

The Global Citizenship Education in the training of teachers and students

L'educazione alla cittadinanza globale nella formazione degli insegnanti e degli studenti

Philipp Botes^a

^aUniversità degli Studi Roma Tre, philipp.botes@uniroma3.it

Abstract

As contemporary society becomes more complex, we need increasingly pragmatic approaches to individual development with regard to global citizenship education. Such approaches should be suitably applied in both school and non-school contexts and involving children, adolescents, and adults. This paper presents an Italian inter-institutional project that has led to the creation of a variety of training activities for teachers and students to systematize global citizenship education in schools and develop learning-teaching processes.

Keywords: Global Citizenship Education; teacher training; adult education.

Sintesi

Con il crescere della complessità della società contemporanea diviene necessario adottare approcci sempre più pragmatici orientati allo sviluppo individuale, in relazione all'educazione alla cittadinanza globale, che dovrebbero essere applicati in maniera adeguata sia nei contesti scolastici che extra-scolastici, coinvolgendo bambini, adolescenti e adulti. Questo articolo presenta un progetto inter-istituzionale italiano che ha portato alla creazione di una varietà di attività di formazione per insegnanti e studenti, al fine di sistematizzare l'educazione alla cittadinanza globale nelle istituzioni scolastiche e sviluppare processi di insegnamento-apprendimento.

Parole chiave: educazione alla cittadinanza globale; formazione docenti; istruzione degli adulti.

1. Introduction

The current historical period is characterized by an increasing number of emergencies worldwide. Wars, pandemics, natural disasters, climate change, and disruptive technological development, alongside emotional disturbance, uncertainty about the future, and job loss are just some of the challenges that people face every day. In this scenario, pedagogical debate has offered possible interpretive keys to both understanding the present and planning significant intervention in the multiple contexts of education, training, and life, applying a transformative approach to emergencies in which difficulties are seen as a resource for the re-imagining and re-building of one's existential project (Cagol, Di Genova, Ladogana & Nanni, 2023; Federighi, 2018).

As evidenced by the latest Unesco Education Report (2021), social inequalities and educational poverty are rising globally, a trend accompanied by a regression in levels of democracy. Data published by the Unesco Institute of Statistics on global education in 2023 comparing over two hundred countries worldwide shows that one in seven young adults (over the age of 15) is illiterate, and of these, 63% are women (UIS, 2023). It is therefore necessary to establish a renewed social contract for education given its fundamental importance in the collective rethinking of the future of all citizens. Education must be seen as a common good, a public commitment, the genuine right of everyone throughout their lives (Torlone, 2021; Unesco, 2021).

Seen in this light, lifelong learning paves the way to democratic and social participation, affirming the right to information, culture, and science and shaping futures of peace, justice, and sustainability (Unesco, 2021). Inhabiting a knowledge society, from a pedagogical standpoint, means understanding social transformations, identifying new educational needs, reconsidering and intercepting new social actors claiming the right to education, revising the tasks of educational agencies, and rethinking the timing and spaces of educational actions. These actions find their place in continuing and lifelong education, through which anyone can continue to learn and transform in relation to knowledge, social styles, and the context in which they live (Dozza & Ulivieri, 2016).

In this sense, the idea is to develop key, cross-cutting skills (Andrade, 2020) that guide individuals in the constantly evolving world of work, which requires increasingly advanced and up-to-date skills, whether general, digital, or technical, skills that stand at the core of lifelong learning, as recognized by Italian law no. 92/2012. Today more than ever, we face challenges affecting the world of work and its stakeholders, with difficulties in recruiting workers, especially those with the right qualifications and skills for the job (Inapp, 2023).

Although international organizations have devoted considerable attention to skills and lifelong learning throughout the life of every individual¹, Italy continues to lag behind international standards, with fewer adults participating in learning opportunities and fewer companies investing in the training of their workers in comparison with the European countries (Alessandrini, 2019; Inapp, 2023). Adult education is therefore confined to programs intended to strengthen the country's human capital and respond to the variables inherent in contemporary scenarios, increasingly linked to *adulthood* (Marescotti, 2022),

¹ For a non-exhaustive list, reference may be made to some of the recommendations promulgated at the international level, such as the *Resolution of the European Council 2011/c 372/01*, the *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* of 2006 and 2018, and *Agenda 2030*.

and to the need for reskilling and upskilling considering the dramatic technological advancements underway (Occhiocupo & Pedone, 2023).

2. Formal Contexts of Adult Education

The diverse possibilities and learning contexts (formal, non-formal, informal) of adult education in Italy include a specific segment with enormous potential (Botes, 2021; Gabrielli, Benvenuto, Sposetti & Szpunar, 2022): Provincial Centers for Adult Education (in Italian, CPIA). CPIAs are autonomous educational institutions with their own staff and specific educational and organizational structure, offering literacy programs and Italian language learning (e.g. for students with migratory backgrounds), first-level courses (for fulfilling lower secondary school and compulsory education requirements), second-level courses (for fulfilling upper secondary school and educational obligations), and enhancement pathways for the acquisition of skills (language, computer, vocational, etc.).

CPIAs welcome students from the age of 15, addressing a large variety of needs, such as the education of migrants and inmates and the retraining of workers, and social issues, like young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and school dropouts (Tacconi & Morbioli, 2019). These formal educational settings can therefore prove useful for the entire community, fostering inclusion, social cohesion, and territorial development, and linking public interests with the private interests of stakeholders in the world of work. From this perspective, CPIAs are not only called upon to deliver educational pathways but also to assess previous experience and certify the skills that people have acquired on their own in other contexts, implementing personalized learning pathways to facilitate adults' return to education and to increase students' active citizenship and employability (Porcaro, Sibilio & Buonanno, 2020).

While the number of schools in Italy is progressively falling as a result of demographic decline, the 130CPIAs, which are primarily aimed at the adult population, are steadily growing. Despite this, they do not seem to be central to political debate (Rubinacci & Porcaro, 2023), although adult schools could potentially offset the reduction in traditional schools. Similarly, as highlighted in the relevant literature (Benedetti, 2020; Borri & Calzone, 2019; Botes, 2021; Poliandri & Epifani, 2023; Tacconi & Morbioli, 2019), numerous critical issues have arisen concerning CPIAs as formal educational contexts. Firstly, they are either misunderstood or completely unknown to professionals (teaching staff, administrative, technical, and auxiliary personnel), local administrations, actors operating in networks for lifelong learning at the local level, and potential students. Secondly, 87% of CPIAs do not have their own premises but are hosted in other schools or places provided by local authorities, parishes, or associations (Poliandri & Epifani, 2023).

In light of the framework outlined herein, CPIAs can potentially play an important role in strengthening the adult education system and continuous training, with the aim of increasing the proportion of people participating in lifelong learning initiatives with positive impacts on the national economy and, consequently, the common good of society, as concluded by Inapp (2023).

3. Civic Education and Global Citizenship Education

With Italian law no. 92 of August 20, 2019, lawmakers introduced cross-curricular civic education due to its plurality of learning and skill development objectives, which do not fall under one single subject and are instead inter-disciplinary. The law requires at least 33 hours of mandatory civic education for all school grades per year, to be delivered within the hourly allocation under current regulations. A series of guiding principles are listed at the core of this teaching:

Civic education contributes to shaping responsible and active citizens, promoting full and conscious participation in the civic, cultural, and social life of communities, in accordance with rules, rights, and duties [...]

It develops knowledge of the Italian Constitution and the institutions of the European Union to substantiate, in particular, the sharing and promotion of the principles of legality, active and digital citizenship, environmental sustainability, the right to health and well-being of the individual (art. 1, Italian law 92/2019).

Every educational institution, from primary to adult education, has outlined, in accordance with the guidelines (Italian Ministry of Education, 2020; Italian Ministry of Education and Merit, 2023) and the current national curriculum instructions, its own interdisciplinary civic education curriculum with specific assessment criteria. Indeed, students are assessed across multiple subjects according to specific indicators that measure both the learning of content and the development of skills.

The foundational themes of the civic education curriculum are the Constitution (Italian and international law, legality, solidarity), sustainable development (environmental education, knowledge and protection of heritage and territory) and digital citizenship. The breadth of topics is aimed at drawing out latent areas in current educational systems and bringing to light their interconnectedness, while respecting and aligning with students' growth processes. This growth must necessarily materialize within a school open to discussion, dialogue, reflection, and critical thinking through education for global citizenship (Capobianco, 2021).

In these terms, civic education is positioned within the key actions and recommendations promoted in both the European community and internationally, which have significantly influenced the curricula of various European educational systems (Damiani, 2021). Particularly relevant in this regard is Global Citizenship Education (GCE), promoted by Unesco since 2012 as an educational priority and framed within the objectives of Agenda 2030, to promote peace, human rights, well-being, and sustainability, starting with the education of citizens to equip them with critical thinking skills, an ethical commitment and strong social ties.

The construct of citizenship has evolved over time with the evolution of societies, but it is still interpreted and enacted differently in various countries, influenced by the development of rights – civil, social, political – and by the historical-political differences present in specific contexts. For this reason, the scientific literature on GCE as a concept contains a plurality of terms, interpretations, and approaches (Caccioppola, 2022; Goren & Yemini, 2017). Nevertheless, for our purposes here, we will apply Unesco's definition of global citizenship education (2014):

Global citizenship education highlights essential functions of education related to the formation of citizenship [in relation] with globalization [...]

It is directly related to the civic, social and political socialization function of education, and ultimately to the contribution of education in preparing children and

young people to deal with the challenges of today's increasingly interconnected and interdependent world [...].

It is also a way of understanding, acting and relating oneself to others and the environment in space and in time, based on universal values, through respect for diversity and pluralism. In this context, each individual's life has implications in day-to-day decisions that connect the global with the local, and vice versa (pp. 14-15).

The pedagogical relevance that emerges from Unesco definition of global citizenship education lays the foundations for its organic application within the school *curricula*.

4. Educational Paths for Global Citizenship

These theoretical premises laid the groundwork for one experimental project in particular that has steered local global citizenship education practices, characterized by inter-institutional collaboration, within continuous learning processes, bridging formal and informal approaches and curricular and extra-curricular pathways. Specifically, the collaboration involved the Tuscany Region, the Regional School Office, and the Tuscan Network of CPIAs working together to define, implement, and enhance a system of skills acquired through global citizenship education, as outlined in the white paper on GCE in Tuscany, referred to in Regional Council resolution 1230/2020. The experimental project, resulting from a memorandum of understanding approved by Regional Council resolution 832/2021, led to the development of a series of training activities to systematize global citizenship education in schools (upper secondary and CPIAs) and foster learning-teaching processes.

The synergistic collaboration between the various institutions has promoted and created a genuine community of practice, made up of managers, head teachers, teachers, and experts from various fields, driven by mutual contributions and commitments, with interactions between global and local, taking supranational paradigms and implementing them locally (Wenger, 2011). In the initial phase, multiple meetings were held to establish roles (coordination, technical-scientific committee, working groups), divide the work, and identify the theoretical framework of the complex project actions.

During the second phase, eight teachers working at four different CPIAs in Tuscany engaged in online training and self-training activities, which led to the creation of two GCE training paths: one Italian as a second language (L2) path for students with a migratory background and another first-level path (lower secondary education). Both pathways, integrated into the civic education curriculum, were divided into learning units, consisting of knowledge, skills, and competencies, to be completed within 33 hours.

Teacher training was fundamental, not only because of the educational materials created to be experimented with in schools, but also because it constructively addressed the lack of courses to train and update adult education teachers (Borri & Calzone, 2019; Dettori & Botes, 2023; Di Rienzo, 2021). Similarly, the training made it possible to promote and enhance teachers' skills in global citizenship according to the objectives of Agenda 2030 (Capobianco & Cerrato, 2022), bringing together professionals working in educational establishments throughout the region and facilitating the exchange of practices.

The third phase involved the creation of a certification test for a global citizenship license recognized by the Tuscany Region, in implementation of Regional Council resolutions 832/2021 and 251/2023. The test consists of 30 multiple-choice questions, which applicants

take online on a platform provided by the region. The test encourages students to use their knowledge, skills, and competencies to provide the answers to theoretical and practical questions presented in real-life contexts. The questions refer to real or simulated situations and use images, maps, and tables. Students who pass the test receive a global citizenship license certifying the skills they have learned during the training course. These skills are recognized by institutions in the region, making the license an official document that students may use to tailor subsequent learning pathways in the future (Decree of the President of the Italian Republic no. 263/2012; Porcaro, Sibilio & Buonanno, 2020).

5. Conclusions

Adult education in Italy is a field in need of more attention, particularly from lawmakers, and from all stakeholders, through shared and networked approaches to concretize lifelong learning paradigms, achieve the objectives of European recommendations, and improve the nation's overall well-being. The first step in this direction would be recognizing and developing educational establishments that already exist, such as Provincial Centers for Adult Education, formal contexts with a privileged position that cater to a diverse public and are capable of responding to multiple needs as they address educational poverty, social inequalities, skill mismatches, and thus, worker reskilling through training paths oriented towards the acquisition of skills (Inapp, 2023).

It is necessary to promote a carefully designed education of citizens through the development of skills that will enable them to tackle challenges and changes in a new and resilient way. As contemporary society grows more complex, an innovative approach to citizenship education is needed (Unesco, 2021). Broadly, it can be understood as education for global citizenship, where each person is an active participant in the management of the common good (Capobianco & Cerrato, 2022). The introduction of civic education in Italian education system at all levels, including adult education, should be interpreted in this sense and placed within the broader perspective of education for global citizenship.

The experimental project presented in this paper is an example in this context, with an emphasis on territorial alliances – vital for those operating in lifelong learning contexts – among different institutions (regional authorities and adult education centre networks) and stakeholders (managers, head teachers, teachers, and experts). The global citizenship project has enabled the sharing ideas, experiences, and teaching practices within communities of practice, in research-training contexts that have effectively connected individuals with limited opportunities for interaction and exchange. Specifically, the training of teachers in the Provincial Centers for Adult Education in four provinces of Tuscany proved to be particularly effective, due to the combination of face-to-face and distance learning sessions (Bonaiuti & Dipace, 2021), despite a prevalence of the latter, overcoming spatial and temporal constraints and meeting the need for in-service training opportunities for adult education teachers (Malagnini & Deiana, 2023).

The implementation of global citizenship education curricula in the Tuscan CPIAs has given students the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills in collaborative, exploratory, and real educational contexts. Being a competent citizen, indeed, regardless of who you are – a child or an adult, Italian or foreigner – demands knowledge of laws, rules, and behaviors, to be applied in everyday life and in different areas of life. In addition, the possibility of an institutional body certifying citizenship competencies, as in the case

of the GCE license, allows for positive impacts on the educational, professional, and, more generally, life path of every individual.

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