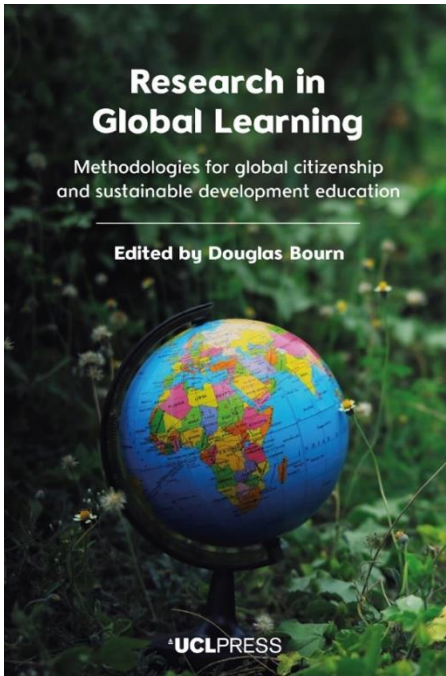


# RESEARCH IN GLOBAL LEARNING: METHODOLOGIES FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

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Bourn, Douglas (ed.) (2023) *Research in Global Learning: Methodologies for Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development Education*, London: UCL Press.



*Research in Global Learning* brings together thirteen chapters showcasing a range of methodologies within the area of global citizenship education (GCE). The volume's stated aims are to promote a range of methodologies in global learning, to highlight research from across the world, to showcase examples of research in a variety of educational settings, and to demonstrate the importance of research within the field of global learning. Each of these aims is underpinned by the desire to see research contribute to the realisation of target 4.7 of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). All of the book's contributors are early

career researchers with most chapters based on their doctoral work, giving the book breadth and variety. The research spans five continents, with roughly equal numbers of contributions from the global South and North. Chapters are

arranged under four main themes: policy and practice; opportunities and constraints within education systems; higher education; and the perspectives of young people.

In his introduction, Bourn highlights that to date, there has been comparatively little study of different methodological approaches within global learning research, and presents this book as a step towards addressing that gap. This is achieved not so much by a direct critique or discussion of different methods (although each author explicitly justifies their choice of research method), but by a 'gallery' approach which showcases a range of practice, giving a flavour of the resulting data, conclusions, and implications. The key benefit here is that examination of said methodologies is well grounded in actual research practice, warts and all, and it is accordingly much easier for the reader to get a sense of how any given approach looked in 'real life'. In a field like global learning, where the aim must always be to work in real circumstances for a better world for real people in real time, this grounding feels entirely appropriate. However, I did feel that the subtitle was therefore slightly misleading – the book is an interesting read, but not a handbook on research methodologies for global learning.

The variety of methodologies is broad, ranging from desk based critical discourse analysis of policy documents, through case studies (single, comparative and longitudinal) to personal reflective and ethnographic studies. Case studies comprise the most common approach, but the variety between them strongly underscores the central position and significant effect of local context, and there is no sense of duplication as each one adds a different colour to the methodological canvas. Yet within this significant diversity and variety, there are clearly recurring motifs: common opportunities and challenges that may express themselves differently in local contexts, but which have the same basic shape and flavour across the miles. Across varied contexts, different theoretical perspectives and a multiplicity of methods, there are several themes that recur with notable persistence.

The first is the challenge of defining GCE in a way that is meaningful in each local context, yet provides sufficient shared understanding to facilitate a conversation that is truly global. Most conceptions of global learning can be

broadly categorised as neoliberal (valuing skills for a global economy), cosmopolitan (respecting ‘universal’ values) or critical (examining systems and justice), and there is substantial divergence between these in terms of theoretical outlook and priorities (Bourn, 2011). In the opening chapter, Goren raises the complicated issue of ‘measuring global competence using supposedly universal measures... as these measures inevitably encapsulate values, cultural assumptions and terms with different semantic meanings across contexts’ (Ibid.: 31). The rest of the book attests to this, negotiating competing views of globalisation and GCE in schools, policy documents and higher education institutions (HEIs). This is complicated further by the specific perspectives and views held by individuals and groups; staying with Goren’s study, a case in point was provided by her participants (teenagers and teachers in Israel) asking for clarity on what ‘types’ of diversity were relevant to include when evaluating their understanding of GCE.

The second recurring theme is the challenge of integrating (or otherwise) national identity with concepts of global citizenship, and how this varies across settings. In Hanley’s chapter, Kazakh students felt conflicted; although they associated global citizenship with fairly general characteristics such as respect and tolerance, they also felt that patriotism and global citizenship could not coexist. An interesting perspective was provided by a teacher: ‘Education should be global, but *vospitanie* [upbringing] – national’ (Ibid.: 86). In a study of teaching resources, Pasha suggests that the standard textbooks used for GCE in Pakistan may have a tendency to gloss over issues of ethnic, cultural and religious difference, leading to a view of global learning that views values and practice as homogenous within groups, with national identity playing the ultimate uniting role. Elsewhere, Tao highlights the tension between global and national identity among Chinese students who study in the UK as they navigate the differences between a traditional Chinese view of global citizenship – ‘a shared destiny of all mankind’ (Ibid.: 211) – and the broad Western approach of seeking a more just and sustainable world.

Third, there is repeated mention of the extent to which local context can support or hinder engagement in GCE, in relation to both affective and active aspects. De Angelis’s ethnographic study in Jamaica notes that social spaces beyond the classroom have a profound impact on learning, and can either

reinforce or undermine lessons and perspectives taught in school. Similarly, Mitsuko Kukita, in her longitudinal case studies of engagement in GCE in Japan examined how person, place, context and time could impact an individual's engagement with GCE. Most specifically, she highlights that this is a dynamic situation, with engagement changing over time, sometimes intentionally, sometime not. Such themes are further reinforced by Allen's research with young people of Caribbean heritage in England and Tobago. As well as the impact of different local settings, she observes the factors that have the potential to exclude individuals and groups from GCE, in this case, issues of race, and a perceived lack of relevance of global learning.

Fourth, many studies raise the challenge of neoliberalism as a driving force which has so often hijacked GCE for its own ends. Lee observes that Korean GCE can often be seen as a method by which to develop global talents, as opposed to strive for justice, a perspective echoed by Tao, who notes that Chinese students coming to the UK felt that attaining a global outlook was a priority for the purpose of securing the edge in a competitive job market upon their return home. In England, Strachan's study found that GCE within science teaching is often valued primarily as a means to improve engagement with content of the primary curriculum. Such a perspective is also evident in higher education: Eten Angyagre voices concern that the apparent key motivation for adopting global learning principles in a Ghanaian university was to aid the journey to being recognised as a world-class, research-intensive university. This view is mirrored in Kraska Birbeck's four case studies of universities in Poland, England, Brazil and the US which found that internationalisation and globalisation were strongly linked to issues of prestige in the world of academia.

Lastly, this publication considers to what extent GCE is something over which teachers (and pupils) feel they have ownership, or whether it is something done 'to' them. To borrow from Kennedy's (2005) model of professional development, is GCE transmissive or transformative? Several studies highlight models of GCE which are mainly transmissive: for example, in Korea, Lee sees that while teachers are viewed as having agency, in practice this is interpreted as possessing the capacity to implement reform policies that have been already set. Soysal paints a mixed picture of the situation in Turkish Initial Teacher

Education, arguing that while there are elements that would be generally considered transmissive (in particular, a strong emphasis on content, as opposed to dispositions), there are other signs that the approach may be moving towards one which is more transformative, as teachers are overtly positioned within policy documents as social and moral leaders, who play an active role in shaping Turkey and the world. While teacher agency can certainly be supported or undermined in policy documents, teachers' views of themselves are no less important. In a Greek context, Efthymiou initiated a plan-act-review process with primary school teachers to explore issues of GCE; while the teachers' context remained static throughout, they changed personally, and reported that the biggest change was not knowledge or skills acquisition, but their capacity to bring the own voice to bear on the issues at hand. This study was, for them, genuinely transformative.

To conclude: with its variety of methods, and yet clear convergence of themes, *Research in Global Learning* manages to achieve its stated aims. For me, its greatest asset was the wide variety of contexts in which research was undertaken; the differing environments, outlooks and settings of each of the fifteen countries included in the text bring enormous richness to the perspectives offered, and provide an illuminating glimpse into places and systems that may well be unfamiliar to readers. In doing so, this book provides insight into three different spheres: a window on the global world itself, a window on the world of research in global learning, and a window on the world of GCE.

**Note:** *Research in Global Learning* is published by UCL Press and is available in an open access digital copy that can be downloaded at [www.uclpress.co.uk](http://www.uclpress.co.uk).

## References

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