

## OPERATIONALISING GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: THE UNIVERSAL LEARNING PROGRAMME

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### ABSTRACT

This article describes the Universal learning Programme, an innovative curriculum framework designed by the International School of Geneva's La Grande Boissière campus and UNESCO's International Bureau of Education. The design, scope and reach of the programme operationalises Global Citizenship Education through the development of deep conceptual understanding of relevant domains, the assessment of life-worthy competences and the creation of authentic social impact. It is through this balanced synthesis of learning and innovative task design that all the precepts of Global Citizenship Education are developed and put into concrete practice. The Universal Learning Programme offers educational systems around the world a model that unites theory with research and practice.

### RESUME

Cet article décrit le Programme d'apprentissage universel, un cadre curriculaire innovant conçu par le campus de la Grande Boissière de l'Ecole internationale de Genève et le Bureau international d'éducation de l'UNESCO. La conception, la portée et l'étendue du programme rendent l'éducation à la citoyenneté mondiale opérationnelle grâce au développement d'une compréhension conceptuelle approfondie de domaines pertinents, à l'évaluation des compétences utiles dans la vie courante, et à la création d'un impact social authentique. C'est par cette synthèse équilibrée de l'apprentissage et de la conception novatrice des tâches que tous les préceptes de l'éducation à la citoyenneté mondiale sont développés et mis en pratique. Le programme d'apprentissage universel offre aux systèmes éducatifs du monde entier un modèle qui allie la théorie à la recherche et à la pratique.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is at a critical point in time: disruptive changes in social behaviour, the economy and the environment, alongside rapid technological advancement present national and international education systems with unprecedented, complex problems and opportunities. Since at least the 1970s (Toffler, 1970), economists and political analysts have pointed out that with the advent of globalisation, humans need to be equipped to deal with



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VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity: Bennis & Nanus, 1985). This affects educational structures too, which need to reflect the societal impact of these disruptive forces.

Recent years have brought even more complexity to the intertwined network of nearly 8 billion humans that is strewn across the planet: impending environmental crises, pandemics, rapidly degenerating political relationships and social movements expressing dismay at economic disparity have created anxiety and confusion at several levels. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated and augmented the need to review education systems (Hughes, 2020a). At the same time, there are opportunities for social networking, travel and access to quality healthcare, along with statistics indicating more peace worldwide than ever before (Pinker, 2018).

What transcends this disruption and complexity educationally is the question: how well are education systems preparing young people to navigate a globalised world of VUCA? One answer to this question lies in the construct of Global Citizenship Education (GCE).

This article outlines a definition of global citizenship as a construct and then describes how GCE has been operationalised into a school programme. This has been done at the International School of Geneva's La Grande Boissière campus by using the work on global competences by UNESCO's International Bureau of Education (UNESCO-IBE). The programme that has been developed through this work is the Universal Learning Programme (Hughes, 2020b, 2020c).

The aim of this article is not only to describe the development, design and implementation of the programme as an expression of GCE but to inspire readers to consider potential pathways for this programme to affect educational systems in their own contexts across the globe. The research method of this paper is descriptive and therefore does not need as exhaustive a rationale as an empirical paper. Much of the article discusses how the Universal Learning Programme was developed through readings of global citizenship and explains why it referred to UNESCO's models above others.

## 2. GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

### *2.1. Global Citizenship*

Before discussing GCE, what is global citizenship? Settling on a definition is fairly complex as there are several ways of approaching the construct. Akkari & Maleq (2019) describe three types of global citizenship: critical, radical and neoliberal.

The critical approach focusses on the individual as a critical thinker. The amount of information circulating in today's globalised knowledge economy requires critical thinking as a skill needed to examine multiple, often misleading claims. The Coronavirus pandemic, for example, created an "infodemic" against which a critical appreciation of health and safety information became a crucial act of responsible citizenship. Questions of environmental sustainability, social justice and equality are all essential points for reflection and subsequent action in this model. The

critical approach emphasises deep thought, action and social transformation (Boni & Calabuig, 2017; Torres, 2009).

The radical approach, explained, for example by Andreotti (2006), is an intensification of the critical approach with a more engaged stance on global issues: “The role of the global citizen is to challenge the hegemony of economic globalization and build solidarity across marginalized groups to fight oppression rather than focusing on building economic relationships across the globe” (Akkari & Maleq, 2019). This type of global citizenship, linked to Marxist, Fanonian and Freirean principles of solidarity for a global class of the oppressed is the type that can be witnessed in radical anti-neoliberal groups fighting for social justice like the Black Lives Matter movement and some grassroots anti-globalisation movements.

Both the critical and the radical definitions of global citizenship point to an outcome of social justice. Reysen & Katzarska-Miller (2013) describe global citizenship as “promoting social justice and sustainability, and a sense of responsibility to act.” (p. 858) in the vein of the organisation Oxfam (2006), that explains that a global citizen should be “outraged by social injustice” (p. 5). These positions imply a responsibility to understanding contemporaneous social matters such as human rights deeply and critically, and a commitment to social impact.

The neoliberal definition of global citizenship, delineated by Aktas, Pitts, Richards and Silova (2017) and Rizvi (2007), focuses on skills “that would enable students to become internationally mobile and readily employable in a variety of cultural and national contexts” (Akkari & Maleq, 2019). The neoliberal global citizen is part of the “transnational mobility of knowledge and skills with the goal of linking global citizenship directly to global economic participation” (Shultz, 2007, p. 252). What could be described as the neoliberal global model is articulated in the Organisation of Economic Development (OECD, 2020), the World Bank (2017) and the World Economic Forum (2020). These organisations are referred to in much 21st century Skills curriculum design as education boards seek to ensure that school systems are as relevant as possible to the needs of the work place.

These visions of global citizenship point in different directions: criticality, social justice and neoliberalism (essentially, skills for a globalised work forum). When turning to GCE, the question is, which model to use for the educational development of young people growing up in the challenging VUCA climate of today’s world?

## *2.2. GCE in Schools*

The idea of the global citizen is frequently integrated into the mission and hidden curriculum of schools but will rarely find itself operationalised in school syllabi or assessments:

Global education is rarely found in the formal school curriculum as a separate school subject or learning area. Invariably it is integrated, where it is taught at all, into a subject/learning area such as Studies of Society or Social Studies or a similar school subject. Learning to be a global citizen through a subject that might be called global citizenship is even less likely

to be located as a separate subject or learning area within the school curriculum. (Print, 2015, p. 187)

Recommendations on the concrete implementation of GCE in the classroom have been elaborated by numerous organisations, notably the Organising Bureau of European Schools Students Union (OBESSU, 2019); High Resolves (2020) and the province of Alberta Canada (Marope, Griffin & Gallagher, 2018a, p. 51).

What these groups point to, essentially, is that GCE relies on innovative pedagogies, an international dimension to the curriculum, teacher training, cross-disciplinary approaches and the development of competences (OBESSU, 2019). While some of these definitions and programmes are essentially based on a normative, moral social vision, others are more focussed on skills for the marketplace.

### *2.3. GCE and International Schools*

International Schools clearly have a close relationship with global citizenship since, traditionally, they were designed to educate children from diverse backgrounds who would travel the world and needed internationally recognised school certification. More recently, however, many international school students are based locally but are enrolled into such schools for their English medium instruction and future access to a globalised workplace. The Council of International Schools (CIS), an accrediting agency that works with more than 1300 institutions around the world, provides “services [...] to inspire the development of global citizens” (CIS, 2020). There are some examples in international education models that are clear efforts to operationalise the construct of GCE: one is the skills-based “Global Perspectives” course run by Cambridge Assessment International Education, which focusses on developing “outstanding transferable skills, including critical thinking, research and collaboration” (Cambridge, 2020). Another is the International Baccalaureate’s learner profile: a set of qualities that individuals are expected to embrace when going through an international Baccalaureate education: learners should be “Inquirers; Knowledgeable; Thinkers; Communicators; Principled; Open-minded; Caring; Risk-takers; Balanced; Reflective” (IB, 2020).

Dvir, Shields and Yimini (2018), in screening a number of mission statements of International Schools, suggest three type of GCE: “Globally acknowledged quality, moral global citizenship, and neoliberal global citizenship”. The former describes skills and attitudes recognised by frameworks, institutions and consortia such as the OECD (2020), the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (Education Reimagined, 2020) or the Centre for Curriculum Redesign (CCR, 2020) as essential for the 21st Century (for example, communication skills, agency, critical thinking and collaboration). These are what could be described as futureproof or future-ready life skills.

The second definition relates to values that have been described as necessary for the betterment of humanity and planetary renewal. These can be found in the ethical statements on global

citizenship by academics such as Kwame Anthony Appiah (2005), who elaborates a universal moral code, Martha Nussbaum (2002), who argues for a humanities-based liberal society and Amartya Sen (2005), whose “capabilities approach” to economics has argued that social purpose should be considered less in the vein of strictly material parameters and more in terms of expressions of humanity such as happiness, engagement and the flourishing of youth. This broad definition of the global citizen goes back to Diogenes’ principle of the *Kosmopolites*: an individual capable of seeing universal strains of being and meaning across cultural difference. The idea of the moral world citizen who sees commonality between cultures and is able to look beyond differences is emblematised in the liberal tradition with its strong reliance on a liberal arts education and the valuing of universal human rights.

The final definition of GCE in international schools, the neoliberal approach, is primarily concerned with market skills necessary for a privatised, monopoly-controlled, corporate world (Chapman, Ruiz-Chapman & Eglin, 2018; Foster, 2015; Freire, 1970). In this definition, subjects such as the sciences and economics are particularly important as is English as a global language for trade, the idea being the primary function of schools is to prepare access to global trade.

Indeed, one might argue that these three types of GCE, are somewhat incompatible with one another ethically and ontologically. Studies in international education have shown, consistently, that there is a tension between the administrative function of these schools, preparing young people for a neoliberal work place, and the normative function, which speaks to human rights, liberal values and planetary sustainability (Hill, 2016; Hughes, 2009).

Dvir, Shields & Yimini’s categories are slightly different to the three categories of global citizenship that Akkari & Maleq (2019) propose since future-proof 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills are not considered part of a neoliberal project. This suggests that when the theory of global citizenship is operationalised in school programme-run GCE, softer and less divisive language is used to describe the development of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills even though, according to Akkari & Maleq, such development is still part of the neoliberal project to contribute to a globalised, deregulated economy. By referring to 21<sup>st</sup> Century skill development as “globally acknowledged quality”, international schools present a model that is more euphemistic in tone<sup>1</sup>.

#### 2.4. GCE according to UNESCO

UNESCO’s position on GCE builds a synthesis of the three schools of global citizenship delineated by Akkari & Maleq (2019) and Dvir, Shields & Yimini (2018): it is an effort to

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<sup>1</sup> Ethics (research about, discussion of, and action related to issues of principle of personal, local, and global importance); Diversity (the understanding of and respect for the similarities and differences of a range of individuals and peoples); Global Issues (the understanding of multiple perspectives of local and global events and issues); Communication (the development of fluency in multiple languages, including mother tongues, used to communicate within and across cultures); Service (the development of the understandings, skills and dispositions to serve the local and global community through engagement in meaningful service learning); Leadership (the acquisition and refinement of the skills of leading and following within different cultural contexts) and Sustainable Lifestyle (a personal commitment to a lifestyle which supports local and global sustainability displayed through example and advocacy) (CIS, 2020).

provide a framework that addresses the collective and public needs of today's globalised societies whilst incorporating elements of criticality, social action and skills for the workplace in industry 4.0. It is a

Framing paradigm which encapsulates how education can develop the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes learners need for securing a world which is more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable [and it moves] beyond the development of knowledge and cognitive skills to build values, soft skills and attitudes among learners that can facilitate international cooperation and promote social transformation. (UNESCO, 2014, p. 9)

GCE takes effect at different levels or dimensions:

Global citizenship education has three conceptual dimensions. The cognitive dimension concerns the learners' acquisition of knowledge, understanding and critical thinking. The socio-emotional dimension relates to the learners' sense of belonging to a common humanity, sharing values and responsibilities, empathy, solidarity and respect for differences and diversity. The behavioural dimension expects the learners to act responsibly at local, national and global levels for a more peaceful and sustainable world. (UNESCO ASPnet, 2020)

From the Education for All summits in Jomtien (1990), Dakar (2000), the Global Education First initiative in 2012 to the Incheon Declaration in 2015, which set out a global education agenda for 2030 and Sustainable Development Goal 4, global citizenship education has been developed by think tanks and formal discussions at UNESCO to arrive at the following three dimensions:

- 1) Global, meaning that GCE should focus on issues that humanity is facing at a global scale that are so vast and interconnected that they cannot be solved at a national level. These include themes such as "human rights, equality, migration, climate change, nuclear threat [and] digitisation (UNESCO, 2019, p. 5).
- 2) Citizenship, meaning that GCE should focus on developing individuals' sensitivity to inclusion, participation and action in society at "local, regional, national, supranational and global" levels (p. 5).
- 3) Education that "develops not just knowledge but skills, capabilities, critical thinking and self-management in formal and informal fields" (p. 5).

UNESCO's vision of GCE allows, therefore for the various interpretations of what it means to be a global citizen to be actualised in a single coherent vision. Rather than face a polarised situation with characterisations of social justice on the one side and neoliberalism on the other, the UNESCO positions allows schools to combine both these efforts in a harmonious continuity in which ethics, social responsibility and skill are developed. I will show shortly how this multi-faceted, synthetic definition of GCE has influenced the design of the Universal Learning Programme.

The question is, to what extent the ideals of GCE are making their way into the classrooms of schools around the world in concrete ways? Are there clear expressions of global citizenship education in practice that can be referenced?

### 3. COMPETENCES FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

One of the most compelling visions for the operationalisation of GCE is the work of UNESCO-IBE on curriculum and, more specifically, competences. Marope, Griffin and Gallagher's flagship 2018 paper, *Future Competences and the Future of Curriculum: A Global Reference for Curricula Transformation*, after detailed collaboration with thought leaders, curriculum experts, 150 UNESCO members states and research hubs, makes the following fundamental points:

- The worldwide plethora of initiatives and statements on GCE and skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has led to some confusion and overlap, creating the need for a coherent, clear model of the skills and types of knowledge that school should be developing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- More precisely, what is needed is an understanding of the competences needed for the present and the future of individuals, groups and societies. A competence is more than a skill, it is a unity of skills, knowledge and attitude. Effectively, the type of competences that schools should be developing needs to be articulated powerfully.

These competences need to be understood in a contextual matrix where the interplay between constituent entry points (in other words, the human and social input into the educational system) are sequenced against competence development to show the impact on societies that such a model might have at the outcome phase. Put in other terms, there is a need for educational approaches to be articulated along a representation of school entry, competence development while at school, and the social impact such an education might make socially and environmentally when learners leave school and enter wider circles of human activity.

#### 3.1. Phases of the competence model

UNESCO-IBE's model, therefore, coordinates the following three entities:

##### 3.1.1. Phase One (constituent elements)

Schools need to be aware of the baseline constituent elements that enter the curriculum experience before learning and teaching start. These indicate the readiness, social context, self-belief, access to elaborate code and cultural literacy and infrastructural environment that students bring with them into a school. The constituent elements are: information, data, technology, knowledge, skills, values and attitudes (Marope, Griffin & Gallagher, 2018a). This suggests that, just as good pedagogic practice would dictate in any learning pathway, before schools consider GCE, detailed understanding of who learners are, what they can do, what they believe and the access they have to resources needs to be established.

##### 3.1.2. Phase Two (the teaching and learning of competences)

UNESCO-IBE has established seven global competences (described as macro competences) that are stable, future-proof and life-worthy. These seven competences will not change with

time since they encompass the set of skills, knowledge and attitudes that learners need to appropriate today and tomorrow. Incorporated in each of these global or macro competences are micro competences. These are contextual, fluid and adaptable, expressing a more dynamic on-the-ground operationalisation of the global competences that is sensitive to time, place and needs. The global competences with the corresponding micro competences in question, are the following:

- Lifelong learning: learning how to learn, curiosity, creativity, critical thinking, communication skills, problem solving, reflection and innovation.
- Self-agency: initiative, drive/motivation, endurance/grit/resilience, responsibility, entrepreneurship, accountability, self-management, exercising rights and responsibilities, self-value.
- Interactively using diverse tools and resources: impactful and efficient use of resources, responsible consumption, interfacing with tools.
- Interacting with others: teamwork, collaboration, negotiation, leadership, followership, conflict management, respect for others.
- Interacting with the world: balancing rights with responsibilities, balancing freedom with respect, balancing power with restraint, being local and global, environmental custodianship, global awareness.
- Multi-literateness: reading and writing, numeracy, digital literacy, data literacy, technological literacy, coding, media literacy, financial literacy, cultural literacy, health literacy.
- Transdisciplinarity: mastery within and across STEM (sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics), the arts, the humanities, social sciences, religions, languages and vocations.

By developing these competences, schools address all the curricular ambitions of GCE including the various definitions of GCE that collectively cover a series of different skills, attitudes and types of knowledge. The UNESCO-IBE competence framework moves further than GCE education into areas of personal and collective wellness, mastery and character development.

### *3.1.3. Phase Three (creating individual, collective and public goods)*

As I have argued in this article, a challenge for GCE and all educational movements based on normative principles, is ensuring that words translate into action and that there are concrete iterations of how exactly the rhetoric is operationalised on the ground.

Social impact should be something that happens after the formal educational experience, when the accrued experience, tools, knowledge, values and skills are put into action, but social impact should also be encouraged at school level, meaning that actions by learners as part of their school learning can and should have some social impact.

This implies task design, assessments, projects and cultural events that ensure that learners are living out the mission of GCE. UNESCO-IBE's framework describes the social and

environmental impact of a competence-based education as a series of “goods”. More precisely, these are personal, collective and public goods, meaning that the impact of the educational experience can be charted not just as social impact in general but at the specific levels of an individual’s good (wellness, character, proficiency, raised ability), collective good (the impact of the educational experience on those around the learner who will benefit from service learning, outreach, the cascading of knowledge and so on) and public good, meaning the impact this educational experience will have on public institutions, government, national and supranational organisations.

The areas of individual, collective and public good that are described in the model are listed below. Note that the benefits are cumulative and not exclusive, meaning that the impact on the individual automatically affects groups and public good, therefore radiating outwards to larger groups:

- Individual Goods (meaning the impact of the educational experience on the individual learner): basic and functional literacies, awareness, adaptability, agility, relevance and currency of knowledge and skills learnt, empowerment, quality of life, fulfilment, productivity, spirit of innovation, a sustainable lifestyle, global citizenship convictions.
- Collective Goods (meaning the impact of the educational experience on groups of people either directly or indirectly): the flourishing of domain specialists, learning organizations and learning societies, efficiency, social cohesion, equity and inclusion, productivity, growth, human capital, enhanced service delivery, social justice, healthy competitiveness, global citizenship actions and partnerships.
- Public Goods (meaning the impact on the educational experience on society at large at state, macro and inter-state levels): Democracy, good governance, citizenship, justice, global peace & reconciliation, safety, security, literate societies and functioning political and multilateral global citizenship. (Marope, Griffin & Gallagher, 2018a, p. 37)

#### 4. THE DESIGN OF THE UNIVERSAL LEARNING PROGRAMME

The International School of Geneva’s La Grande Boissière campus (ECOLINT-LGB) and UNESCO-IBE entered into a formal relationship in 2018. The genesis of the project was the earlier work done by the International School of Geneva and UNESCO-IBE on guiding principles for learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Hughes & Acedo, 2017).

The idea was to operationalise the work expressed in UNESCO’s work and to design a curriculum that would be a concrete active instantiation of GCE. From the outset and throughout the project, collaboration took place in the form of professional development, planning meetings and group work on curriculum design between the school’s faculty and education experts. GCE requires collaboration between teachers on the ground and research experts.

Experts from various institutions collaborated on the design of this curriculum: the Education University of Hong Kong; the University of Geneva; the University of Durham; the University of Laval; the University of Ottawa; the Mindbridge Foundation; the Centre for Curriculum

Redesign, the OECD; Pepperdine University; New South Wales Department of Education and the University of Toulouse. Some of the prominent academics who contributed to the design of the programme included ex education director for the OECD, Barry McGaw, Pepperdine's Eric Hamilton, UNESCO-IBE's Mmantsetsa Marope, the University of Geneva's Abdeljalil Akkari, the University of Durham's Ray Land and the Centre for Curriculum Redesign's Charles Fadel.

After much discussion between members of all the communities involved, we decided to call the programme the Universal Learning Programme. The word "universal" was chosen because it suggests the transcendental values associated with global citizenship such as universal human rights and sensibilities but also because "universal" connotes overarching educational questions that transcend not only geographic barriers, but time too. Indeed, the premise of the programme from its inception was for it to be robust enough to remain relevant not only across countries, but through time too.

Faculty members were involved in the design of the programme logo (a spiral following the Fibonacci sequence, starting from the barely perceptible constituent elements through to an olive branch at the end of the visual, representing social impact) as well as project, unit planner and assessment structure. A Universal Learning Programme Strategy Group was put in place made up of students, teachers, parents and partners to discuss programme development, communications and effectiveness. Universal Learning Programme Coordinators were appointed, as well as a Social Impact Coordinator, to ensure that the programme would be well anchored on the campus of La Grande Boissière. Continual discussion and development with experts took place throughout the development of the programme and UNESCO-IBE audited the programme after one year of implementation.

One of the challenges that schools face is how to introduce curriculum innovation in such a way that programme evolution is meaningful, integrative and not merely additive. Furthermore, it needs to be endorsed by all stakeholders and schools, like most organisations, are inherently change resistant. There is much literature on the difficulties of change management to which one can refer (Fullan, 2008; Hargreaves, 2009; Hughes, 2018 for example). The approach taken at La Grande Boissière was to offer a strong vision and clear three-year plan, a relatively steep change curve over a limited period of concentrated training and structural implementation followed by a more stable period of consolidation. This is known as the "dream, leap climb, fight, arrive" strategy (see Duarte & Sanchez, 2016).

An important point to emphasise in the early inception of the programme was that much of what was being expressed was an articulation of what the International School of Geneva had been doing since its creation in 1924 as the world's first international school. The Universal Learning Programme is an effort to unite some of the best practices in international education with contemporary and forward-looking research on education. The concept of GCE runs through these streams that meet in the Universal Learning Programme's history, structure and ambitions. Therefore, the message to collaborators was that this was not something entirely new but a confluence of well-established classroom practices and innovative strategies. development.

#### *4.1. The philosophy and pedagogy of the Universal Learning Programme*

The Universal Learning Programme is designed as a framework that is compatible with international and national systems: it is a philosophy of education and a set of principles that can be adapted and adopted in numerous ways. This is important because GCE should not be a standardised straight jacket but must make some allowance for cultural and contextual pressures. The vision of the Universal Learning Programme is for it to be integrated into multiple school systems across the globe, irrespective of infrastructure, resources, language of instruction or national system requirements.

This much said, the programme follows three fundamental steps that must be respected for schools to incorporate the Universal Learning Programme approach: establishing deep understanding, developing competences, and creating social impact.

#### *4.2. Deep Understanding*

First, all learning must be predicated on deep understanding. GCE implies facing deep global challenges, therefore, the primary strength that learners will need to take to these challenges is domain knowledge, nuanced conceptual understanding, knowledge of self and, therefore, the ability to transfer and apply that knowledge in the service of effective problem solving. The importance of knowledge, conceptual understanding and critical thinking has been articulated in previously mentioned definitions of GCE (for example, UNESCO ASPnet, 2020).

The recent Coronavirus outbreak, a global challenge, required knowledge-based responses on effective personal hygiene in order to contain the spread of the virus, a conceptual understanding of the manner in which the virus was spreading and critical analysis of sources of information. To give another example, in order to address challenges countries face around migration, a deep conceptual and substantiated understanding of the causes and effects of migration is needed from domain specific levels (economics, human geography, history) but also at a transdisciplinary level (concepts of diplomacy, reciprocity, human rights and sustainability for example). In an age of web-based confirmation bias, scurrilous sources of information, spin doctors and band wagons, deep understanding is more important than ever.

It is particularly important to emphasise knowledge and understanding as there are voices in educational discussions that downplay knowledge and information as something that can be readily accessed on the world wide web, and that therefore, it is less important to have a strong body of knowledge at one's disposal than it was in previous decades. The Universal Learning Programme approach is that knowledge is central since it is information stored in long term memory that will be used in any problem solving episode and rigorous studies in cognitive psychology have shown that well stored schemata of information are necessary for any applied or higher order thinking tasks (creativity, critical thinking, analysis, synthesis and so on) (Pellegrino, Chudowski & Glaser, 2001; Sutton Trust, 2014; Sweller, Clark & Kirschner, 2010).

The Universal Learning approach to deep understanding is based on the research of Land, Cousin, Meyer and Davies (2005) on thresholds and McKenzie, *et al.* (2013) on schemas. For knowledge and skills to be mastered, they need to be configured in schemas (concepts, stories or big ideas) that can be easily stored and retrieved. This requires mastery teaching (see Elliot Major & Higgins, 2019). The Universal Learning Programme has designed specific teaching tools to anchor deep understanding: knowledge pyramids and skills, processes and strategies pyramids (Hughes, 2020a) that take learners from facts and skills through concepts to formulate the conclusion of their learning in “Universal Understandings”, which are powerful headlines that synthesise learning in definitional statements. These are similar to Wiggins and McTighe’s “enduring understandings” (2005). Examples of universal understandings from Universal Learning Programme units include the following:

- The significance of a Revolution depends upon the perspective taken (history unit on revolutions);
- The brain and nervous system underlie all human behaviour (biology unit on neuroscience);
- Some relationships display aperiodic behaviours and never end (mathematics unit on trigonometry).

Similarly, learners look at the domains they are learning about through “Universal Questions”. These are broad, transdisciplinary questions that promote deep thinking and allow for a philosophical appreciation of subject matter. Universal Questions are generated by staff and students and are used in presentations, assemblies, as lenses for reflections during field trips and as in-class discussion points. Examples of Universal Questions include:

- What makes something meaningful?
- What does it mean to be human?
- What makes something beautiful?
- Can peace ever be bad?

#### 4.3. Developing competences

As various frameworks have stipulated, GCE must go further than knowledge alone into the area of competence development. Therefore, the Universal Learning Programme ensures that learners are educated in such a way that competences are nurtured and valued clearly. Every subject is assessed not only against narrow academic criteria but more expansive lifeworthy competences as described earlier in this paper.

For example, students studying philosophy are assessed on accountability (in other words, the extent to which they can stand by an opinion and “own” it); students studying physics are assessed on their teamwork in experimental work; students studying mathematics are assessed on their initiative (the extent to which they grapple with mathematical learning actively and with a sense of intrinsic motivation) while students studying history are assessed on their self-management (metacognitive development, readiness, preparation for tasks and so on).

Competences are assessed in a number of different ways: through an app the school has developed, in formal assessments, through peer-to-peer assessment, self-assessment, formally and informally. By doing this, Universal Learning Programme assessments send out the message that developing these competences is important for life but also that they can be appreciated in several ways as they are contingent on context, cultural specificities and localisation.

The plethora of competences in the UNESCO-IBE model have been synthesised in four core areas, each with a guiding question. These are the cardinal points of the programme; they sum up the essential areas of human development that GCE should be nurturing:

- Character (who am I?), incorporating the global competence of lifelong learning;
- Passion (what is my purpose?), incorporating the global competence of self-agency;
- Mastery (how can I go further?), incorporating the global competences of multi-literateness and trans-disciplinarity;
- Collaboration (how can we work together?), incorporating the global competences of interactively using diverse tools and resources, interacting with others and interacting with the world.

#### *4.4. Creating social impact*

Approaching issues with deep conceptual knowledge and understanding and nurturing competences in the application of that knowledge must lead to some meaningful impact on self, others and the world. It is at this vital participatory and active dimension of the educational experience that the deep meaning of citizenship rings true, for without action at the end of a learning voyage, the journey remains abstract and theoretical, without substance and engagement. The Universal Learning Programme places learners in situations where they can impact the world around them positively through a series of projects.

A character project in which learners set themselves personal challenges and use the Philosophy for Children method (see Trickey & Topping, 2004) to deepen their understanding of character and ethics. This project develops a sense of self and values.

A passion project is which learners identify their personal passions (these can be outside of the formal curriculum), work in groups so as to coordinate these passions in a project designed so that the outcome that has some positive social impact and make sure that the project outcome is linked in some way to one of the Sustainable Development Goals. This project develops entrepreneurship and collective goods impact.

A mastery project whereby students appreciate and analyse the social impact of domains of human activity. For example, students answer Universal Questions on the social impact of scientific innovations and discoveries in science classes and run statistical analyses of the correlations between various facets of human activity in mathematics, looking at the relationship between Gross Domestic Product and happiness, employment and education and other correlations. The Mastery project enhances a domain-specific and transdisciplinary

appreciation of how research, academia and various fields of study can impact society positively.

A social impact project that runs through the school based on service learning whereby every learner is involved in community service. Learning outcomes are logged by students in reflections that draw out thinking on the meaning and purpose of service actions. These instances of social impact anchor the Universal Learning Programme in active, participatory learning that not only habituates individuals and groups to contribute to the world around them once they have graduated, in the manner that citizens should by definition throughout their lives, but allows for in-school and in-the-present participation in current events and issues of global importance such as sustainability and inclusion. The Universal learning Programme's approach is to look at GCE as a living reality.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Curriculum is much more than a list of items to be studied, it is an entire system that, ultimately, impacts the world. UNESCO-IBE's position on curriculum is that it should be reconceptualised along the following key dimensions:

- The first operational tool for ensuring the sustained development relevance of education and learning systems;
- A catalyst for innovation, disruption, and social transformation;
- A force for social equity, justice, cohesion, stability, and peace;
- An integrative core of education systems;
- An enabler of lifelong learning;
- A determinant of the quality of education and learning;
- A determinant of key cost drivers of education and learning systems;
- A lifelong learning system in its own right. (Marope, Griffin, Gallagher, 2018b, p. 10)

Operationalising Global Citizenship Education requires a curriculum framework that is balanced and innovative, visionary and practicable, competence-based and research-informed. The Universal Learning Programme is a unique expression of these qualities in a K-10 school approach that has been designed not only to serve the learners of the International School of Geneva, but learners across the world by giving them access to a high quality experience that addresses GCE in concrete ways.

The dream is to establish a network of Universal Learning Programme schools that will unite forces and approaches across contexts, cultures and levels of access to ensure that as many young people as possible are educated to think deeply and act impactfully as current and future global citizens. Currently, international teacher training is being developed to allow for many other schools to join a group of institutions committed to the tenets of the Universal Learning Programme to operationalize GCE across frontiers for a more peaceful, equitable and sustainable world.

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