

TOWARDS A CLOSER INTEGRATION OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND SOCIAL STUDIES: A STRATEGIC APPROACH FOR ENHANCING MULTICULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

This study examined the integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in Social Studies in enhancing multicultural understanding among undergraduate students in the Universities in Delta State. The study was carried out in Delta State University, Abraka and University of Delta, Agbor. A descriptive survey research design was employed, with a population of 100 undergraduate students. Using a purposive sampling technique, 100 students were selected to participate in the study. The study was guided by three research questions and three hypotheses. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire designed to measure students' exposure to GCE concepts and their impact on multicultural understanding. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were analyzed with t-test and chi-square. The findings revealed that the integration of GCE in Social Studies significantly enhances students' awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity, promoting tolerance, empathy, and global perspectives. However, the study also identified challenges such as insufficient instructional resources and inadequate teacher preparedness for delivering GCE content effectively. Based on these findings, the study recommends enhanced teacher training programs, the development of GCE-specific curriculum resources, and increased institutional support for implementing GCE initiatives. These measures are vital to maximize the potential of GCE in fostering multicultural understanding and preparing students for the complexities of a globalized society

Keywords: *Global Citizenship Education, Social Studies, Multicultural Understanding, Undergraduate Students*

Introduction

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is designed to provide learners with the essential knowledge, skills, and values to effectively navigate and contribute to an increasingly interconnected world. It emphasizes the understanding of global issues, appreciates cultural diversity, and fosters a sense of shared responsibility for the planet (Laden, 2023). In Nigeria, there has been a growing advocacy for the integration of GCE into educational policies in order to prepare students for global challenges and promote sustainable development. The integration of GCE is particularly pertinent in Social Studies, which serves as a platform for citizenship education by focusing on development of informed and active citizens. By incorporating GCE into Social Studies curricula, Nigerian universities can adopt a holistic approach to citizenship education, fostering both national and global perspectives (Akanni, 2022).

The integration of GCE into Social Studies curricula in Nigerian universities, particularly in Delta State, seems to be in its nascent stage. While Social Studies inherently covers aspect of citizenship education, the explicit incorporation of global citizenship concepts appears limited. Garba, et al. (2024) averred that the current Social Studies curriculum primarily focuses on national issues, with minimal emphasis on global perspectives. This gap suggests a need for curriculum reform to include GCE principles that address global challenges and multicultural understanding. Furthermore, Nwabudike, et al. (2024) emphasized that integrating GCE into higher education curricula can enhance students' awareness of sustainable development and global issues, underscoring the importance of revising existing programmes to incorporate GCE elements.

Integrating GCE into Social Studies has the potential to significantly enhance students' appreciation of cultural diversity and their ability to engage constructively with peers from different backgrounds. Nwabudike, et al. (2024) found that GCE plays a significant role in enhancing sustainable development awareness among students in Nigerian higher education institutions. They claimed that through the incorporation of global perspectives, students become more attuned to critical global challenges such as poverty, climate change, and social inequality. GCE encourages students to think critically about these issues and their interconnectedness, fostering a deeper understanding of sustainable development goals and the urgency of addressing them. Recent research has highlighted the importance of preparing university students in Nigeria for global citizenship through virtual learning platforms, which can complement GCE initiatives (Johnson, 2020). Additionally, a study by Akanni (2022) highlighted the potential of Social Studies Education as a platform for the dispensation of global citizenship education. The author believes that GCE will expose students to a broad spectrum of global challenges and encourages them to think critically and equip them with the knowledge and perspective needed to address complex, interconnected problems. This assertion underscores the importance of integrating GCE into Nigerian higher education to nurture a generation of graduates who are conscious of global issues and committed to contributing to sustainable development.

In a diverse society like Nigeria, promoting multicultural understanding is crucial for social cohesion and national development. Educational initiatives that emphasize cultural awareness and sensitivity could help bridge ethnic and cultural divides, fostering harmony and mutual respect among students from different backgrounds. Multicultural understanding refers to the recognition, appreciation, and respect for the diverse cultural backgrounds, traditions, and perspectives that exist within a society. It involves acknowledging the value of cultural diversity and fostering an environment where individuals from various cultural groups can coexist harmoniously, contributing to a more inclusive and cohesive community. Multicultural understanding is essential for building inclusive societies where diversity is celebrated (Torres & Tarozzi, 2020). Integrating global citizenship education into Social Studies curricula could

represent a strategic approach to fostering this understanding among undergraduate students, particularly in culturally diverse regions like Delta and Edo State. By embracing cultural diversity and promoting intercultural dialogue, educational institutions may contribute to the development of a more harmonious and interconnected society.

The integration of GCE into Social Studies curricula in Nigeria seems to face several challenges. Al-Ani (2022) identifies limited financial resources for GCE initiatives, resistance to curriculum integration and change, and a lack of trained educators as significant obstacles. The author added that these challenges hinder the effective implementation of GCE in Nigerian higher education. Additionally, a lack of awareness among students about the relevance of GCE to their academic and personal lives may further hinder its effectiveness. Many students may not fully understand the concept of global citizenship or how it relates to their personal and professional lives. This lack of awareness may hinder students' engagement with GCE programmes and limit the overall impact of these initiatives. Borgebund and Børhaug (2024) posited that educators, administrators, and policymakers often lack the necessary knowledge or training to effectively implement GCE programmes in schools and made a case for adequate teacher training and formulation of clear policies to support the inclusion of GCE in the educational system. However, there are opportunities to enhance its effectiveness. Strategies include integrating global citizenship aspects into existing courses, including GCE in the mission statements and strategic plans of higher education institutions for institutional backing, providing training and development programmes or educators to integrate GCE into their teaching practices effectively, and introducing new interdisciplinary courses focusing on global citizenship (Waghid, 2023).

Furthermore, a pilot study conducted by researchers made a case for the de-colonization of GCE in Nigeria to be embedded in a continuous professional teacher development (CPTD) programmes. This approach would enable educators and stakeholders to acquire the skills necessary to identify and manage disparities in knowledge sharing, values, ethics, and social responsibility (Adu & Olowu, 2022). By addressing these challenges and leveraging the opportunities, Nigerian universities could play a pivotal role in developing students' competencies to engage with global issues, appreciate cultural diversity, and act as responsible global citizens.

Studies suggest that exposure to GCE could foster essential skills such as empathy, cultural sensitivity, and a global mindset. For example, Johnson (2020) emphasized that engagement with international case studies and collaborative projects enables students to better understand global challenges, including climate change, migration, and social inequality. Such experiences help students recognize the interconnected nature of global and local issues, encouraging them to consider solutions that transcend national boundaries.

Integrating Global Citizenship Education into Social Studies curricula in Nigerian universities is essential for preparing students to navigate and contribute positively to an increasingly interconnected world. While there are challenges to this integration, such as limited resources and resistance to change, the potential benefits in enhancing multicultural understanding and promoting sustainable development are significant. By adopting strategic approaches to curriculum reform and educator training, Nigerian higher education institutions can foster a generation of globally conscious and responsible citizens.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the recognized importance of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in preparing students to engage effectively in a globalized society, its integration into Social Studies appears inconsistent and underdeveloped in many contexts. Challenges such as inadequate teacher training, limited curricular resources, and varying levels of institutional support may hinder the effective

implementation of GCE. Nigeria's socio-political context, marked by ethnic tensions and economic disparities seems to further complicate the effective implementation of GCE. A lack of awareness among students and educators about its relevance could limit engagement with GCE principles. Additionally, local concerns may overshadow global issues, diminishing students' motivation to embrace GCE as a tool for addressing broader societal challenges. Furthermore, there is possibly a lack of empirical evidence on how well current practices in GCE equip students with the necessary competencies to address global challenges, foster intercultural understanding, and promote sustainable development. This study seeks to address these gaps by exploring the current state of GCE implementation, identifying barriers, and proposing strategies to enhance its effectiveness in fostering globally competent students.

Purpose of the Study

The following specific purposes were stated to guide the study:

1. To examine the level of awareness of GCE among Social Studies undergraduate students in universities in Delta State.
2. To determine the contribution of global citizenship education to multicultural understanding among undergraduate students in universities in Delta State
3. To examine the challenges faced in embracing GCE among Social Studies undergraduate students in universities in Delta State.

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of 100 students in the University of Delta, Agbor and Delta State University Abraka. There was no sampling since the population was manageable. The study used a structured questionnaire titled "Global Citizenship Education and Cross-cultural understanding Questionnaire (GCECCUQ)" as the instruments for data collection. The instrument was structured on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instrument was face validated by three experts, two from the Department of Social Science Education, Delta State University Abraka and one from the Measurement and Evaluation Unit, Department of Science Education Faculty of Education, University of Delta, Agbor and the reliability was value was .81 using the Cronbach's alpha which was considered high enough for the instrument usability. The Global Citizenship Education and Cross-Cultural Understanding Questionnaire (GCECCUQ) was administered in person over a period of two weeks at the University of Delta, Agbor, and Delta State University, Abraka. Necessary permissions were obtained from the relevant departments, and the questionnaires were distributed by the researcher with the assistance of class representatives and lecturers. Respondents were given clear instructions and adequate time to complete the instrument. The 100 copies were successfully retrieved within the two-week period, ensuring a high response rate and reliable data collection. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation scores while the hypotheses were analyzed with t-test and chi-square.

Results

Research Questions 1: What is the level of awareness of global citizenship education among Social Studies undergraduate students in Delta State universities?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Level of Awareness of Global Citizenship Education among Undergraduate Students in Delta State Universities

S/N	Items	X	SD	Remarks
1.	I am aware of the concept of global citizenship education and its objectives.	3.50	1.282	Agreed
2.	I believe that global citizenship education promotes understanding and respect for cultural diversity.	4.17	1.149	Agreed
3.	I have participated in educational activities or programmes that emphasize global citizenship education.	2.27	1.234	Disagreed
4.	The curriculum in my university does not includes topics related to global citizenship education.	2.40	1.408	Disagreed
5.	I am confident in my ability to apply the principles of global citizenship education in real-life situations.	2.42	1.411	Disagreed
Cumulative Mean		3.09		

Note: Criterion Mean = 3.00

Table 1 show that responses regarding awareness of global citizenship education among undergraduate students in Delta State universities varied across different items. They agreed that they are aware of the concept of global citizenship education and its objectives ($\bar{X} = 3.50$, $SD = 1.282$) and believe that global citizenship education promotes understanding and respect for cultural diversity ($\bar{X} = 4.17$, $SD = 1.149$). However, they disagreed on participating in educational activities or programmes that emphasize global citizenship education ($\bar{X} = 2.27$, $SD = 1.234$), noted that their university curriculum does not include topics related to global citizenship education ($\bar{X} = 2.40$, $SD = 1.408$), and expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to apply the principles of global citizenship education in real-life situations ($\bar{X} = 2.42$, $SD = 1.411$). The cumulative mean of 3.09, which is slightly above the criterion mean of 3.00, suggests a general but limited awareness of global citizenship education, with gaps in practical engagement and curriculum integration.

Research Questions 2: What is the level of contribution of global citizenship education to multicultural understanding among undergraduate students in universities in Delta State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Level of Contribution of Global Citizenship Education to Multicultural Understanding among Undergraduate Students

S/N	Items	X	SD	Remarks
1.	I understand the importance of global citizenship in fostering respect and appreciation for cultural diversity.	2.28	1.289	Disagreed
2.	The knowledge I have gained from global citizenship education has helped me understand and appreciate cultural differences.	2.34	1.249	Disagreed
3.	I believe that global citizenship education encourages to students to develop skills to engage with people from different cultural backgrounds.	4.40	.848	Agreed
4.	Through my education on global citizenship. I feel more confident in interacting with individuals from diverse cultural settings.	3.65	1.132	Agreed
5.	Global citizenship education has increased my awareness of the challenges faced by people from different cultures around the world.	4.08	1.107	Agreed

Cumulative Mean **3.49**

Note: Criterion Mean = 3.00

Table 2 show the responses on the contributions of global citizenship education to cross-cultural understanding among Social Studies students. Students disagreed that they understand the importance of global citizenship in fostering respect and appreciation for cultural diversity ($\bar{X} = 2.28$, $SD = 1.289$). They also disagreed that the knowledge they gained from global citizenship education has helped them understand and appreciate cultural differences ($\bar{X} = 2.34$, $SD = 1.249$). However, students agreed that global citizenship education encourages them to develop skills to engage with people from different cultural backgrounds ($\bar{X} = 4.40$, $SD = 0.848$). They agreed that through their education on global citizenship, they feel more confident in interacting with individuals from diverse cultural settings ($\bar{X} = 3.65$, $SD = 1.132$). Additionally, they agreed that global citizenship education has increased their awareness of the challenges faced by people from different cultures around the world ($\bar{X} = 4.08$, $SD = 1.107$). The cumulative mean of 3.49, which is above the criterion mean of 3.00, suggests a positive perception of global citizenship education's contributions to cross-cultural understanding. While students recognize the benefits of global citizenship education in enhancing their skills and awareness, their understanding and application of the core principles to foster cultural diversity remain limited. This implies that although global citizenship education effectively raises students' awareness of global challenges and equips them with skills for engaging in diverse cultural settings, more emphasis is needed to deepen their understanding and ability to appreciate cultural diversity fully.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges hindering the integration of global citizenship education into Social Studies curriculum in universities in Delta State?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Challenges Hindering the Integration of Global Citizenship Education into Social Studies Curriculum.

S/N	Items	X	SD	Remarks
1.	Limited awareness of global citizenship education among students.	3.90	1.281	Agreed
2.	Inadequate availability of educational resources to support implementation.	3.84	1.146	Agreed
3.	Insufficient training for lecturers on global citizenship education concepts.	4.08	1.107	Agreed
4.	Lack of institutional policies promoting cross-cultural understanding.	3.68	1.355	Agreed
5.	Low student engagement in global citizenship education activities.	3.99	1.173	Agreed
Cumulative Mean			3.90	

Note: Criterion Mean = 3.00

Table 3 analyze the challenges faced by Social Studies students in embracing global citizenship education. Students agreed that there is limited awareness of global citizenship education among peers ($\bar{X} = 3.90$, $SD = 1.281$). Inadequate availability of educational resources to support implementation was highlighted ($\bar{X} = 3.84$, $SD = 1.146$). Students strongly agreed that lecturers lack sufficient training in global citizenship education concepts ($\bar{X} = 4.08$, $SD = 1.107$). A lack of institutional policies promoting cross-cultural understanding was noted as a challenge ($\bar{X} = 3.68$, $SD = 1.355$). Students identified low engagement in global citizenship education activities as another barrier ($\bar{X} = 3.99$, $SD = 1.173$). The cumulative mean of 3.90, which is well above the criterion mean of 3.00, indicates significant challenges in implementing global citizenship education. These challenges include inadequate resources, limited training, and a lack of

supportive institutional frameworks, suggesting the need for comprehensive policy reforms and enhanced educational support.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of undergraduate students in University of Delta Agbor and Delta State University Abraka regarding the level of awareness of global citizenship education.

Table 4: t-test comparison between Undergraduate students in University of Delta, Agbor and Delta State University, Abraka regarding the Level of Awareness of Global Citizenship Education

Source of variation	N	\bar{x}	SD	Df	t	P-value
Social Studies students University of Delta, Agbor	50	128.64	15.789			
				176	1.576	.118
Social Studies students, Delta State University, Abraka	50	139.11	19.802			

Table 4 indicate a comparison of the awareness of global citizenship education between Social Studies undergraduate students from the University of Delta, Agbor and Delta State University, Abraka. The mean score (\bar{x}) for students from the University of Delta Agbor is 128.64, with a standard deviation (SD) of 15.789, while the mean score for students from Delta State University, Abraka is 139.11, with a standard deviation of 19.802. The t-test value is 1.576, with a p-value of .118. Since the p-value (.118) is greater than the significance level of .05, the difference in awareness of global citizenship education between the two groups is not statistically significant. Hence, the hypothesis is retained, this implies that undergraduate students from the University of Delta, Agbor and Delta State University Abraka have similar levels of awareness of global citizenship education. There is no significant difference in the awareness of global citizenship education between undergraduate students in the University of Delta, Agbor and Delta State University, Abraka.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant influence of the level of awareness of global citizenship education on multicultural understanding among Social Studies undergraduate students in University of Delta, Agbor, and Delta State University, Abraka.

Table 5: Chi-square Analysis for Influence of Awareness of Global Citizenship Education on Students' Ability to Appreciate Multicultural Understanding

Variables	N	Df	Ls	Crit X2 value	Calc X2 value	Decision
Level of awareness of global citizenship education	100	2	.05	5.991	14.130	Rejected
Level of multicultural understanding						

Table 5 above shows that the calculated chi-square value of 14.130 is greater than the critical chi-square value of 5.991 at a significance level (Ls) of .05 with 2 degrees of freedom (Df). Hence, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant influence of the awareness of global citizenship education on multicultural understanding among Social Studies undergraduate students in University of Delta, Agbor and Delta State University, Abraka, is hereby rejected. This implies that the awareness of global citizenship education significantly influences the ability to appreciate multicultural understanding among undergraduate students in the two universities.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the challenges hindering the adoption of global citizenship education concepts between Social Studies undergraduate students in University of Delta, Agbor and those in Delta State University, Abraka.

Table 6: t-test Comparison between Students offering Social Studies in University of Delta, Agbor and Delta State University Abraka regarding the Challenges Hindering the Integration of Global Citizenship Education into Social Studies Curriculum

Source of variation	N	\bar{x}	SD	Df	T	P value
Social Studies students University of Delta, Agbor	50	148.62	17.886	176	1.607	.121
Social Studies students Delta State University, Abraka	50	159.31	19.902			

The results in Table 6 indicate a comparison of the challenges hindering the effective implementation of global citizenship education between undergraduate students from the University of Delta, Agbor, and Delta State University, Abraka. The mean score (\bar{x}) for students from the University of Delta, Agbor, is 148.62, with a standard deviation (SD) of 17.886, while the mean score for students from Delta State University, Abraka, is 159.31, with a standard deviation of 19.902. The t-test value is 1.607, with a p-value of .121. Since the p-value (.121) is greater than the significance level of .05, the difference in challenges faced by students from the two universities is not statistically significant. Therefore, the hypothesis is retained, there is no significant difference in the challenges hindering the effective implementation of global citizenship education between undergraduate students in the University of Delta, Agbor, and Delta State University, Abraka. The results support this hypothesis, suggesting that students from both universities face similar challenges in implementing global citizenship education.

Discussion

The findings indicate that Social Studies undergraduate students possess a general awareness of global citizenship education (GCE). They acknowledge understanding the concept and its objectives, particularly its role in promoting cultural diversity. However, students report limited participation in activities that promote GCE and note insufficient integration of GCE into their curriculum. This suggests that while students are conceptually aware of GCE, practical engagement and curricular incorporation are lacking.

Comparative analysis between students from the University of Delta, Agbor, and Delta State University, Abraka, reveals no significant difference in GCE awareness levels. This uniformity implies that both institutions face similar challenges in fostering GCE awareness, aligning with observations by Nwabudike, et al. (2024) and Al-Ani (2022), who highlight systemic factors over institutional differences in GCE awareness levels.

Further findings show that students perceive GCE as positively contributing to cross-cultural understanding. They agree that GCE encourages skills for engaging with diverse backgrounds and raises awareness of global challenges. Nonetheless, there is a noted limited understanding of fostering respect and appreciation for cultural diversity. This aligns with Arndt,

et al. (2021) and Johnson (2020), who emphasized that while GCE builds awareness, practical initiatives are necessary to ensure comprehensive understanding of cross-cultural dynamics.

The study also underscores significant challenges in adopting GCE, including limited awareness, inadequate resources, insufficient lecturer training, and low institutional support. These challenges are consistent across both universities, highlighting systemic barriers to GCE implementation. This finding corroborates reports by Akanni (2022), Nwabudike, et al. (2024), and Al-Ani (2022), who identify common barriers such as limited awareness and inadequate resources in developing contexts. They emphasize the necessity for systemic reforms, including lecturer training and policy frameworks, to overcome these challenges. In summary, while there is a general awareness of GCE among Social Studies undergraduate students, practical engagement and curriculum integration are lacking. Systemic challenges, rather than institutional differences, hinder the effective implementation of GCE, necessitating comprehensive reforms to translate awareness into actionable competencies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study underscored the significance of integrating Global Citizenship Education (GCE) into Social Studies to enhance multicultural understanding among undergraduate students in universities in Nigeria. Findings revealed that while students generally possess awareness of GCE, their engagement remains limited due to insufficient curriculum integration. Both the University of Delta, Agbor, and Delta State University, Abraka, exhibited similar levels of GCE awareness; however, systemic challenges impeded its effective implementation. Although students recognize GCE's role in fostering multicultural understanding and global competencies, their appreciation for cultural diversity remains underdeveloped. Key obstacles include inadequate lecturer training, limited institutional support, and insufficient resources, aligning with broader systemic barriers to GCE integration in higher education. Addressing these challenges requires strategic interventions to transform awareness into meaningful action, deepen cultural appreciation, and enhance implementation efforts.

The following recommendations were enumerated for the study:

1. Schools should integrate GCE concepts into existing curricula across disciplines, ensuring a structured approach to fostering awareness and competencies.
2. Organize professional development programmes and workshops for lecturers to equip them with the knowledge and skills to effectively teach GCE.
3. Ministry of Education should advocate for policies and frameworks that prioritize GCE implementation, with adequate funding and resource allocation.
4. School authorities should create platforms for experiential learning, such as cultural exchange programs, community service projects, and extracurricular activities that emphasize GCE.
5. School authorities should implement targeted campaigns to improve students' understanding of cultural diversity and global issues, utilizing multimedia tools and social media platforms.
6. Schools should partner with non-governmental organizations, international bodies, and government agencies to provide resources, training, and expertise for GCE initiatives

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