

Why Is Global Citizenship Important in the Twenty-First Century?

In addition to the long roots underlying the desire to help students develop cosmopolitanism discussed earlier, there are new and emerging motivations. This section expands upon the familiar reasons for global education introduced in the preceding section, the promotion of peace and sustainability, the sustenance of global compacts, and the generation of opportunities for individuals and nations, which range from the opportunity to access humankind's cultural heritage to the opportunity to prepare to obtain jobs in a highly globalized economy. A subsequent section will examine new rationales.

GLOBAL CITIZENS MITIGATE GLOBAL RISK

In the aftermath of World War II, after more than fifty million lives had been lost, after the first and only instances of nuclear warfare, and after the victors, rather than forging even closer bonds, began carving up the world on either side of the Iron Curtain, a group of individuals—representatives from over fifty countries—came together to imagine a series of institutions that would help ensure that another war of this devastating scope never took place again (UN, 2012). The United Nations (UN) was born out of a hope to sow seeds of peace and cooperation among the countries of the world and to unite humanity in a common cause. Those who led its creation expressed a desire for a new kind of citizen—a global citizen—who would balance his personal and state's interests with the needs and practicalities of a global world order. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) crystalized, in the preamble to its constitution, the idea that peace and stability are ensured not only by treaties and military clout but also—and primarily—by the attitudes and beliefs of individuals: “since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed” (UNESCO, 2012).

The need for global citizens who are the defenders of peace has not diminished in the intervening decades. Today's wars are neither easily defined nor constrained by national borders. Newer organizations have joined the United Nations in recognizing both the lasting need for cooperation in order to achieve peace and the new challenges for global stability facing humanity today. Global education remains one of the antidotes to conflict and one of the remedies during and after conflict (Reimers & Chung, 2010).

Each year, the World Economic Forum (WEF) publishes a Global Risks Report that identifies the fifty most important risks and trends that threaten global stability. The risks, which are identified by a group of over 750 experts, must be global in scope, must affect at least three distinct industries, must have substantial potential economic impact, must include some element of uncertainty (that is, the likelihood of their occurring in the next ten years and the scope of the impact of the risk must be uncertain), and must require a variety of stakeholders

to work together to mitigate the risk (WEF, 2016). The risks are divided into five categories: environmental, technological, societal, economic, and geopolitical. Besides identifying the risks, the report also quantifies and describes the interconnectedness of the risks themselves (WEF, 2016).

Today's world needs leaders who are versatile and interdisciplinary thinkers able to work toward finding solutions to these pernicious and entangled threats as well as informed citizens who are aware of these risks and of the way in which their own actions can minimize their impact. The aspiration to build the defenses of peace in the minds of people, as reflected in UNESCO's charter, has therefore grown more complex. The UN secretary general's special initiative Education First, which was launched in 2012, has a specific focus on fostering global citizenship: "Education is much more than an entry to the job market. It has the power to shape a sustainable future and better world. Education policies should promote peace, mutual respect and environmental care" (Ban Ki-moon, 2012). The recently approved Sustainable Development Goals represent a positive, aspirational way to address and overcome these risks, and the notion of global citizenship emanating from that compact is one that reflects the skills and dispositions that could effectively address those risks.

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