

Curriculum Reform in Brazilian Secondary Education: Creating Global Citizens

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Abstract

Teaching people how to read, write, and count in a globalized and multicultural society is no longer sufficient. Skills like respecting one another, combating racism, prejudice, and intolerance, and learning to address local and global problems have become critical. UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education (GECD) initiative has faced criticisms for promoting secular values over religious ones and being too individualistic at times. Therefore, this article proposes improvements to GECD, including the introduction of new knowledge areas such as Negotiation, Social Justice, Brazilian and Global Culture, Values and Perceptions, Brazilian and Global Institutions, Conflict Resolution, Respect, and Tolerance. The objective is two-fold: to reform the GECD curriculum by presenting a new course on Global Education and Citizenship adapted to the Brazilian educational context and to reform the Brazilian National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC) for secondary education.

Keywords: Global Citizenship Education; UNESCO's initiative; Brazilian National Common Core Curriculum



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Introduction

More and more people worldwide realize how important Education is to make Human Rights a reality. For instance, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) promotes Global Citizenship Education (GCED), a program focused on Education and constructing a more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, and anti-racist society that combats inequality. Despite the principles outlined in the UNESCO-adopted Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Brazilian Ministry of Education's Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education ([Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education, 1996](#)) does not feature any GECD courses in its secondary education curriculum.

The fact is that GECD, in its current format, has its efficacy compromised because: (a) it is not a long-term course – values take time to be absorbed; (b) it does not encompass local and religious values, focused on secular values; (c) it does not provide the knowledge areas of conflict resolution, negotiation, global and local institutions, values and perceptions, for instance. Therefore, this article presents a proposal for curriculum reform on GCED, adapted to the Brazilian educational scenario, to be adopted further in the Brazilian Secondary Education curriculum, as described in the upcoming sections.

In addition, this work complies with Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ([UN, 2022a](#)) states that “Everyone has the right to Education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary Education shall be compulsory.” (p.1). [Dias \(2022\)](#) addressed the issue of fundamental (or elementary) education. This article gives sequence to the previous work on proposing a curriculum reform in the Brazilian Secondary Education¹ curriculum, the unit of analysis.

Moreover, this work also suggests adding an unprecedented required course titled *Educação Global e Cidadania* (Global Education and Citizenship), suited to the Brazilian educational context and culture, which will be described in the following sections. Thus, this article incorporated UNESCO's Education 2030 Agenda and Framework guidance, mainly Target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4 on Education), which is intended to promote gender equality in education, outlined as follows:

Ensure that all learners are provided with the knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through Education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and culture's contribution to sustainable development. ([UN, 2022b](#))

Still according to [Gioia and Pitre \(1990\)](#), the article's contribution regarding originality is *incremental* because it adds a new course to the existing curriculum without removing any other, and regarding utility is *practically useful* because this research could be the base for new regulations over the secondary education BNCC standards. Brazilian education, nevertheless, abides by the Article 205 from the Federal Constitution 1988:

¹ In Brazil, Secondary Education is named *Ensino Médio* (Middle Education)

Education, a right of all and a duty of the State and the family, will be promoted and encouraged with the collaboration of society, aiming at the full development of the person, their preparation for the exercise of citizenship, and their qualification for work ([Federal Constitution, 1988](#)).

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1. Method

The paradigm of this study is social constructivism and interpretivism ([Creswell, 2014](#)). Theoretical background of this study is qualitative in nature. This study utilized inductive reasoning and interpretative approaches based on different methodologies and tactics, such as direct involvement and archival research, with the unit of analysis being the Brazilian Standard National Curriculum Base under current laws and norms. In the following parts, an alternate curriculum for secondary education is suggested after a thorough examination. The premise is that a worldwide peace culture based on human rights, tolerance, and respect would emerge without the Secondary education curriculum's Global Education and Citizenship course.

2. GECD Principles and Standards

Global Citizenship Education (GCED) is a form of civic and equitable learning that engages students in efforts that solve social, political, economic, or environmental global concerns. The two main components of GCED are "global consciousness," which is the ethical or moral element of international concerns, and "global competences," which are skills aimed to enable students to participate in creating and improving the world. These factors have resulted in the evolution of a more global and inclusive approach to education. ([UN, 2022](#))

Global Citizenship Education (GCED) follows the Plan of Action for the third phase (2015–2019) of the World Program for Human Rights Education ([UN, 2014](#)) that also promotes the standards and general principles for human rights education, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, encompassing three dimensions: (a) Knowledge and skills; (b) Values, attitudes and behavior; (c) Action — taking action to defend and promote human rights. ([UN, 2014](#), Item 5, p.3)

3. GECD: New Imperialism?

Global Citizenship Education (GCED) faces waves of criticism ([Sigal, 2009](#); [Davies, 2014](#); [Eurydice, 2012](#); [Helen, 2013](#); [Schattle, 2008](#); [Abdi & Schultz, 2008](#)), summarized as follows: (a) the model of Global Citizenship is actually a model of European Citizenship, therefore, "key intersections between the local and global now demand a radical rethink of how we understand citizenship education." ([Davies, 2014](#), p.1); (b) citizenship education does not address sensitive issues such as conflict management ([Schattle, 2008](#); [Dias. et al.,2022](#)); (c) GECD faces the dangers of exacerbated

nationalism (Davies, 2014); (d) secular values substituting religious values (Schattle, 2008; Davies, 2014; Eurydice, 2012); (e) the lack of tools for conflict resolution, such as Negotiation (Dias. et al., 2022); (f) GCED would represent a “new imperialism” (Abdi & Schultz, 2008; Andreotti, 2006); (g) GCED promotes individualism (Davies, 2014; Andreotti, 2006).

Table 1. GCED’s main knowledge areas, competences, domains and attributes.

Knowledge Areas	Competences	Domains	Attributes
(i) human rights education (ii) sustainable development, (iii) peace education (iv) education for international and intercultural understanding	(a) understanding of multiple levels of identity, transcending religious, ethnic or other differences; (b) deep knowledge of global issues and universal values such as justice, equality, dignity and respect; (c) Cognitive skills to think critically, systemically and creatively; (d) Non-cognitive skills, including social skills such as empathy and conflict resolution, and communication skills and aptitudes for networking and interacting with people; finally, (e) Behavioral skills to find global solutions to global challenges.	(i) behavioral (ii) cognitive (iii) socio-emotional	(i) Informed and critically literate; (ii) Socially connected and respectful of diversity (iii) Ethically responsible and engaged.

After careful content analysis of the existing literature, evidence suggests that GECD criticisms do not invalidate the course but rather encourage vigilance over its content's applicability to local conditions and the incorporation of new knowledge areas, which is precisely this study's objective. Therefore, this article proposes including additional knowledge areas to improve GECD. As a result, the new course is named *Educação Global e Cidadania*, introduced in the following section. (Dias. et al., 2022)

4. Educação Global E Cidadania

According to Dias (2022), *Educação Global e Cidadania* accepts all of the GECD's complaints as genuine. However, the new course considers answers to all of GECD's objections, such as the inclusion of eight new knowledge areas, such as (v) Negotiation; (vi) Social Justice; (vii) Brazilian Culture, Values and Perceptions; (viii) Global Culture, Values and Perceptions; (ix) Brazilian Institutions; (x) Global Institutions; (xi) Conflict Resolution, (xii) Respect and Tolerance, summarized in Table 2:

Rationale for the inclusion of eight Knowledge Areas

Table 2 shows the four original GECD knowledge areas (i) to (iv), plus eight new knowledge areas (v) to (xii). *Negotiation* knowledge area (v) is related to all skills, domains, and attributes, as it is also a diplomatic art for resolving disputes. Therefore, negotiation should be included as a knowledge domain in Global Education and Citizenship. Furthermore, negotiation is a missing tool for GECD because it provides the necessary skills to overcome conflicts and has been widely studied over the past decades (Kissinger, 1969; Raiffa, Richardson & Metcalfe, 2002; Rubin & Brown, 1975; Pruitt, 1981; Acuff, 1993; Fisher, Ury & Patton, 1981; Salacuse, 2003, 2006; Lax & Sebenius, 1986; Shell, 2006; Dias, 2016; Schatzki & Coffey, 1981; Bazerman & Moore, 1994; Neale & Northcraft, 1991; Thompson, 2001; Moore and Woodrow, 2010; Cohen, 2007; Patton, 2012).

Multiple approaches, such as role-play simulations, are typically used to teach Negotiation (Dias, M. O. & Teles, 2018; Dias, M. Navarro, and Valle, 2013, Dias, M. et al., 2014; Dias, M. et al., 2013; Dias, M. et al., 2015; Dias, M. Paradela, Dias, M.; Assis; Oliveira, J.; Fonseca, R., 2019; Dias, M., Teles, and Duzert, 2018; Dias, M. & Duzert, 2018; Dias, M. O. & Navarro, 2017; Dias, M. & Davila, 2018; Dias & Duzert, 2017; Aylmer & Dias, M. 2018; Dias, M. 2018; Dias & Navarro, 2018; Dias, M. and Falconi, 2018; Dias, M. 2018; Dias, M. & Navarro, 2018 Dias, M. 2019, 2019a; Dias, M. and Lopes, 2019, 2019b). According to Novak (2000), (vi) *Social Justice* is defined as a social habit of justice which is the foundation for social order (p.11). Consequently, it should also be included as a knowledge area in Global Education and Citizenship. Social Justice is connected to (vii) to (xii). (vii) Brazilian Culture, Values, and Perceptions, and (viii) Global Culture, Values, and Perceptions are justified by the requirement of gaining knowledge of local and international cultures, values, perceptions, and heritages, not merely as historical facts, commemorative dates disconnected from the reality, with an emphasis on Brazilian culture. (ix) Brazilian Institutions and (x) Global Institutions allude to the learning objective of grasping the operation of Brazilian and Global institutions, such as the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Powers for instance. (xi) *Conflict Resolution* should be included in Global Education and Citizenship as a knowledge topic since differences exist and conflict is a regular occurrence. Bullying, for instance. Therefore, children should attempt from early life how to handle disagreements and understand what alternative dispute resolution processes, such as mediation, arbitration, and conciliation, amongst others. (xii) *Respect and Tolerance* should be included as a knowledge topic in Global Education and Citizenship since they are the most essential values for the development of a global citizen. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2022), Respect is “a good sentiment or action expressed towards someone or something deemed valuable or held in high respect or regard. It gives a feeling of respect for desirable or important qualities.” Tolerance means tolerating whatever one disagrees with, such as an action, a concept, an item, or a person. (Murphy, 1997). Both are universal values that should be acquired independently but also incorporated with all the other knowledge domains once they overlap and are interrelated. (Dias. et al., 2022).

Table 2. Inclusion of eight new knowledge areas

Knowledge Areas	Competences	Domains	Attributes
(i) human rights education (ii) sustainable development, (iii) peace education (iv) education for international and intercultural understanding (v) Negotiation (vi) Social Justice (vii) Brazilian Culture, Values and Perceptions (viii) Global Culture, Values and Perceptions (ix) Brazilian Institutions (x) Global Institutions (xi) Conflict Resolution (xii) Respect and Tolerance	(a) understanding of multiple levels of identity, transcending religious, ethnic or other differences; (b) deep knowledge of global issues and universal values such as justice, equality, dignity and respect; (c) Cognitive skills to think critically, systemically and creatively; (d) Non-cognitive skills, including social skills such as empathy and conflict resolution, and communication skills and aptitudes for networking and interacting with people; finally, (e) Behavioral skills to find global solutions to global challenges.	(i) behavioral (ii) cognitive (iii) socio-emotional	(i) Informed and critically literate (ii) Socially connected and respectful of diversity (iii) Ethically responsible and engaged.

Educação Global e Cidadania: Integration

How could *Educação Global e Cidadania* be inserted into the context of Brazilian secondary education? Two ways: first, as a *mandatory course* (general basic formation), within the 600-hour workload; second, as an *elective course* (formative itineraries), within the 400-hour workload.

Due to the flexibility proposed by Law 13.415 from 16 February 2017 ([Law 13415, 2017](#)), who altered Article 24 from LDB ([Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education, 1996](#)), allowing a redistribution of classes workload within the secondary education, as aforementioned, the choice for the insertion of *Educação Global e Cidadania* was as an elective course (formative itineraries), with some advantages: (i) the course has no workload restrictions, and therefore, should be adapted regional scenarios, while the mandatory courses are restricted to BNCC; (ii) there is no need for subtracting workload from mandatory courses to accommodate *Educação Global e Cidadania*.

Therefore, *Educação Global e Cidadania* should be situated within the 400-hour workload as a formative itinerary (elective course), with the course workload from 80 h (minimum) and 160 h (acceptable) per year (corresponding approximately to 20 to 40 percent of the formative itinerary workload). Once BNCC works in collaboration with national bodies in the area ([Dias. et al., 2022](#)). States' Education Secretaries from 27

states, Municipal Education Secretaries from 5,570 municipalities, there is enough room for adaptation to local scenarios and for course improvements.

5. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore Brazilian Secondary Education. It has recommended a groundbreaking modification to the Standard National Curriculum Base (BNCC) by including *Educação Global e Cidadania*. This course is designed to fulfill the ever-increasing need to modernize Brazilian Education, given the ever-increasing need for higher-quality education policy development under Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 2022).

Some criticisms and ramifications about the GCED are outlined as follows: GCED advocates individualistic principles, secular values, and a single culture that disregards local customs, values, and culture. The criticism, however, is addressed at GCED as a specific course. Several proposals are necessary for resolving the provided objections against GCED. First, the antithesis of the GCED principles, ethnocentrism, promotes individualistic ideals. Consequently, individualistic conduct should be countered by emphasizing collectivist principles and avoiding ethnic nationalism, synthesized in the new *Educação Global e Cidadania* proposal (see Table 5).

Concerning problem (a) secular vs. religious principles, the GCED should be replaced with courses such as religious education and honoring local culture. Regarding complaint (b) regarding creating a common culture that disregards local customs, values, and culture, the GCED program must include local culture. Otherwise, the course will be another "foreign" course. Therefore, Global Education and Citizenship, the Brazilian version of GCED, included eight more knowledge domains: negotiation, conflict resolution, respect, and tolerance. Without the inclusion of Brazilian values, culture, views, and institutions, the GCED course is not inclusive. The GCED program should thus address the fundamental premise of cultural inclusivity. Otherwise, it may be called "new imperialism."

The study has implications for a number of fields of study, including (a) Brazilian education (Arajo, C.; Dias, M., 2022; Dias, M., 2019d; Dias, 2019c); (b) Brazilian culture and negotiations (Dias et al., 2022; Dias, 2019; Dias, M., 2016); and (c) virtual education (Dias, M., Teles, A., 2022; Dias, (d) cooperative societies in Brazil (Dias, M., 2018); (e) retail business (Dias, M., Falconi, D., 2018); (f) generational conflicts (Dias, M., and Aylmer, R., 2018); (g) Government negotiations and privatization (Teles, A., Dias, 2022); (h) cooperation in Game Theory (Dias, M., Pereira, L., & Vieira, P., Pan, J., 2022), among others.

This study examined the Brazilian Secondary Education, including the *Educação Global e Cidadania* course, according to (BNCC, 2022), which is advocated by future study (Ensino Superior). Additionally, future scholars are invited to study the following hypothesis: the higher the grades in *Educação Global e Cidadania*, the lower the violence rates. Furthermore, future research should additionally study the Global Education and Citizenship course as an independent, moderator, or mediator variable. Finally, future studies are encouraged to provide a detailed course schedule, teaching materials and notes on *Educação Global e Cidadania*.

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