Develop attitudes that foster civic engagement
- Work in a collaborative and critically thoughtful manner

Identity (A sense of personal identity as a member of various communities)
- Identify and develop their sense of connectedness to local, national, and global communities
- Develop a sense of their civic self-image
- Consider and respect others' perspectives
- Investigate moral and ethical dimensions of developments, events, and issues

Center (top): democracy • self-determination • rules and law • institutions • power and authority • security • systems

Center (top-right): decision making and voting • influence • conflict resolution and peace building • reconciliation • reciprocity • advocacy • stewardship • leadership • volunteering

Center (bottom-left): inclusiveness • equity • empathy and respect • rights and responsibilities • freedom • social cohesion • justice • fairness • truth • citizenship • collaboration and cooperation

Center (bottom-right): interconnectedness • beliefs and values • self-efficacy • culture • perspective • community • relationships

Figure 1 Citizenship Education Framework- Copyright Queen's Printer for Ontario 2018

2.1 Youth Engagement and Advocacy

Young people accounted for 33% of the global population in 2020, making them the largest demographic across the globe. Although youth participation in peacebuilding is widely discussed, there are very few examples of practical action.

On December 9, 2015 the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted a historic resolution that recognizes the "important role young people play in the prevention and resolution of conflict". Resolution 2250 created the framework for nations to engage and empower youth as workers of peace through five pillars: ●Participation ●Protection, ●Prevention ●Partnerships ●Disengagement and reintegration in "war to peace" and "post conflict reconstruction". These pillars can all integrate GCED and fully embed soft skills learning, often implicit, not to say underrated in comparison with "academic" knowledge.

In the light of these elements and what we have considered so far, the empowerment and inclusion of youth is capital. Membership of young people through sponsorship, mentoring and positive role-modeling can vastly contribute to building a global tradition of peacemakers, given the high potential of youth as a diverse active political group, which is still not fully integrated. It is imperative to break the glass ceiling that leads to high profile national or international assemblies where youth-related subjects are discussed without a single representative of youth leadership organizations, the same goes for women and many other under-represented groups.

GCED can be a useful approach to tackle these issues, through various prisms, fostering vocations and interest in governance and representation. There are oceans of drawbacks in

this domain. When debating over social media, we can depict the advantageous potential for intensifying voices of influencers. Klear platform has drawn a ranking list on the "Top 10 Social Media Peace Influencers" revealing that the Peace community is made up of 69% Women, mostly from the United States (13.6%) and the United Kingdom. Clearly, social media plays a role in making these voices heard beyond their communities making them "lobbyists" and "ambassadors" for peace.

2.2 Lobbying for Peace: Citizen Diplomacy

GCED is based on the capacity and trust that every citizen has a part to play in the peacebuilding process. And it is this belief that should motivate the empowerment of learners, based on the idea that every global citizen has the right, even the responsibility, to engage across cultures and create shared understanding, through meaningful person-to-person interactions. In other words, act as a "citizen diplomat". This does not necessarily involve spectacular actions, the latter being nevertheless important to advance causes, but strong actions can mutually benefit from what Catherine Neveu refers to as "ordinariness" or "ordinary citizenship", where it is "normal" to perform what some might call "small and ordinary activities". This perception takes credit for encouraging everyone to "do their part", making it accessible to initiate a sustainable ecological and societal transition, especially in the field of education where allocated resources are sometimes very scarce or difficult to mobilize, due to ever increasing pressure.

The concept of global citizenship first emerged in the 4th Century BCE among the Greek Cynics, who coined the term "cosmopolitan" – meaning citizen of the world. This vision of a shared and accepted common commitment for the future, global justice, and global cooperation is still slow moving and requires backing and innovation in the field of policymaking. With the rise of populism and isolationism, it is today more necessary than ever to acknowledge the moving nature of our world and the global which need to be urgently dealt with.

The term "lobbyist" has a negative bias but should be given a positive connotation when rooting for the common good. There is still a perpetual struggle to implement values of inclusion and tolerance due to the vacillation of political agendas. Hence the work of researchers, political influencers, and the presence of citizens in policymaking are imperative. Pragmatism and bureaucracy should go hand in hand with a human-centric vision of social advancement. Time for reflection is overdue, as the urgency of the situation must be brought forefront.

This calls for the necessity to ascertain the key feature of youth leadership in order to spread extensively the "bandwagoning" of peace, through a peace-oriented mindset. Not only in conflictual situations, but also in peaceful contexts. Leaders and practitioners must also pre-emptively work to ensure that the targets of "peacebuilding" become durable objectives, not simply temporary reactions to violence.

3 DIGITAL LITERACY: PEACE, ETHICS, AND ADVOCACY IN THE INFORMATION AGE

In the continuum of the human-centric approach of GCED, in peace building and policymaking, it is essential to tackle "Digital Literacy". If the digital divide and tech-illiteracy need to be addressed, there is another component that requires focus, which is

Digital Citizenship Education (DCE) as a catalyst of digital and social competencies of GCED. According to the European Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, DCE is "the empowerment (…) through education or the acquisition of competencies for learning and active participation in a digital society" ensuring users "to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities online, promoting and protecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the cyberspace". This set of skills includes locating and consuming digital content as well as creating and communicating digital content.

The case of digital literacy is the embodiment of the urgent need for harmonization of the implicit part of the educational curriculum with the explicit one, developing creative, relational, and critical thinking skills, illustrating the need to widely educate, regardless of any socioeconomic or generational considerations. There is indeed a common idea that young people master ICT tools, but they are rather more active in terms of population ratio and are prime example tech consumers, as we will see, making social media routine, use, and practices, in terms of liability and security, a complex but necessary issue to address.

However, in a world characterized by deep inequities and power differences, the principle of "Universal Responsibility" would not have much practical meaning if not coupled with a principle of "Common but Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR), meaning to "bring substantive equality in a framework for justice, to foster cooperation (…), and to provide incentives (…) to implement (…) obligations", a concept usually applied to states in international law but that would be very interesting to explore in this regard. Universal responsibility, in this context, refers to the moral dimension of a global ethic that can be shared by all humans".

Differentiated responsibility refers to the "capacity to respond," depending on our actual capacity to do so. Thus, although we may all be equally obliged to respond ethically to meet the challenges we face, our actual capacity to respond depends on the powers and resources one has at hand. With increased freedom, knowledge, and power comes increased responsibility to promote the common good. This responsibility is also valid for digitally-enabled countries, designed for the promotion of art, science, education, and culture, preserving the legacy of humankind essential for building the foundation of a balanced creative, cognitive, emotional, aesthetic, and social development of children and youth. While much progress has been made since the year 2000 on access to primary education, significant challenges remain for the implementation of 21st-century fluencies. Yet, universal access to primary education has not yet been achieved for low-income countries – whose primary enrolment rate stood at 73% in 2016 – and an estimated 750 million adults are still illiterate, a situation only aggravated by the pandemic, obstructing even further development perspectives, and even causing a great backwards surge in terms of the advances made so far.

Youth school disengagement is sadly enough a rising phenomenon, in which we can observe young people seeking other forms of "inspiration", comprised of a variety of diverse paths. Nevertheless, some managed to express their commitment against climate change, as an example, with the "Fridays for Future" movement led by Greta Thunberg. The Global Education Monitoring 2019 report notes that formal education may not be playing its full role in peace education. It also noted the importance of non-formal and informal education in helping people to become critical media consumers and to foster respect for diversity. Likewise, the report highlights the scarcity of adult work-related education and training in low and middle-income countries, in a context in which labor markets are undergoing rapid
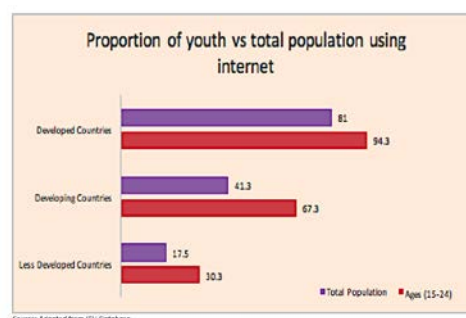
and significant transformations, triggered by technological developments and climate change, this calls for structural reforms to align educational strategic planning, in the era of fake news, deep fakes and sharp power.

3.1 Critical thinking in the Sharp Power Era

The global Big Data market was estimated to be more than $111 billion in 2020 with a total volume of data expected to reach an average increase of 530% by 2025, according to the European Commission. In that data is said to be the new oil, this new resource will exacerbate multi-level conflicts, with a wider spectrum of actors. Whether it is in Antarctica, in cyberspace, or in outer space, conflicts over resources and territories will persist in the "Zero-Sum Game" international patterns. The conquest of space opens new horizons for collaboration as well as conflict. So how can we ensure that data economy and new technologies are oriented towards peacebuilding, social progress, human dignity, and the protection of the planet? How can they contribute to achieving SDGs? A starting place to answer this would be genuine civil society inclusion, not only consultation processes but also full civil participation, empowering voices that matter. It is no secret that the voices of "influencers" resonate louder than some politicians. Citizens need in fact to have a say on this data mining, as they are the target audience. Open data certainly enables innovation, but citizens should be able to play a more active role.

Young people, for example, are no longer content with merely receiving official information from authorities and mainstream media; they expect to play a role in producing and sharing it with large audiences. This is a powerful steppingstone to trigger intergenerational dialogue and bridge skills for a productive two-way conversation. The educational ecosystem has the advantage of providing space to reflect on the diversity of actors in our societies, on the condition of having the appropriate framework in terms of allocated financial and human resources.

It is essential to highlight the importance of e-literacy or (digital literacy) as a 21st-century fluency, part of DCE, especially in protecting against vulnerabilities such as organized crime, violent extremism, cyberbullying, etc. Promoting safety initiatives such as Safer Internet International Awareness Day, in addition to multiple UNESCO-driven programs, is crucial in disseminating the culture of freedom and independence in mainstream media. Peacetech (use of technology for peacebuilding purposes) plays a major role in civic participation, with a significant and growing number of initiatives proving that technology can be leverage in tackling pressing challenges. Given the global proportion of youth using the internet (Figure 2), there is much to reflect on as far as the skills we should be addressing in education planning are concerned. These initiatives underscore the fundamental constraints that deserve attention from international actors, as well as pushing to create a more inclusive "information society", and evolving into a dynamic hub for participation, in which youth are paradoxically excluded from in most official processes.

Proportion of youth vs total population using internet

Source: Adapted from ITU Database

3.2   Empowering Voices that Matter

The demands for reformed and renewed educational mechanisms are a reality and a necessity, strengthened by the need for vibrant and active networks. As early as 2015, Ms. Irina Bokova former Director-General for UNESCO declared in the "Rethinking Education: Towards a Common Good" report, that education should be "moving beyond literacy and numeracy, to focus on learning environments on new approaches to learning for greater justice, social equality and global solidarity". Indeed, in theory, the universal character of education should matter even more in an era where the world-village notion is a reality. Despite resounding schisms and social upheavals, education to global citizenship carry shared moral values but also flexible mechanisms allowing the attainment of global security, weaving the idea of a unity beyond all forms of divides, empowering citizens, and supporting outstanding trans-border initiatives, ventured by inspired young people.

This is specifically what François Taddei characterizes as the "ability to cooperate and stand for moral values". One of the key components of this human feature is language and the ability to exchange information, a capacity reinforced by digital progress. This conception is even more meaningful with the advent of deep fakes, advanced use of AI, and sharp power as a growing trivial international means of destabilization. We are losing ground and we need to make cyberspace a peaceful space as well, by equipping learners with 21st-century skills.

We need to hold everyone accountable by developing ethics and empathy in regard to knowledge prescription and learning mechanisms. This falls directly within the framework of *phronesis*, the ethics of action, and *Praxis*, social action, two of the pillars of learning models along with *episteme (*knowledge*)*, and *techne (*craft*)*. Usually, *Praxis* and *phronesis* are ranked last, regarded as secondary in comparison with knowledge and this is probably stemming from the over-appreciation of "hyper-specialization", especially significant in higher education, that tends to overshadow soft skills.

The plurality and diversity of resounding voices is a rich resource that should be at the foundation of a worldwide reflection. Despite growing and radical forms of nationalism and centrism these values should be at the core of our social projects. It can only be achieved on a global level if the proper institutions, modes of governance and networks are empowered within states, supported by a significant regional integration, ensuing consolidated global development. We need to aim for the "How to achieve the ultimate form of "*who can I empower?*" in the Digital Age rather than the "*what can I say?*".

Nolens volens, it is safe to say that education to soft skills (or 21st-century fluencies) as depicted in this work, is in direct association with addressing these issues, through a "Whole Education" perspective leaning on "transformative competencies" addressing the rising needs for innovation, responsibility, and awareness, creating new value, reconciliating tensions, solving dilemmas, and taking responsibility.

4   CREATING A CULTURE OF COMMON GOOD FOR PEACEBUILDING

Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that "Education is, quite simply, peace-building by another name". If there is a common consensus over this idea, the challenge has

always been and still is, addressing objectively deeply rooted structural causes of conflicts emanating from historical injustices, marginalization, and corruption. Education imparts knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that are important for the social, economic, and political development of any country, ensuring social justice, fair access to resources, and reducing divides. Even if it sounds like a cumbersome and hilly path we need to start somewhere, GCED is a good start, acting at the core of our societies, in one of the most significant social advancements of our time, which is education. Eventually, it might be the most cost-effective and the easiest way to distill peace in our societies, providing fundamental human rights and human dignity. It is all about creating a shared vision of what the priorities are and how to address them with concrete actions.

Addressing social injustices allows citizens to climb up the Maslow Pyramid individually and collectively. The persistent digital divide, as an example, is undermining the potential digital dividend for youth amongst many segments of the young people, especially young women and those living in the countryside, who remain excluded. The 2020 World Development Report by the World Bank observes "that there are persistent digital divides in terms of gender, geography, age, and income". More than half of the world population still lacks access to the Internet and the majority are in low-income countries. It is the poorest households that are systematically excluded, and women are most frequently left behind.

4.1 Global Competence Education: 21st Century Soft Skills for a Soft Power

We have seen so far that the convening power of GCED for peacebuilding purposes dwells in its ability to unify and facilitate processes at any stage of conflict.

Oxfam's Guide for Teachers depicts GCED as a framework to "equip learners for critical and active engagement with the challenges and opportunities of life, in a fast-changing and interdependent world", developing the knowledge and understanding, skills, values, and attitudes that learners need to "participate fully in a globalized society and economy and to secure a more just, secure, and sustainable world than the one they have inherited". The two main poles here, if we consider this definition, are, first the set of soft skills required for building the socio-cultural capacity, the second being the edification of awareness and the empowerment of citizens through social justice. A virtuous circle that can harness accountability through the tryptic: learning, thinking, and acting.

Promoting democratic and civic institutions for learners, through participation in kids' parliaments and city councils, should be much more generalized, allowing understanding and transparency. This also underlines the very importance of starting the development of soft skills through GCED curricula at an early age, nurturing peace, and harnessing the transformative power of education, to build and educate citizens to be ready to face the complexity of the world, a world where the monopole over information and knowledge goes far beyond the educational system. This might be the orientation school systems need, with the encouragement of student participation and the support of student-driven learning practices, as was highlighted at the Conference of the Asia Society.

The achievement of such an ambitious plan demands strong conflict-sensitive policies of reform in view of including education in security issues, beyond patching deeply rooted problems with cosmetic measures. Furthermore, there is a need for addressing issues related to marginalization and social exclusion, which if not resolved could result in the reverse effect, making education the creator of social divides instead of playing its role in closing

gaps. A multidimensional and inclusive reform would allow educators to benefit from spaces, tools, and budgets, as well as national, regional, and international partnerships, supporting transversal cooperation, with possibilities of best practice exchanges, with simplified protocols to avoid the overlapping of administrative tasks. Whether the debate over the digitalization of education is as passionate as were other variables in the history of education (since the debate over the obligation of education itself faced hurdles) it would be much more beneficial to consider what would be the best way to make the most of digital environments, in an ethical, universal manner, to free teachers from some constraints, and to open up the sectors of the learning process. Approaches such as Flipped Learning have explored such routes, by leaning on a wide range of resources, having been tailored with an impressive level of precision thanks to AI. This approach certainly leads to some healthy and constructive debates in democratic societies, as well as creating great opportunities.

4.2   Open Data, Open minds: Emotional Intelligence and Artificial Intelligence

Whole Education mentioned earlier is an approach that believes in the importance of well-being in the learning process. While viewing humans as the center of sustainable development, the right to a healthy environment does stress that it is only possible if there is harmony with environment and nature. These Third-Generation human rights, updated by United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, are sometimes called "Solidarity Rights" because they more explicitly express the need for all citizens, not only states, to fulfill their fraternal duties, to provide effective defense and promote human rights for all. Seen from this perspective, there is a direct relationship between a holistic view of human rights and the principle of universal responsibility.

Indeed, with the rapid growth of machine learning and AI, the best asset of human beings is empathy and the capacity to care. To achieve global competency development technology is a game-changer, but it is not a miracle solution. Educators play a more important role in the uptake of socio-emotional learning (SEL), leaning on transformative pedagogy (the educator can teach about sociocultural issues to raise awareness of social ills through high levels of reflection, focusing on equity and diversity). This could be achieved by the means of what Dr. Fernando Reimers calls "Empowering Teaching for Participatory Citizenship".

In education, we often talk about IQ (Intellectual Quotient), but we very seldom discuss the prominent purpose of EQ (Emotional Quotient). Travis Bradberry qualifies EQ as the best predictor ratio commanding 53% when compared to 33 other "workplace skills". This means taking this direction is not deflecting from educational purposes but answering the demands considerably for 21st century most sought-after skills. This requires capacity building among youth as well as educators, changing the mindset and allowing ethical innovation, by including diverse approaches not only in research and academia but also in policymaking, by encouraging cross-cultural and inventive leadership.

Civil hackathons for example demonstrated an interesting potential for governments to open access to data and launch co-developed and creative actions. The Canadian Open Data Experience (CODE) in 2014 succeeded in attracting widespread participation encouraging government departments to contribute, showing that "Open Government is about greater openness and accountability, strengthening democracy, and driving innovation and economic opportunities", an event witnessed by a long list of observing countries, giving an international scope to the event, driving in a snowball effect the possibility of multiplying and reallocating this action, the format being itself an open-source.

Civic tech and peacetech could be relevant concepts for making art and culture accessible, connecting classrooms, activating perspectives, and taking into practice, giving a positive vision of openness, sharing and building a participatory culture without ignoring the excesses and deficiencies of our digital era to apprehend what Gianluigi Fioriglio calls the "Dictatorship of the Algorithms".

AI is a complicated toolkit that is hard to utilize effectively and objectively in ambiguous situations like peacebuilding. As peacebuilders, we need to give careful thought to all the challenges it brings into our work: resource requirements, ethical data collection, transparency, and trust. Raising awareness about ethics, obstacles, and challenges of the digital era is essential as a 21st-century fluency.

5   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve sustainable peace, we need to comprehend the incentives behind war and direct the collective endeavors towards building mutual understanding and a transnational continuum of actions. If this idea might sound worn out by repetition it is time to move to action and take measures beyond the theoretical scope, by questioning the traditional line of hierarchies when building peace through education, the only war we should be leading is the one against poverty, illiteracy, and social injustice. "Education is the key" as Nelson Mandela said. Education cannot do it all, but it is a safe and reliable place to start.

Encouraging interdisciplinarity and breaking the silos of restrictive approaches through GCED, and education in general as a major peacebuilding pillar, is crucial. Decision-makers need to consider that it is equally relevant to address building peace and promote equity and inclusion, at the risk of widening existing gaps, this latter should be the focus of strategic planning in education so as to harness the values of social justice and human dignity, laying the grounds for GCED, resulting in active and responsible citizenship.

The digital era has not yet revealed its full expectations and is standing on thin edges surrounded by very blurred boundaries. The development of open data and AI should be accompanied by one of the most significant skills of the future, which is trust-building. Blockchain and AI in peacetech should encourage transnational cooperation in this area for the rights and duties of citizens, building the premises of human-centric and peace-oriented, global governance, shaking up the stagnation of traditional credentialing, establishing renewed social contracts, and flexible work cultures. The vivid criticism addressed to international organizations should not over-shadow the massive amount of their work in advancing research and innovation and collective reflection. Political participation on all levels should be everyone's prerogative with structured, anticipatory, and participatory patterns, new open mindsets, and modes of education governance, more receptive to change, adaptative and innovative, targeting long-term sustainable results, leveraging existing resources.

Global citizenship, despite being a collective and large-scale concept is not expected to be a uniform block. The preservation of freedom, plurality, and diversity are the fundamentals of peace preservation, peace reinforcement, and peace sustainability. Michael Steiner, former Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in Kosovo stated rightly in 2002, that "peacebuilding does not require (..) to create clones of western society. But it requires us to work to change bad habits".

From growing anti-trade sentiments, through the impact of climate change, and cyber-threats in a hyper-connected world, most of the security threats of the 21st century will require greater cooperation across borders and collective action from governments, private sectors, non-state actors but above all civil society.

Implementing a strong GCED policy for peacebuilding purposes implies leaning on solid yet open institutions and global governing bodies, with appropriate technical capacity, setting shared goals with differentiated protocols towards building a common good, with international organizations acting as a catalyst for peace efforts, in view of rethinking multilateralism with consensus, rules, and membership. Making this organization effective requires the inclusion of civil society, citizens being the core unit of global citizenship, answering consequently the need for a stronger convergence of individual and collective efforts.

Covid-19 pandemic unhinged numerous existing operative patterns, especially in education, proving a compelling example of the necessity of local actions and thinking global. The fact that millions of young people are seeking other forms of commitment outside the educational circle, to advocate for peace and sustainability, is an encouraging sign of the necessity to bring global questions to schools and should at the same time activate signs regarding the relevance of these issues in education strategic planning for GCED purposes.

The subject of this paper is comprehensive and can take a number of forms and leads. As a Ph.D. candidate, I wish to explore even further the role of GCED in peacebuilding and global governance and come up with tangible material in the field of policymaking. Let us keep in mind that peace is a shared responsibility, and that education is a precious but fragile asset, that can easily be undermined in times of crisis, and thus should never be taken for granted. Maria Montessori said in 1949 in one of her most impactful works, simply titled "Education and Peace", a sentence worth reflecting upon: "Preventing conflicts is the work of politics; establishing peace is the work of education."

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