

# Global Citizenship Education: A Potential Contributing Factor to Youth Radicalization and Terrorism Engagement

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Received: July 10, 2017Accepted: August 2, 2017Published: December 14, 2017doi:10.5296/ije.v9i4.11916URL: https://doi.org/10.5296/ije.v9i4.11916

# Abstract

Radicalization and terrorism engagement studies are complicated waters to swim in due to the complexity of many involved variables. I argue that global citizenship education contributes to youth radicalization and terrorism engagement once they realize that global citizenship values are incongruent with local and global adult economic and sociopolitical practices. The discussion elaborates on global citizenship values promoted by global citizenship education and its potential link between youth radicalization and terrorism engagement. The discussion suggests the stronger youth global values the more likely they will radicalize and engage in terrorism.

Keywords: Global values, Radicalization, Terrorism, Value incongruence



"People do not ordinarily engage in reprehensible conduct until they have justified to themselves the morality of their actions." Bandura (2004)

# 1. Introduction

It is unfortunate that youth radicalization and terrorism engagement studies haven't paid attention to the potential contributing factor of global citizenship values incongruence with global economic and sociopolitical practices. Any factor leading few youth to radicalize and engage in terrorism is worth of investigations. As global citizenship education is instilling global citizenship values in youth then we should start inviting the global citizenship values-gap debate to participate in developing our understanding of youth radicalization and terrorism engagement. I argue that global citizenship education is contributing to youth radicalization and terrorism engagement as youth come to realize that global citizenship values are incongruent with local and global adults' daily practices.

According to UNESCO (2015), global citizenship education helps enable youth cognitive, socioemotional and behavioral dimensions. On the cognitive aspect, it helps youth develop their knowledge and thinking skills which provide them with the abilities to understand the world and its complexities. On the socioemotional dimension, global citizenship training helps young people to identify themselves with all human beings and learn to act, perform, and on the behavioral dimension be engaged in addressing social injustice locally and abroad.

There are plenty of arguments explaining that terrorism is flourishing around the world because schools haven't been able to instill democratic values in children and youth. I have a different viewpoint. I maintain that formal and informal education institutions are achieving their mission of inculcating global citizenship values in youth therefore creating space for youth radicalization and terrorism engagement as an instrument of global values. Youth radicalization and terrorism engagement result from values incongruence between taught global citizenship values anchored in youth identity and the global political, social, cultural, economic suffering of individuals, families and communities in nations around the world. It doesn't mean all frustrated young people will engage in terrorism the same way not all disfranchised young people will necessary become terrorist.

In order to develop my argument, the first section of the paper introduces a quick overview of the key terms used in this paper: radicalization and terrorism engagement. The second section discusses the concept of global citizenship education mainly it's cognitive, socioemotional, behavioral and its outcomes. Section three focuses on the values-gap or incongruence between what young learners get from global citizenship education in addition to the undue global socioeconomic and political conditions themselves and other human beings they consider to be part of their lives. The discussion concludes that, from the youth perspective, radicalization and terrorism engagement is a political instrument to advance social justice around the globe.



# 2. Global Citizenship Education and Global Values

According to Chaliand & Blin (2007), authors of *The history of terrorism*, terrorism can only be understood in its cultural and historical context. Thus, scholars should locate actual young people radicalization and terrorism engagement in its historical context of the unintentional negative outcomes of globalization and the youth's global values taught in schools and international programs around the world. Kaur (2015) argues that "Schools are strategically placed to make children and youth with learning experiences which relate, as far as possible, to the challenges of their everyday lives and by so doing play their appropriate role as exemplars of values and moral action". This statement speaks volumes about global citizenship education in schools as an instrument of global values development aiming to develop youth capabilities to respond to the challenges of their time such as the global socioeconomic injustices, global warming and global crisis of international migration.

Richardson, quoted by Macaluso (2016), claimed that "any terrorist I have ever met through my academic work had a highly over simplified view of the world, which they saw in black and white terms. Education robs you of that simplification and certitude. Education is the best possible antidote to radicalization". He was making the point that educated youth have protective tools against being indoctrinated. I stand on the other side of what education does for the youth understanding of their time. I agree with Richardson that the school provides children a greater understanding of the complexity of the world they live in. However, for or Richardson, education is antidote for radicalization and terrorism engagement while for me global citizenship education promoting global values incongruent with global sociopolitical, cultural and economic injustices may lead to young people commitment in terrorism. Scholars and policymakers have been insinuating over and over that youth don't have the capacity to handle complex issues, therefore adopting the position of that youth lack agency.

We need to take into account the youth understanding of their mobilization in the context of incongruent discourses between the language of the clash of cultures, civilizations, religions, and ethnicities on one hand and global citizenship values taught in schools claiming cooperation and global humanity. For many young people, global values taught in school institutions and informal teaching enforcing the language of agency which override the one of unconditional obedience and passivity (Foucault, 1977). More importantly, as Kronfli (2011) stated, among the principles of global citizenship education teaching is self-efficacy and civic engagement. He added that, teaching global citizenship aims to develop learners' skills of becoming agents of change, reinforcing the power of the individual. In addition, a global citizen involves being engaged in actions. In fact, a global citizen is more than understanding the nature of the world's hitches; he/she takes an active role in addressing them.

Globalization is a very much contested concept (Axford, 2013) and here is not the place to address it. However, it will be naïve to think that the globalization through economic, information technology, international migration processes do not affect cultures around the world and eventually opening up space for global values development. This is exemplified by the World Values Survey initiative which has been analyzing the basic values and beliefs of people throughout the world with the objectives to monitor changes and understand their



implications of human beliefs and values on social, economic, political and cultural dimensions. Global citizenship education can be seen as an educational response to the challenges of an increasingly globalized and interconnected planet of global warming; increased injustice characterized by excess consumption and large portion of humans living under abject socioeconomic conditions; wealth concentration in few regions of the world; refusing to welcome refugees to name a few. It is also a transformative educational process which aims to create links between the local and the global in order to develop in learners a sense of belonging to a broader, world-wide community and common humanity (Skinner, 2015). Globalization is not merely economic, products and technology (Axford, 2013). It is also the multiple interconnections among different national cultures as well as the increasing consensus about and consciousness of global issues and the world as a whole instigating in youth a deep political and cultural transformations (Yu, 2008, Robertson, 1992; Mittleman, 2006). Global citizenship education is a product of globalization.

Guo (2014) reminded us that "global citizenship education literature indicates that global citizenship education is still a contested concept meaning different things for different authors". She went on, stating that a global citizen should demonstrate some or all of the following characteristics:

- "Respect for fellow humans, regardless of race, gender, age, religion, or political views;
- Appreciation for diversity and multiple perspectives;
- A view that no single society or culture is inherently superior to any other;
- Cherishing the natural world and respecting the rights of all living things;
- Practicing and encouraging sustainable patterns of living, consumption and production;
- Striving to resolve conflicts without the use of violence;
- Be responsible for solving pressing global challenges in whichever way they can;
- Think globally and act locally in eradicating inequality and injustice in all their forms".

Global citizenship education rejects the use of violence to solve any kind of conflict. Consider now the repressed peaceful protests against corrupted dictators supported by the powerful countries; the refusal to listen to youth voices in Arabic countries; the damages caused to the environment; the war waged on the name of the expansion of western democracy to start getting a sense of young people frustrations. As matter of fact, the fact of overlooking young people's claims using peaceful means leave them with no other option than violence. In their provocative book Dalton & Welzel (2014) reminded us that citizens have turned away from allegiance toward a decidedly "assertive" posture to politics and many of those citizens are young people.



Global citizenship education is mounting around the world. Bayram (2015) mentioned that "According to the 2005–2008 wave of the World Values Survey carried out in 57 countries across the world, over 30% of the 65,269 respondents strongly identify as world citizens". He went on arguing that values offer one viable means of exploring human motivation and serve to evaluative standards in people's actions. Wintersteiner (et al., 2015) also mentioned that global citizenship education is no longer a concept taught only in Western countries and is increasingly gaining recognition as an umbrella term that includes other pedagogies like peace education, intercultural learning, global education and citizenship education Chan (2008).

As the world becomes increasingly politically, economically, socially, culturally and technologically integrated the meaning of citizenship, which for many years relied upon a sense of belonging to a specific nation, is being stretched to the global world. Some human practices are losing meaning within the limits of nation's boundaries making the global world the contemporary context for the theory and practice of citizenship (Masinda, 2014). Social, politic and social rights as presented by Marshall (1950) had a profound impact within the national states parameters. Consequently, as globalization expanded its reach, in many if not all aspects of human existence, the meaning of citizenship covering nationals expanded to all humans on a global scale. Unfortunately, global citizenship values are incongruent with sociopolitical and economic globalization practices.

#### 3. Global Values and Youth Radicalization and Terrorism Engagement

Young people are moral subjects constituted by the discursive practices of their time. The time of our youth is of global values training in a world challenged by injustices of all kinds. It is not my intention to debate is the meaning of youth radicalization and terrorism engagement. It will be sufficient to mention that the two terms have provoked fierce debate among scholars, policy makers and commentators in search for preventive measures, remedies and deradicalization strategies. For Abbasi & Khatwani (2014), terrorism is politically and emotionally stimulated and hard to be defined through a single definition. This is quite understandable, not only because the individuals at the centre of the issue, our youth, are the vital segment of our societies for better or for worse. Factors explaining their radicalization and engagement in terrorism have been portrayed as complex and diverse (Ahmad, 2016) raging from religious extremism (Koopmans, 2014), economic deprivation (Borum, 2004), social marginalization (Brock Blomberg Hess & Weerapana, 2004), historical grievances (Amartya, 2008), search for self-glorification and greed (Post, 2015), identity and oppression (Franz, 2007) to name a few.

Some argue that in Western countries youth education entrenched in anti-democratic values, inflexibilities and non-openness is the sociocultural infrastructure causing youth alienation and exclusion leading to youth radicalization and terrorism engagement (Manuel, 2014). Drawing from this line of thinking, education is blamed for triggering youth radicalization as it fails to promote democratic values and respect of different opinions. In the same line of blaming the school's culture for leading youth into radicalization, Macaluso believes that in the attempt to prevent youth radicalization and terrorism engagement,



"Interventions mainly at the level of secondary and higher education have primarily sought to identify early signs of radicalization and to target vulnerable individuals, who often belong to the same religious or ethnic groups. These approaches have weakened social cohesion by demonizing certain communities and underscoring stereotypes" (Macaluso, 2016).

Studies on youth radicalization and terrorism engagement tend to underscore youth competence to have adequately understanding of the world challenges and the impacts of their actions (Ahmad, 2016; Koopmans, 2014; Borum, 2004; Brock Blomberg Hess & Weerapana, 2004; Amartya, 2008; Post, 2015). As a result, youth inclination toward violence is approached in pathological lenses. To illustrate this pathologizing account, Bouhana & Wikstrom (2011) believe that youth radicalization and terrorism engagement are located in their vulnerabilities to the exposure of terrorist narratives therefore denying youth their agency dimension to cognitively understand what is right or wrong. In this line of inquiry, youth engaged in terrorism are pathologized as paranoid, antisocial and narcissistic personalities. However, Silke (1998) reminded us that terrorist operatives are not necessarily psychopaths. This psycho-pathological view has been challenged by Githens-Mazer & Lambert (2010).

Also Uprichard (2008) significantly challenged this narrow psycho-pathological view of the issue stance as unfair when he considers youth as "being and becoming", indicating that youth, even into their growing stage, aren't agentless, passive individuals but active citizens with capabilities. Bayat (2010) goes even further referring to youth as making politics because they live. He claims that youth have been at the forefront of many sociopolitical changes in history. He appealed that,

"The idea of youths as a revolutionary class is not new. The widespread mobilization of young people in Europe and the United States during the capitalist boom of the 1960s convinced many observers that youths (then active in universities, in antiwar movements, and in producing alternative lifestyles) were the new revolutionary force of social transformation in western societies" Bayat (2010).

John Dewey (1933) declared that even when moral education is not explicitly taught in the classroom, the school setting offers a moral milieu which he named the "hidden curriculum". I will add that we can say the same about the hidden curriculum of global citizenship values being taught around the world through numerous programs deployed by the United Nations organizations such as UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP and many NGOs like Human Rights Watch, Medical Doctors Without Borders etc. I should mention here the content of the later mentioned institutions to account for the deep global citizenship values training youth are getting across nations. Indeed, the very same way elementary, secondary and university teachers are the trainers of the young people's global citizenship, I should add to this the multitude of parents, community workers, social justice advocates and international humanitarian workers who are contributing to critical youth thinking.

Many scholars believe that schools can teach values as a remedy against radicalization and



terrorism engagement (Omede & Omede, 2015). What they neglect to bring into the discussion is the other side of the story meaning the gap between global values and global injustices can lead to radicalization and acts of terror. For example, OXFAM reported that:

"New estimates show that just eight men own the same wealth as the poorest half of the world. As growth benefits the richest, the rest of society – especially the poorest – suffers. The very design of our economies and the principles of our economics have taken us to this extreme, unsustainable and unjust point. Our economy must stop excessively rewarding those at the top and start working for all people. Accountable and visionary governments, businesses that work in the interests of workers and producers, a valued environment, women's rights and a strong system of fair taxation, are central to this more human economy" (Oxfam, 2017).

The argument here is that youth radicalization and terrorism engagement studies have to be studied within the context of contemporary global realities and global citizenship education. In the context of the global realities described by OXFAM (2017) we also know that schools are training youth to become global citizens equipped with strong sense of individuality, free-action, critical thinking and agency capable to critically deconstruct and reconstruct in a new away the reality of the world they live in. I would like to draw some commonalities with Richardson who states that

"A paradigm shift in conversion theories occurred as theories of deprivation and strain gave way to a new paradigm that sees individuals as volitional entities who are actively seeking the meaning of action in a social context" (Richardson, 1985).

Indeed, the global values-based potential explanation of radicalization and terrorism engagement implies a perspective of conversion from submissive and obedient youth to critical independent thinkers capable of engagement to address the challenges of their era. Youth are shifting from a passive attitude to converted individuals who are ready to act and assume their actions based on the global values acquired through global citizenship education. A last parallel can be drawn with child soldiers in armed groups. Their involvement in armed groups is mostly considered to be a result of vulnerability to socioeconomic strain and forced recruitment. Some studies revealed that some children involved in war are not passive but active mindful actors with a strong sense of agency exercising their choice to be in armed groups (Berents, 2009).

# 4. Suggested Hypothesizes for Future Research

From the analysis of global citizenship education (UNESCO, 2015; Guo, 2014), there are potential associations between global values acquisition and youth radicalization and terrorism engagement. Using Hines, Hungerford & Tomera (1986) theoretical approach about factors explaining pro-environmental behavior, the table below helps visualize the potential links between global citizenship education and youth radicalization and terrorism engagement. The basis of the argument is that the more significant are the outcomes of the global



citizenship education in youth the more likely they will radicalize and get engaged in terrorism.



I suggest that research should start paying attention to the idea that youth who have global citizenship values may radicalize and engage in terrorism if they:

- Have developed solid understanding of global injustice or strong sensitivity to global unfairness. Indeed, global citizenship aims to train youth so that they can cognitively develop critical thinking skills about global challenges such as global warming, international migration crisis, poverty and violent conflicts.
- Have strong commitment towards closing the gap between global values and global socioeconomic and political injustice. In fact, global citizenship education's objective is to enable youth to become aware of their capacity to advocate and act to change actual situation for the better.
- Have a deep bond with the good of others. One of the global citizenship education outcomes is to instill in youth a sense of global commonness and feeling that they



have to commit to the good of other human being.

- Developed a strong sense of individual responsibility in changing the course of the events. The global citizenship education tries to inculcate in youth a strong sense of duty and accountability implying that everyone is responsible for the good of others.
- Are engaged in verbal, textual or tangible actions for global justice. Global citizenship education trains youth to engage in curbing injustice. Youth who are intensively searching for opportunities to verbalize, texting or working for organizations advocating for socioeconomic justice may sometime be disappointed by the little impact they can achieve.
- Are self-assured that violent action is the only effective option they can use to address global injustices. One of the pillars of global citizenship education has been to teach youth the importance of peaceful means to address the challenges of their time. However, as youth start realizing that worldwide pacific activism doesn't significantly contribute to ameliorate the majority of human beings across nations they may end up choosing violent approach as a mean for change.
- Are confident that they can efficiently navigate national shielding system from action planning and action implementation. Global citizen youth will engage in terrorism when they have some guarantees that they can achieve their violent act despite of the sophisticated security intelligence means aiming to prevent act of terror.

# 5. Conclusion and Research Implications

Studies on youth radicalization and terrorism engagement have neglected to take into account the incongruence between youth's global values developed throughout global citizenship education and the unjust global socioeconomic, cultural and political conditions of their era. Bayat (2010) reminds us that "The political agency of youth movements, their transformative and democratizing potential, depends on the capacity of the adversaries, the moral and political authorities, to accommodate and contain youthful claims". This suggests that youth radicalization and terrorism engagement results in part from the political authorities' incapacities to accommodate youth's claims for local and global socioeconomic justice, political and human rights.

This discussion suggests that political, economic and civil society's leaders need to seriously look at how youth radicalization and terrorism engagement can be understood in relation to their desire to validate the implementation of their global engagement. In addition, youth's radicalization and terrorism engagement may be an experiment or validation of their global values, an ultimate expression of their trueness to the good of others. In the same vein of Bayram (2015) approach, it may be said that global values as guiding principles of some youth have an impact on their decisions about the roles and actions they want to play in their lives on local and global levels.

If we recognize youth's capabilities and reject their agentless reputation, there is a chance to



modify our approaches towards youth radicalization processes and terrorism engagement. In doing so, we may start diagnosing the impact of youth learned global citizenship values on their potential radicalization and terrorism engagement. It is also clear that, to prevent youth radicalization and terrorism engagement, political authorities across nations have to address the global socioeconomic and political injustices in contradiction with the Millennium Development Goals taught in schools (Vandemoortele, 2011). The test for future studies on youth radicalization and terrorism engagement for scholars, intelligence professionals and policy makers will then be to understand the effect of global values-based dimension incongruity with political, economic and social global practices on youth radicalization and terrorism engagement to be able to design preventive and disengagement strategies.

In reviewing the radicalization literature, Borum (2011) find that scholars and policymakers went from the expressions of "War on Terrorism" to a "Battle of Ideas" as strategies to curb radicalization and terrorism engagement. I will add to this move that we should quickly move to the expression "strategy of global values congruence" with youth's socioeconomic and political conditions across the globe to prevent their radicalization and terrorism engagement. In a global context of terrorism only some global sociopolitical and economic alignments with the youth global values can prevent their radicalization and terrorism engagement. The discussion indicates that, if global political, social, cultural and economic practices are congruent with global citizenship values taught in schools we have a chance to prevent youth radicalization and curb their engagement with terrorism. The same way the 19<sup>th</sup> enlightenment ideas normalized terrorism in the last century for some young people, nowadays schools as nurseries of global values development are acting as social institutions of youth radicalization and terrorism engagement against the challenges of their time.

The discussion indicates that it is no longer only the altruistic dimension for the suffering populations in some countries (Khouwaga & Emmerling, 2017) but an altruistic engagement to respond to the incongruence between global values and global injustices. It is no longer a matter of choosing to engage in local or foreign fighting (Hegghammer, 2013, Cited by Khouwaga & Emmerling, 2017) but to fight anywhere possible depending on context and available resources to them.

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