Final Year Students' Perceptions of Global Citizenship and Responsible Behaviour: Implications for the Curriculum

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Abstract

Graduates should become culturally sensitive and gain an awareness of global issues to create a better world. This research article seeks to understand the perceptions of final year students towards global and responsible behaviour. It is imperative for final year students to understand the effects of globalization since globalisation affects citizens worldwide. Higher education institutions and workplaces are gradually becoming multiculturally diverse; therefore, identifying ways to implement global citizenship effectively into the curriculum is vital. Quantitative research was used to collect data from 250 final year students. The analysis of results revealed that graduates are not fully aware of the importance of global citizenship and responsible behaviour. Combining the perceptions of the students and what emerged from literature, the recommendation is that higher education institutions should strive to produce graduates with good global and moral behaviour so that they will be able to function well in every sphere of life they find themselves in. If these principles are taught intentionally, they are capable of changing students' worldviews and promoting global cohesion.

Keywords: Global Citizenship, Perceptions, Responsible Behaviour, Curriculum

Introduction

There is no education or work environment which is prone to globalisation because the world is now interconnected. More importantly globalisation seems to be the panacea for several economic challenges faced by people worldwide (Abdelal & Tedlow 2003; Papanikos, 2024). This interconnectedness necessitates voluntary collaboration among nation-states to achieve socio-economic outcomes (Fischer, 2003; Papanikos, 2024). Higher education institutions are gradually becoming multiculturally diverse because of this global interconnectedness. As a result, global citizenship has the attention of many stakeholders across the globe (Andrews & Aydin, 2020). Therefore, identifying ways to implement global citizenship effectively into the curriculum is vital (Andrews & Aydin, 2020). This research paper delves into the final year students' perceptions of global citizenship and responsible behaviour at a university of technology in South Africa. Graduates should become culturally sensitive and gain an awareness of global issues to create a better world. Research on globalisation and issues on internalisation are research areas which can play a significant role in places where xenophobia is a challenge as well as culture shaming.

Global citizenship is an illustration of someone that plays an active role in a diverse environment and enables the easy collaboration of citizens to ensure sustainability (Bates, 2012). Education, both formal and otherwise, is thus an enabler for these dynamics in the learning environment or workplace environment (Hromcová & Agnese, 2019). Understanding the perceptions of final year students in the globalised world is a crucial matter especially these days where globalization is not unavoidable both in the learning space and workplace. Higher education curricula should prepare graduates to be global players in their chosen careers because education is a catalyst for these crescendos. In support Wingenbach, Graham, & Gomez (2023) argue that the curriculum should equip graduates with global competencies approach, which include self-awareness in intercultural encounters, communications, and general knowledge about world issues. This research article seeks to understand the perceptions of final year students towards global citizenship and responsible behaviour. Graduates should display responsible behaviour in this world where diversity should be embraced with respect and harmony in the learning environment and workplaces. Higher education curricula should strive to produce graduates with good global and moral behaviour. If these principles are taught intentionally, they are capable of changing students' worldviews and enhance global cohesion.

Furthermore, making students aware of global issues such as social justice, diversity, and equality can make young people embrace cultural diversity easily. This notion was also pointed out in the research conducted by Myers (2006) years ago when he argued that integrating the concept of global citizenship into the curriculum would assist students to develop democratic citizenship that is responsive to cultural diversity. Students should be multicultural conscious at the same time maintain their cultural heritage, and contribute productively to the world (Yusoff, 2019). To be a responsible global citizen one needs to be aware of global human rights and social justice, these are fundamental to global citizenship.

Literature Review

The world is becoming more and more technologically advanced, and students are becoming active partakers in a worldwide web on social media (Mutekwe, 2015). This then necessitates a serious need for students to deepen their knowledge of global citizenship awareness. The South African higher education environment as well as higher education globally has been

invaded by students and academics from all the walks of life, so the knowledge of global citizenship should be central to academic conversations. Students should understand global citizenship and appreciate and respect people from all over the globe. To develop these global citizenship attributes demands a curriculum which addresses global citizenship aspects to be taught in higher education institutions. Education programs must focus on and address the practical aspects, the ideals, and the problems of global citizenship education to prepare university graduates to meet the needs of workplace diversity. Fostering global citizenship mentality in the higher education environment is vital to today's graduates because we live in a diverse and global world (Andrews & Aydin, 2020).

Culture awareness can be explained as enthusiastically learning about, interacting with, or immersing in different cultures to gain knowledge and respect for individuals of different cultures around the world. Recent years South Africa has witnessed a worrisome surge in conflicts and discord between immigrant and non-immigrant groups, manifesting in instances of xenophobia, racism, anti-immigrant sentiments, hate crimes, segregation, and nationalist ideologies. Students therefore need relevant educational experience to navigate an increasingly diverse and multicultural world (Andrews & Aydin, 2020). All students should acquire the knowledge, competencies, and attitudes requisite for valuing cultural diversity and championing human rights transcending national boundaries. The following sections discuss the two constructs central to this study that is global and moral citizen (GMC) and ethical and responsible behaviour (ERB).

Global and Moral Citizenship (GMC)

Global citizenship education has been professed as a means by which graduates can obtain a greater understanding of citizenship, politics, democracy, and globalisation development, and thus be able to detect how the political, economic, cultural, social, and environmental constructs influence the universe (Bruce et al., 2019; Lafer, 2014; O'Meara et al., 2018). Self-awareness in intercultural encounters, communications, and general knowledge about world issues should also be part of global citizenship education (Wingenbach, et al 2023). International issues need to be taught in postsecondary education to prepare students for the global market (Zuniga et al., 2015). Francis et al. (2019) pointed out that university students cannot understand diverse economies or foreign production practices without studying issues affecting global food systems for instance.

Global and moral citizenship epitomises how the graduates feel and think about the world around them. Graduates with global and moral citizens attributes should seek to play their roles in a moral and ethical manner, in whichever society they find themselves (Barrie, 2004, 2012; Janmaimool & Khajohnmanee, 2020) and should be concerned with moral development responsibilities towards society. Steur et al. (2016) explained that moral citizenship is about "both students' ethical and moral development and their development towards global citizenship". A world of citizens with global characteristics will ensure the sustainable development of nations and promote universal equality, peace, and human rights (Wei, 2022). Peterson (2020) and Wei (2022) go a step further saying such citizens will create an environment where the co-existence of diversity can help develop solutions for global challenges. Appreciating cultural differences and collaboration are core skills for global citizens to live together in a harmonized world (Akkari & Maleq, 2020; Appiah, 2008; Jooste & Heleta, 2017; Peterson, 2020; UNESCO, 2020).

Ethical and Responsible Behaviour (ERB)

According to Coetzee (2012); Shiri, & Jafari-Sadeghi, (2023), global citizenship suggests that one does not shy away from his or her actions and the results of their choices and behaviour, while safeguarding the integrity and beliefs of one's profession, community and/or workplace. Coetzee (2012) further explains that exhibiting ethical and responsible behaviour shows that one is ready to lead others with encouragement and empowering them to behave morally towards society and community, and that one is fully accountable for the consequences of one's choices and actions.

Methodology

The article relied mainly on a quantitative research approach. The questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument. Participants were final year students from a university of technology in South Africa. About 250 questionnaires were sent to final year students. Quantitative data analysis was complemented by a thorough literature review search. The constructions that the researchers identified fall into the framework of global citizenship of (Coetzee, 2014) who contributed immensely to some of these issues. The questionnaire was given to experts at the institution to ensure that the questions were clear and not ambiguous. Data was collected from the questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions on global citizenship education ethical and responsible behaviour.

Data Analysis

Below are the questionnaire items which students responded to:
- ERB 1: I accept accountability for the results of my decisions and actions.
- ERB 2: I uphold the ethics and values of my profession, community, or workplace in all I do.
- ERB 3: I encourage responsible behaviour towards the community and the environment.
- ERB 4: I find it easy to provide direction to others and motivate and empower them.

Table 1: Global and Moral Citizenship: Ethical and Responsible Behaviour

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
ERB 1	135	4.40	0.866
ERB 2	136	4.31	0.882
ERB 3	138	4.30	0.915
ERB 4	136	4.18	1.017
Summary	138	4.30	0.9202

The study underlines the importance of Global and moral citizenship ethical and responsible behaviour in preparing final year students for employment, beyond the traditional focus on hard skills and other academic credentials. This agrees with Holmes (2013) who asserts that a student will become a graduate not simply by formally achieving a degree award but by acting 'in ways that lead others to ascribe to them the identity of being a person worthy of being employed. It is important for final year students to understand the critical importance of global and moral citizenship, ethical and responsible behaviour.

Results and Discussions

Out of 250 questionnaires sent to the final year students only 138 were completed. It was found out that participants agreed with statements regarding ERB 1 (4.40; 0.866), ERB 2 (4.31,0.882), ERB 3 (4.30,0.915), and ERB 4 (4.18,1.017). Most of the students agree and strongly agree that they accept responsibility for the results of their decisions and actions and uphold the ethics and values of their community as well as the workplace.

Global and moral citizenship and responsible behavior should be on the agenda of education, especially curriculum designers bearing in mind the integration of the global communities. Students must be taught to be global players and responsible citizens. The paradigms that push responsible citizens should be given center stage in the education space. Curriculum should play a fundamental role in promoting Global and moral citizenship and responsible behaviour. Globalised system characterised by high levels of interconnectedness and challenging global problems needs a curriculum which equips students with the knowledge of global and moral citizenship and responsible behaviour (Franch, 2020). Hence Pashby, (2011) argued that schooling is one of the spaces where the concept of global citizenship is most utterly used, mainly in the narrative that theorises the need for a new citizenship education with a global orientation through an emphasis on global citizenship, has the power to shape a sustainable future and a better world (United Nations, 2012). This is also emphasized in sustainable development goal 17 (SDG17). SDG 17 incorporates the need to build a better world, support, empathy inventive, and cooperation which can be achieved through the teaching of global citizenship education (GCE). Higher education institutions should take GCE as a pedagogical framework for schooling in the 21st century. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been considered as the transformative pathways that will lead to a more equitable global society and sustainable planet (Agusdinata, 2022).

Conclusion

It can be concluded that most of the students agree and strongly agree that they accept responsibility for the results of their decisions and actions and uphold the ethics and values of their community as well as workplace values. However, they seem not to be aware of "ubuntu" (I am because we are). Students should be taught how to be responsible citizens so that they accept each other with respect and dignity. This agrees with Holmes (2013) who asserts that a student will become a graduate not simply by formally achieving a degree award but by acting 'in ways that lead others to ascribe to them the identity of being a person worthy of being employed.

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