Fostering Global Citizenship Through Student Mobility

COVID-19 and the 4th Wave in Internationalization of Education

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Abstract

Although the phenomenon of student mobility can be traced back to over a thousand years, a remarkable increase began from 1995 when the World Trade Organization released the *General Agreement on Trade in Services*, making higher education a tradable commodity. International mobility programs have the potential to provide the environment for global citizenship by empowering students to be resilient and become citizens of the world. Higher education institutions are clamoring to prepare students for living in highly diverse societies, and countries use the soft power of international exchanges to develop goodwill. However, the striking increase in student mobility has suddenly come to a dramatic halt in recent months globally due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the impact on international students has been most severe. In this context, this paper briefly discusses the evolution of student mobility and how it fosters global citizenship.

Keywords

international students – student mobility – COVID-19 – higher education – online learning

1 Introduction

The global challenges we face in the 21st century require urgent combined action by the countries of the world to mitigate the challenges posed by climate change (e.g. rising temperatures affecting sea level, storms, droughts, livestock, food and water shortage), advances in technology and increased automation, terrorism, population migration of refugees and displaced persons, human rights violations to name a few. Added to this most recently is the unprecedented dilemma of COVID-19 due to its global reach and yet unknown health effects with uncertainty as to who will receive the vaccine when available although it has impacted every aspect of social and financial life in our planet.

Although the 21st century is marked by a rise in the global economy and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (e.g. Artificial Intelligence such as driverless cars), the impact of globalization and the technological revolution had already necessitated the learning of new skills and a change of perspective in what to value (e.g. sustainable development). There has been a heightened sense of interdependence among countries of the world (despite nationalistic rhetoric by some political leaders). Reflecting society as it does, education is at the forefront in being largely responsible for the development of skills and values that will prepare future generations to face the scale, scope and complexity of the transformations that will shape our future. As Klaus Schwab says in his book *The Fourth Industrial Revolution* (2017),

“We stand on the brink of a technological revolution that will fundamentally alter the way we live, work, and relate to one another... We do not yet know just how it will unfold, but one thing is clear: the response to it must be integrated and comprehensive, involving all stakeholders of the global polity, from the public and private sectors to academia and civil society.” (Quoted in Schumacher, 2020)

One significant response of educational institutions, particularly at the tertiary level, has been internationalization involving both internal changes and international outreach and collaboration. There is considerable confusion about the term ‘internationalization’ because multiple factors affect the process (Knight, 2004) and there is the danger of it becoming a “catchall phrase for everything and anything international” (de Wit, 2002, p.114). Here it is taken to refer to “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of ... education”(Knight, 2003, p.2).

From the point of view of education, internationalization implied open-mindedness to other cultures and peoples. In comparative education, there is a current move to integrate international, global, and intercultural

dimensions (coined as the internationalization process) and thus merge previously fragmented fields so as to lead to new understandings in the critical field of internationalization (Comparative and International Education Society, 2018). In the West, the impact of feminist and post-colonial theories, Orientalism and Critical Race theories have been changing the focus in pedagogy from Western, male, Christian, heterosexual, middle class perspectives to include the intersectional experiences of marginalized groups, multiple cultures and world religions (curricula changes, emphasis on intercultural communication, understanding diversity, teacher training, inclusive education, etc.). Along with these internal changes towards internationalization aimed at fostering global citizenship in students to become resilient and critical citizens so as to have peaceful and sustainable societies, there have been increasing efforts to include international experiences through various avenues: student and faculty mobility as well as institutional outreach (e.g. branch campuses, international collaborations). Mobility is a two-way process involving students and faculty going to, as well as coming from other countries. Global citizenship education has emerged as a necessary if not sufficient concept in education for intercultural communication and preparing students for an unknown future.

This paper is a reflective essay on the significance of global citizenship education (GCE) in today's conflict-ridden but interconnected world and the substantial role that student exchanges can play in developing global citizens. While issues of affordability and lack of equal opportunity for all in student mobility/exchanges have been problems, the pandemic has focused the global gaze on inequalities in all sectors of life among and within countries. Several questions arise both for GCE and student mobility. What conceptual and pedagogical implications does COVID-19 have for GCE? How are students who go to other countries for study, research or training (international students) grappling with the dilemmas they are currently facing in the present COVID-19 pandemic? How are they dealing with the fact that the pandemic isn't simply a disruption but a long-term challenge that makes their situation tenuous? Furthermore, how are institutions handling the impact of the pandemic on teaching and learning, and with helping their international students, some of whom could not return home due to travel restrictions? What are the institutions doing about the loss in revenue with the sudden decline in enrolments of international students? What recommendations can help support international students in their host countries? This paper will address some of these questions.

Although international students may be at various educational levels, the focus here is on student mobility at the tertiary level which includes short-term courses in colleges or universities, or long-term programs at universities

both at the undergraduate or post-graduate levels, and internships such as student teaching. The term international student is not used by all countries in the same way. For example, a foreign student (e.g. on permanent residence status) is not necessarily an international student. We use the term 'international student' to mean those who have traveled to a country other than their own to participate in educational activities (UNESCO, 2015).

2 Comparative Education and the Roots of International Student Mobility

Although there is an evident link between internationalization and the field of comparative education, traditionally from the scholarly point of view, theoretical and empirically rigorous research studies on themes of international student mobility have not been popular topics of research and publication in the major comparative education journals (Streightweiser et al., 2012). Lately however, there has been a striking increase in interesting research by emerging scholars and doctoral students on issues related to student mobility exploring the challenges involved in the mobility of people in tertiary institutions. A recent literature review points out that the number of academic articles on the topic of international students that were published in the Web of Science Core Collection rose from 35 in 1995 to 356 in 2018 (Jing et al., 2020). A notable evidence for student mobility as a new trend in comparative education is that in 2017, the 'Study Abroad and International Student' Special Interest Group was created under the Comparative and International Education Society. This Special Interest Group as well as other groups have been active in providing online webinars on international education during the pandemic when face-to-face interaction is not possible. These have been keeping scholars working on international educational cooperation digitally and have tremendous potential to contribute to an interconnected world at a critical time.

The concept of exchange of ideas between countries is embedded in the history of learning itself. We can trace the exchange of ideas and scholars to Chinese travelers such as Fa Hsien, Sung Yun, Hsuan Tsang and I Tsing who visited India between AD 400–700. Interested in Buddhist scriptures in Sanskrit and Pali, these travelers also introduced Chinese culture to India. During the Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 AD), the Silk Road which crossed Asia from China to Rome while very important for scarce goods such as silk and gold, was also a means of exchanging ideas that affected all the countries along that route. Formal study abroad can be traced to the West, when Emo of Friesland, traveled from northern Holland to study at Oxford University in 1190 (Lee, 2012).

In 1754, Swiss diplomat Emmerich de Vattel, encouraged the exchange of professors among various nations. In the study of Comparative Education, it is known that French educator Marc-Antoine Jullien, around 1792 started negotiating with Louis XVI for the creation of a worldwide commission on education composed of educational associations from the various European states with the aim of exchanging ideas.

Throughout history, education has been used as a tool of cultural diplomacy through exchange programs and international study. In his book, *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*, Joseph Nye (2005) defines soft power as the ability to attract and persuade people to get what you want. The soft power of ideas appeals directly to the psychological, intellectual, and emotional states of young people by winning their “sympathy, support, and admiration” (Samuel, 2012, p. 5). It can be a powerful and subtle political tool as compared to the hard power of military or police force. There are many examples of countries which have concentrated a variety of resources to their educational programs to “win the hearts and minds” (Nye, 2004, p.1) of young people. Among them, Britain, France and Germany have created the British Council, Alliance Française and the Goethe Institute to make various aspects of their countries and languages popular throughout the world. The United States of America began its well-known Fulbright program during the cold war. Australia had international education as part of its foreign policy during the Colombo plan, and in 1985 alone it brought over 20,000 students to Australia (Tyler & Van Lewen, 2020). All these well-known institutions develop soft power by working in other countries but also by bringing students to their countries. Many of these students return to their home countries to become leaders in various fields, including heads of states and have an affinity with the country where they had their education. Another very successful student exchange program is the flagship Erasmus+ program, an important part of the European Union's foreign policy which enables international study abroad among its member states for 4 million Europeans and undoubtedly creates cohesion in the Union. A more recent example is China's Confucius Institutes which started in 2004 and has already spread over 104 countries where it promotes Chinese language and culture.

Till the recent COVID-19 crisis, two factors largely affected the international student mobility. Firstly, globalization made national borders porous with the movement of ideas, people, goods, and capital so that students travel internationally to get higher education as well as school education in other countries. Secondly, the *General Agreement on Trade in Services* (GATS) of the World Trade Organization made education into a tradable commodity in a global economy and more easily accessible. These aspects among others, unleashed neoliberal

policies in education. Privatization, commercialization and commodification of education, in addition to other forces of globalization increased the movement of students and faculty. This has encouraged the movement of faculty as well as students. Motivated by the aspirations of obtaining a better understanding of other cultures, pursuing higher quality of education and/or the subsequent immigration opportunity, over 4.6 million students studied in foreign institutions across the world in 2017, which was more than three times the number in 1995 when the GATS started to take effect (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018). The top host countries of the international students were the USA, UK, China, Australia, France, Canada, Russia, and Germany (Institute of International Education, 2017), whereas the major sending countries/territories included China, India, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Nigeria, and France (IOM's Global Migration Data Analysis Center, 2020).

3 Waves of International Student Mobility

Choudaha (2017) identified three overlapping waves of international student mobility. Wave I (1999–2006) was focused on “attracting global talent”. In tertiary education before this period, the international student mobility was stable at about 1 million but grew significantly in the 1990s (OECD, 2017). Wave II (2006–2013) with the financial crisis, budget cuts prompted recruitment strategies to attract foreign students in order to get higher foreign students fees often at the expense of standards of admissions (especially in language competency); this coincided with aspirations of the growing middle class in several countries of the geographical South, particularly China and India, who could afford the high fees. By 2010 international student numbers in a growing number of countries rose to 4.2 million (OECD, 2017). Wave III (2013–2019) showed a levelling off rather than an expected increase in international student mobility due to several factors on the supply side of education such as the impact of economic slow-down, Brexit, and anti-immigrant attitudes in several Western countries. On the supply side of higher education, during the last two decades both China and India have invested considerable resources in developing their higher education systems and both countries are aggressively focusing on entering the top global rankings. There is more South-South mobility and several countries which had initially sent their students abroad have themselves become host countries for international students. While demand for global experience remains strong, the option of global education in local settings is getting attractive with branch campuses of Western universities opening in many countries.

We may now be in the Wave IV (2020-?) due to the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although there has been tremendous growth in internationally mobile students so that in 2017 there were over 5.3 million as compared to 2 million in 2000 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018), COVID-19 has already had a profound impact on education, human capital formation and the welfare of people at all levels. While there is cooperation as well as competition in rushing to find a vaccine that would stop the rapidly increasing cases and deaths in many regions of the Global North as in the South, it is doubtful that this danger will go away soon. And, no matter what the scenario is with regard to a cure or a vaccine, there will be significant disruption in international student mobility. This wave would likely see restructuring of mobility patterns with a shift in destination areas from North America, Europe and Australia towards Asia (universities ranking higher) and the Middle East (branch campuses) (Altbach & de Wit, 2020). Until the pandemic hit (most visibly from January 2020), more than 6 million students crossed borders around the world for higher education programs of one year or more, and there were a considerable number of international border crossings for short term programs (Marginson, 2020). The U.S. enrolls 22% of all international students; the UK enrolls 11% and China enrolls 8% (Dennis, 2020). The impact of cancellation of on-campus classes in schools and universities around the globe has been devastating as we will see below.

4 Benefits of International Student Mobility

While the understanding of study abroad continues to evolve, the goals of going abroad to study started to broaden when its potential for becoming a transformative experience that would help in global citizenship formation was recognized. The exchanges of students among countries brings good will (soft power) and builds networks which help in trade and cross-cultural communication further down the line. Moreover, the importance of the intellectual and professional development of the student, and also of the enrichment of one's general education through being in a foreign environment was apparent. Research indicates that study abroad programs enable students to gain a better understanding of themselves, and of their own culture and country. They are confronted with comparing and evaluating elements of their own culture with those of other cultures. Hopefully, through a reflexive learning process they can develop the ability to make connections with social and historical issues and recognize the inter-connectedness of events. In addition, interaction with people of other countries makes students comfortable in multicultural settings

(Parsons, 2010). In terms of personal benefits, research shows very high rates of return: one study shows that 96% students have increased self-confidence, 97% feel more mature and 98% understand their own values more clearly (Dwyer & Peters, 2004). Moreover, intercultural interactions with people of another country also increases the students' capacity for critical thinking and even improves the ability of expression (Hoffa, 2007).

In addition to individual benefits, societal and political aims such as reconciliation programming and furthering of international understanding through soft power is acknowledged in global peace-building. International experience not only highlights the parochial ideas of students but it has the potential to transcend their insular view of the world by confronting students with other perspectives. More recently, many study-abroad programmers are looking to community service alongside study to enrich the student learning experience. Referred to as "service-learning", the exposure to another culture and language while encountering at the same instance, civic and social issues in real time are likely to broaden the learning experience. Volunteering abroad is not in itself a new concept, but along with discussion and analysis in structured programs the combination can raise awareness at a higher level and make one's learning a fruitful experience.

The benefits of students crossing borders have been tremendous. Not only do international students contribute in multiple ways to the provider countries, there is also a transformative effect on international students as well as on local students. So, both sending and host countries benefit. A most important result of this is that it brings the world closer with deeper understanding and facilitates cooperation (Marginson, 2020). International exchanges have been particularly significant over the last few years in a period of escalating anti-international rhetoric. The need to focus on global citizens is urgent although global learning pedagogies and programs are under attack with increased xenophobia and extreme nationalism around the world, and especially in the U.S. which attracts the largest number of foreign students. Ironically, it was the U.S. Senate that recognized the benefits of international study. It designated 2006 as the Year of Study Abroad, and issued a resolution providing 13 reasons why Study Abroad programs are beneficial and crucial to the success of future citizens and the nation as a whole including global literacy, values sharing, cultural awareness, regional specialization, foreign language acquisition, expanding personal interests, practical training, and an understanding of international affairs (Vistawide, n.d.).

The "economic contributions of international students are in addition to the immeasurable academic and cultural value these students bring to our campuses and local communities" (National Association of Foreign Student

Affairs [NAFSA], n.d.). According to NAFSA, the world's largest non-profit Association of International Educators dedicated to international education and exchange, international students in the U.S. contributed \$41 billion and supported 458,290 jobs in the economy in 2018–2019. Today, neo-liberal agendas for economic educational competence are picking up great momentum. Intercultural communication and working with people all over the world are tremendous assets in a global market place. The advantage of international study cannot be overestimated. “Employers are looking for graduates who can communicate well with others, both in person and in writing. They know the importance of cross-cultural understanding and an appreciation for different points of view” (Curran, 2007, p. 1).

5 Challenges in International Student Mobility

A major problem in international student mobility is that in most cases, the students need to contribute financially towards the experience. This prevents many students from participating in international programs requiring travel and this is a matter of social justice. It is urgent that universities develop models that would enable all students to participate in these experiences.

Intellectually, what one gets out of an international experience is dependent on an individual's perspective. Mark Twain's words are as relevant today as they were in 1869: the cultural baggage that people carry abroad prevents them from fully understanding what they were seeing. To really benefit from the foreign experience is not just to visit places but in processing and appropriating it into one's own realm (Hoffa, 2007). The programs need to be structured well but not all programs have the critical reflective aspect which would provide global citizenship education because studying abroad should help students to heighten their awareness of other points of view, raise their consciousness and engage with others and not merely be a sight-seeing tour. A major challenge for internationally mobile students is connecting with the world and its future: transcending individual and group differences, developing an awareness of rising inequalities and their responsibilities to their local communities, but also to the world at large.

In practical terms, international students in a foreign university may face a series of challenges – the most important being culture shock. They often face differences in the societal area but most importantly in the academic environment. Other challenges involve socializing with classmates from other cultures, developing friendships with locals, and perceiving racial discrimination (Jing et al., 2020). For example, many students come from cultures where

speaking out in class is not common: asking questions in class, participating in discussions and role playing are not what they feel comfortable doing. Another possible problem is the stereotypes or biases (conscious or unconscious) that they encounter. Very often a direct consequence of this is that students of one nationality or ethnic/linguistic group stick together which can have both good and bad effects. The negative aspect is that when one just stays with one's group that person has less opportunity to get the advantages of being integrated into the host society, culture and language. The positive effect is that students who are far away from their homes support one another and feel less isolated than if they were alone. Furthermore, these groups of students help out new students in various ways to establish themselves in the new surroundings. When they do not have a critical mass international students can be isolated and suffer consequences such as depression and loneliness.

6 Dilemmas Brought by COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has posed unprecedented challenges for international students because tertiary institutions went online very quickly. First, closure of educational institutions results in loss of learning as well as loss in earning. Loss of learning is not easy to make up. Although it is very impressive that many education institutions in the North, and increasingly in the South have shifted to online learning, that is not a "proper substitute for a physical mobility experience" says a report on the Erasmus+ program in Europe (Gabriels & Benke-Åberg, 2020). One of the most important reasons why students cross international borders to study abroad is to have the experience of living in another culture, developing international networks by socializing with students from many countries and cultures and developing broad knowledge about the world. Not only are there problems with the technical implementation of online courses, but high-speed internet access varies substantially among geographical regions and among socio-economically disadvantaged people in the same area. Moreover, not everyone has a computer although increasing numbers of people have access to smartphones.

Furthermore, international students suffer immediate and long-term implications of the shutdown of campuses which are in addition to those faced by local students. Overall, reports indicate that this crisis has had a very disruptive effect on the mobility of the students, due in large part to travel restrictions by many countries. Besides the epidemiological and economic impact felt by all sectors of education, international students have been greatly disadvantaged in terms of the availability of transportation to go home. Not only

did some have no transportation to return home and if they did, they had the extra expense of traveling home if and when possible. Many students have been stuck in the host countries because the international and even national borders were very suddenly closed. A report from the Erasmus+ program indicates that besides visa problems and residence permits, international students encountered problems in accessing basic needs such as food, sanitary products and medical support (Gabriels & Beneke-Åberg, 2020). Expenses for lodging and other necessities were cut off for many students who felt stranded.

Not only are there travel restrictions and severe financial problems, lower-income students are suffering disproportionately. Since most tertiary institutions are going online for the immediate future at least, different time-zones pose problems of attending classes synchronously from other countries, in addition to lack of resources which prevent many students from succeeding in online environments. Most regrettably, international students from certain countries, especially China and South-East Asia have been subjected to racism and xenophobia which affect their psychological and physical well-being and adds to their stress.

COVID-19 has created a financial crisis. Due to lock-downs the economies have been hit hard. For internationally mobile students the impact is sudden and immediate because they cannot travel. The world's economy is expected to shrink 4.9% this year and this means less funds for international programs. Reduction in revenue from student fees will impact international mobility greatly. Nontuition revenues will also be affected when students are not on campus. Countries such as Australia depend heavily on international student revenue. Australian universities will need to rethink their business model now that their main source of revenue is drying up (Rizvi, 2020). Almost 35% of their students are international (mainly from China), and according to the Australian system of higher education has been hit perhaps harder than many other university systems by the coronavirus crisis (Rizvi, 2020). In Europe, the flagship programme Erasmus+ might encounter serious cuts instead of its anticipated rise in funding. In the United States, one of the larger providers of study abroad, the Council on International Educational Exchange has announced that it will eliminate 600 jobs. Financial incentives such as scholarships to international students which have brought thousands of foreign trainees and scholars to host countries and provided talented people to the workforce of many Western countries will dry up. Sports events and international conferences both encourage global citizenship and influence world-mindedness and cooperation, and those aspects will suffer. If the stock market stays weak the value of endowments will plummet (Bevins, Bryant, Krishnan, & Law, 2020). There will be less money for research and scholarships.

The lack of ability of the U.S. to control the COVID-19 situation is also having a drastic effect on international students. The present administration in the U.S. has recently suspended foreign workers visas, and in early July 2020 the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced that international students who are studying for their degrees will have to leave the country or risk deportation if their institutions go entirely on line. It is a Catch 22 situation: face-to-face instruction on campus would risk COVID-19 infection. But the fact that the U.S. has failed to stop the sharp escalation of deaths and cases due to the pandemic and is among the least successful countries in the world in controlling the virus, has obliged many institutions of higher education to move entirely online in the absence of a cure or a vaccine. However, the government rescinded the policy after institutions such as Harvard and MIT filed a lawsuit against the current administration over the blocking of international student visas. More than a dozen attorneys general challenged the policy. According to the Migration Policy Institute (2018), 1.2 million students were enrolled in 8,700 institutions in the U.S. in 2018 and would have been affected by the visa restriction.

7 International Students and Global Citizenship Education

Globalization, internationalization and global citizenship education are theoretically linked and the concept of GCE has evolved as the integration of people, institutions and the economy have intensified over the last century. Global citizenship is about a “change in the level of consciousness”, and in education it should be part of a dynamic, transformational framework to prepare for a future world (Haigh, 2013). Critical global citizenship education, through reflexive learning processes, is ultimately about finding non-violent means to achieve global peace (Ghosh, 2017).

There are several classifications of all these processes but we will discuss here three dominant interconnected approaches of globalization which have been identified by McGrew (2000) which Shultz links to GCE (Shultz, 2007): a neoliberal approach, a radical/conflict approach, and a critical/transformationalist approach. From the neoliberal approach which focuses on the economic aspect (a single global market based on liberal transnational trade), global citizenship would imply a liberal approach to capital and technology. The radical approach, on the other hand, sees Western imperialism as the driving force for domination and economic power. From this perspective GCE is the analysis and challenge of global structures that create global inequalities. The third critical/transformational approach does not see the North-South

divide. Rather the elites and poor are transnational and can be in rich and poor countries and their differences are seen in multiple spheres such as cultural, social, environmental, political and economic (Schultz, 2007). GCE from this perspective sees cross-border relationships and diversity as essential towards building a common humanity. Social justice and inclusive education link the local and the global by building strong relationships, communities and states.

Studying abroad, whether in short programs as part of a program, or as an international student who does a full degree in another country and culture has the potential for helping individuals to develop a holistic view of the world as a global system in which all people are participants. The idea is not to provide education *about* global citizenship but rather an education *for* global citizenship to youth by empowering them to be resilient and become citizens of the world because the very existence of this earth is at stake. Studying abroad, by engaging students in thought, in discussion, in active learning, becomes the basis for global citizenship.

Some empirical studies have confirmed the positive effect of study abroad experience on global citizenship development. Based on interviews with four cohorts of students at the Global Citizenship Programme in Lehigh University, Hendershot and Sperandio (2009) found that study abroad experiences, particularly interactions the students had directly with those from other cultures, had the greatest effect on their global citizen identity development. Similarly, by examining American students' reflections on their participation in a two-week study abroad program in Bangladesh, Gambino and Hashim (2016) report that well-designed short-term study abroad programs can not only help deepen students' knowledge and understanding of the complex global problems, but also intensify their ethical commitments as global citizens thereby serving as an important component in promoting global or cosmopolitan civic education.

In addition to the above-mentioned results, some researchers have revealed the relationships between study abroad programmatic features and the development outcomes of global citizenship. For example, Tarrant, Rubin, and Stoner (2014) find that study abroad in itself is not sufficient for cultivating a global citizenry. Rather, it is the combination of location (study abroad or not) and academic focus that produces the best outcome for global citizenship. In retrospective survey responses from 2,250 American college alumni who studied abroad between 1995 and 2005, Horn and Fry (2013) demonstrated that studying abroad in developing countries, participating in an international service-learning program, and participating in a longer-term program associated positively with the odds that a student will engage in development volunteerism, which is a critical form of global citizenship. According to these salient research findings, we encourage higher education institutions to incorporate

short-term study abroad into their educational programs to prepare their students for the increasingly globalized world along with developing international curricular to enhance inbound international students' global awareness and intercultural competence. By receiving deliberate instruction, students will become knowledgeable about global issues and will be able to obtain the knowledge, skills, and values that are necessary for global civic engagement.

In the meantime, it should be noted that global citizenship does not exclude citizenship in one's country. One must be rooted in an identity in order to have other identities. Simplistic and single-levelled approaches to citizenship are giving way to multi-dimensional and multi-level practices reflecting the complexity of the various actors and their engagement/activities involved from the local to the global levels. Global citizens develop fluid cultural identities that transcend national and local boundaries (Tsolidis, 2002). The context of traditional education is limited to the nation-state, whereas the context of global education extends beyond the national borders, embracing the multidimensional community worldwide (Davies et al., 2005; Spring, 2008). Becoming a global citizen simply means that we re-think the concept of "citizenship" through a cosmopolitan lens, as a "global field of negotiated practices" rather than as an institutionally and legally determined status (Jahanbegloo, 2020). International mobility situates students in institutions with a wide spectrum of peoples and cultures in the world and highlights the interdependence that cultures and nations have with each other (Hobson & Silova, 2014). Effective teachers lead students to understand the difficulty and complexity of multicultural, anti-racist, anti-sexist and intersectional issues and encourage students not only to engage in dialogue but to stand up and denounce racism, sexism and discrimination in the midst of potential tension. Critical global citizenship education probes the effects of complex global structures, power relations and practices that marginalize people.

8 Conclusion

Conceptually, global citizenship represents a set of values deemed important for society as it becomes more integrated and interactive globally. Empowering youth to be responsible, innovative, engaged and critical citizens is a tremendous responsibility for education. Since youth spend a large part of their years in the educational system, the schools must take their task of socializing youth seriously by equipping them with intercultural competence and an understanding of difference. Reaching across political borders to different people, cultures, religions implies developing ethical and cosmopolitan values and a level of (modesty) "epistemic humility" (Jahanbegloo, 2020).

At the moment, COVID-19 has forced higher education institutions to recalibrate their normal ways of teaching students - both local and international - by innovative but distance teaching. This is going to keep them floating for a while but already international enrolments have been drastically reduced. The fundamental elements of the global macroenvironment, of higher education and consequently for international students in particular, are being threatened by the COVID-19 crisis. Does the pandemic signal a new normal with greatly reduced student mobility at a time when geopolitical tensions are rising? The pandemic has revealed the structural inequalities in higher education but it has also shown the resilience of international students and how they have survived in the face of extreme difficulties. Although students internationally have survived other crises (e.g. 9/11), the challenge of this pandemic is unprecedented because of a fundamental shift in ground realities. The new normal will be different from the past. While the transition is likely to be confusing, educational policy makers must seize the opportunity to reimagine international student mobility programs for students equally without excluding those who cannot afford them on the one hand and on the other hand, that will optimize the possibility of global citizenship education for youth that will lead to a peaceful and sustainable world.

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