

## Global Citizenship and Cultural Understanding

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**Abstract:** Global citizenship is an abstract yet powerful notion that describes a way of thinking, acting, relating and responding to socio-cultural elements. It is a notion that is based on understanding the self in relation to others. Global citizenship is regarded as a fundamental part of the scholarly and social experience. This paper also discusses the role of languages to understand the different cultures.

**Key Words:** Global Citizenship, Culture Openness, Role of Languages.

### Introduction:

A global citizen is someone who identifies with being part of an emerging world community and whose actions contribute to building this community's values and practices. This person places their identity of being part of a global community above that of their identity as a citizen of a particular nation or place. For everyone this world is like a home where everybody feels safe and secure as much as they feel at their own house. As Martin Luther King, jr points out: " We have inherited a large house, a great WORLD HOUSE in which we have to live together."

At The Global Citizens' Initiative we say that a "global citizen is someone who identifies with being part of an emerging world community and whose actions contribute to building this community's values and practices."

Global citizenship as a choice and a way of thinking. National citizenship is an accident of birth; global citizenship is different. It is a voluntary association with a concept that signifies "ways of thinking and living within multiple cross-cutting communities—cities, regions, states, nations, and international collectives..." (Schattle 2007, 9). People come to consider themselves as global citizens through different formative life experiences and have different interpretations of what it means to them.

A focus on global citizenship puts the spotlight on why internationalization is central to a quality education and emphasizes that internationalization is a means, not an end. Serious consideration of the goals of internationalization makes student learning the key concern rather than counting inputs.

The concept of global citizenship creates conceptual and practical connections rather than cleavages. The commonalities between what happens at home and "over there" become visible. The characteristics that human beings share are balanced against the differences that are so conspicuous.

No concept or term is trouble-free; no idea goes uncontested by some faculty member or group. For better or for worse, global citizenship will undoubtedly provoke disagreements that reflect larger academic and philosophical debates. There is plenty of skepticism about global citizenship. Some object to any concept that suggests a diminished role for the nation and allegiance to it or the ascendancy of global governance systems. The idea of developing students' moral compasses can raise questions about whose values and morals and how institutions undertake this delicate task. Some students will choose not to accept responsibility for the fate of others far away, or may see inequality as an irremediable fact of life.

### Culture:

Every human being belongs to, and identifies with, many cultures. You encounter culture—sometimes one in which you feel at home, sometimes one that is completely unfamiliar and even confusing or disturbing to you. Your family has a culture, your school has a culture, your workplace has a culture, the community awareness can help you embrace, and most important thing is that we have to respect all the cultures around the world and welcome it in our country as Mahatma Gandhi's points out: "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any."

A culture is a way of life of a group of people--the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next. In Mahatma Gandhi's word: "A nation's culture resides in the heart and in soul of its people."

A lone-ranger type worker in office culture marked by teamwork, for example, might be put off by how often he is dragged into projects, not understanding how the team structure helps this company get things done. A student

visiting a friend, whose family seems to fight all the time might be intimidated by the atmosphere, not having any idea that family's culture, talking that way is a functional form of communication.

Whether you commute, live on campus, or take courses online, college is a time of encountering all kinds of cultures. You are exposed to cultures through the material you study and through the instructors, students, and other people with whom you interact. The key to getting the most education out of every moment in class and out is to be open to learning about, and from, other cultures. You have an amazing opportunity waiting for you an opportunity that cultural awareness can help you embrace.

Always celebrate diversity. In India we have different cultures in different states. South Indian culture is different from the north Indian culture likewise east and west Indian culture. But we have unity in this diversity. So, this is the best example of how to live with the cultural diversity. To conclude, cross cultural studies are very crucial to maintain better relations between nations and to enrich universal culture. Lay in fostering these.

### **Languages are path to know different cultures:**

Since everyone is the product of their own culture, we need to increase both self-awareness and cross-cultural awareness. There is no book of instructions to deal with cultural diversity, no recipe to follow. But certain positive attitudes help to bridge cultures. Admit that you don't know. Knowing that we don't know everything, that a situation does not make sense, that our assumptions may be wrong is part of the process of becoming culturally aware. In order to understand another person, we need to try standing in his/her shoes. Through empathy we learn of how other people would like to be treated by us. Systematically check your assumptions. The more complicated and uncertain life is, the more we tend to seek control. Assume that other people are as resourceful as we are and that their way will add to what we know. "If we always do, what we've always done, we will always get, what we always got."

Multilingual person is someone who can communicate in more than one language, either actively (through speaking, writing, or signing) or passively (through listening, reading, or perceiving). This is the most precious talent now a day to know multi/many languages. If we know many languages it means we know many culture, tradition, and life styles. For example: I am also a multilingual person I know more than two languages so I can understand more than two cultures, traditions and lifestyles which differentiate me from others.

### **Conclusion:**

Global citizenship is not just a buzzword within present-day education circles. It is a worldwide phenomenon that is changing the way people think about the world and their place in it. Another language gives the learner the ability to step inside the mind and context of that other culture. Without the ability to communicate and understand a culture on its own terms, true access to that culture is barred. Why is this important? In a world where nations and peoples are ever more dependent upon on another to supply goods and services, solve political disputes, and ensure international security, understanding other cultures is paramount. Intercultural understanding begins with individuals who have language abilities and who can thereby provide one's own community with an insider's view into foreign cultures, who can understand foreign news sources, and give insights into other perspectives on international situations and current events. For survival in the global community, every nation needs such individuals. A person competent in other languages can bridge the gap between cultures, contribute to international diplomacy, promote national security and world peace, and successfully engage in international trade. Being a student of a university I come to know about various new things of the different cultures everyday by my friends from different places. So, I can conclude that multilingual skills provide ability to a person to easily accommodate various cultures. And the idea of global citizenship can be attained easily by having a sense of common beliefs towards various life styles and practices, which makes us tolerant enough to appreciate various cultures at global level.

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