Global Citizenship Education – A Live Project: One Year After. Reflections of Seven Participants

Edda Sant, Chris Hanley, Jay Henry, Chris Chambers, Pura Ariza, Marta Costa and Bobbie Dutton

Abstract
We reflect on our experiences as participants/organizers of the 'Global Citizenship Education – A live Project'. 'Live projects' are real-live educational activities in which students collaborate with other participants to generate new ideas. In this article, we examine the possibilities of 'live projects' as a democratic approach to global citizenship education in the context of higher education. We argue that 'live projects', when time and staff resources are guaranteed, offer great opportunities to challenge assumptions and to generate new forms of knowledge.

In late 2016, the authors of this article and other academics from the Faculty of Education at Manchester Metropolitan University (Manchester Met) organized an event entitled 'Global Citizenship Education – a live project'. The project brought together seventy participants including Manchester Met undergraduate and postgraduate students, national and international researchers, teacher educators, newly qualified teachers, representatives of official and non-official councils, school pupils and their teachers to discuss their practical and theoretical understandings on global citizenship and global citizenship education. In this article, we would reflect on our experiences on this event as a potential approach for global citizenship education in the context of higher education.

Background: Global citizenship and higher education
This project is contextualized in a globalized educational landscape where the education of the global citizenry has become a key feature (Torres, 2015). The concept of 'global citizenship' is, nevertheless, ambiguous. In Higher Education institutions, (at least) two main understandings of 'global citizenship' coexist: the "neoliberal global citizen" and the "democratic global citizen" (Camicia & Franklin, 2011). "Educating" a "neoliberal global citizen" implies guiding

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students to gain a number of "global citizen competences" or "attributes" such as communication skills, knowledge about other cultures and social responsibility (Oxley and Morris, 2013). In contrast, 'democratic' frameworks for global citizenship education emphasize the need of providing students with spaces to interact with others and reflect on their own knowledge and assumptions (Andreotti, 2006). This project was framed by this second understanding.

The project took place in the Faculty of Education at Manchester Met where students, as prospective teachers and/or educational professionals, might need or want to be prepared to 'educate' others in the global dimension of citizenship education. Indeed, not only are higher education institutions expected to engage with the discourse on global citizenship, but schools have also been identified for their significant role (UNESCO, 2014). National and international policies recommend that teachers should not only teach specific subject areas but also educate a citizenry prepared for an increasingly globalized world (e.g. UNESCO, 2014; OECD, 2016). Previous research indicates that teachers are committed to global citizenship education but they lack the conceptual and pedagogical resources to perform their role as civic educators (see e.g. Osler, 2011; Rappoport, 2010). Studies often highlight the need for a clearer commitment from teacher educator and other educational programmes to the education of the global citizenry (e.g. Reilly & Niens, 2014; Schweisfurth, 2006).

In the case of our Faculty (the Faculty of Education at Manchester Met), our previous work with Education Studies students and secondary teacher trainees suggests that Manchester Met students still perceive the education of the global citizenry as something disconnected from their experiences in higher education and their professional future (Sant & Hanley, 2016; Sant, 2017). Secondary PGCE students, regardless of their specialism, often lack space to discuss their prospective role as civic educators (Peterson et al., 2015). Education Studies students, who study a theoretical course on education and who might or might not work as teachers, appear to challenge the relevance of global citizenship education and are particularly committed to more 'local' forms of citizenship (Sant, 2017). The aim of the 'Global Citizenship Education – a Live Project' was to investigate a novel approach to engage future teachers and other educational professionals on a democratic forum on global citizenship education.
In this article, we first discuss the educational project, examining our approach to ‘live projects’ and describing the educational activities we created and the participants of those. We then reflect on our experiences as participants/organizations of this project. We conclude by discussing the possibilities and challenges of a ‘live project’ as a democratic approach to global citizenship.

A live Project
According to Sara (2006), a ‘live project’ can be defined as one where:

“Students are taken out of the studio setting, and repositioned in the ‘real-world’. This external involvement tends to result in students producing something that is of value to the client/user group, which might range from ideas, feasibility reports, or research, to a completed design scheme, a construction or other intervention.” (2006, p. 1)

In the ‘Global Citizenship Education – A Live Project’ we took Sara’s (2006) definition as starting point but we felt challenged by some of the features of this definition. Camicia and Franklin (2011) define ‘democratic global citizenship education’ as the situation in which:

“In their communication with each other, global citizens aim at reaching an understanding of other global citizens rather than adhering to strictly strategic communication such as that found in the economic sphere.” (p. 314)

In this respect, the notion of ‘client’, used by Sara (2006) was antagonistic to our understanding of ‘democratic’ education. For us, the ‘live project’ was not an opportunity to bring together students with potential ‘clients/users’ but rather with participants with different forms of theoretical, practical and personal educational expertise. Further, more than aiming to produce ‘something’, our aim was to create a situation for educational experiences to happen through the exchange of different forms of knowledge. Thus, we decided to adapt Sara’s definition and we defined ‘the Global Citizenship Education – a live project’ as a project in which “students work in ‘real-world’ situations with other participants to generate new forms of knowledge”.

The project was organized in two different sessions. The 12th of October 2016 volunteers from BA and MA Education Studies students worked together with Manchester Met lecturers, primary
school students and their teachers, invited researchers from Spain, Pakistan and Colombia, a representative of the British Council, and the authors of this article. After a brief introduction of the project, the participants were organized in mixed tables of discussion involving (at least) primary school pupils, undergraduate and postgraduate students and Manchester Met and international academics. Through different activities, participants were requested to discuss their views on the meaning, possibilities and challenges of global citizenship and global citizenship education. The discussion on the tables was followed by a plenary discussion in which participants manifested their agreement or disagreement with different understandings of global citizenship and education.

The 14th of October volunteer PGCE students from the PGCE English, Foreign Language (MFL) and History course(s) worked together with Manchester Met teacher educators, secondary school students and their teachers, invited researchers from Spain, Pakistan and Colombia, a representative of a society for global citizenship education, and the authors of this article. Participants were organized in mixed tables of discussion. A total of two tables of PGCE English, two tables of PGCE MFL and one table of PGCE History were formed. In each table, participants were first requested to discuss the views on global citizenship and later make some proposals on how they could include global citizenship education in their subject-area teaching practices.

Figure 1. Poster advertising the Global Citizenship Education – Live Project
Reflections 1: Edda Sant, principal investigator of the project

I participated in the event as organizer and participant both days, the 12th and the 14th of October 2016. On the 12th, I took the leadership of the event (introduced the event and the activities) and I was involved in the discussions on one of the tables as participant. On the 14th, my role was more flexible, and I was able to observe the dynamics in the different tables of discussion.

Figure 2. Presentation of activities on the 12th of October 2016

My memories of the event can be classified into two distinct categories: as organizer and as participant. Organizing the event was an extremely demanding task, both in time and economic resources. Thanks to the CELT SOTL grants, we had secured funding covering travel, hospitality, accommodation and research assistance expenses. Without this funding, the event would not have been possible. Not only was funding necessary, but also time. The two principal investigators of this project (Chris Hanley and myself) are both working as Full Time Senior Lecturers with strong teaching commitments. In our case, we did not have additional hours to carry on this project and we had to coordinate/organize the event simultaneously to our teaching commitments. We worked with participants from a range of ages and origins, having to provide distinctive support in each case. We coordinated/organized hospitality, travel and, in some occasions, accommodation for most groups of participants. Although we could not have done this without the help of the other academics and our two research assistants, there were some tasks (booking catering, accommodations, rooms, budget, etc.) that our research assistants, in their contract as temporary employees, could not lead. In my experience as organizer, bringing all these people together required a break in teaching commitments or a clear administrative support that we were not able to secure before the beginning of the project.
As participant, I believe the project was extremely valuable for two main reasons. First, the project created an open forum in which all approaches were welcomed. There was space for different understandings of global citizenship including those supporting 'anti-globalization' views. Although we have chosen the topic (global citizenship) in advance and therefore we could not talk here about an entire 'democratic' forum, we felt that considering this starting point, the project was almost as 'open' as it could have been. Second, the project was in itself of great educational interest. Education is one of the fields in which theory and practice interact in a very particular and complex way. Trainee teachers and Education students often struggle to see the links between one and the other. The 'live project', I argue, was a unique experience in this respect. Our undergraduate and postgraduate students worked together with primary, secondary students and in-service teachers in what could be defined as a 'practical' environment. Simultaneously, they engaged in theoretical debates (on the meaning of global citizenship and education). In discussions with Manchester Met and international researchers, pupils, practitioners and others, our students engaged with different forms of knowledge (theory, research, practice and policy).

Reflections 2: Chris Hanley, principal investigator of the project
I found the conference memorable for the diversity of people involved. We were able to create a platform for a unique blend of participants with important perspectives to share. There was an incredible sense of purposefulness in the conference rooms throughout its duration; we attempted to capture different dimensions of this in the research data (visual images, voice recordings, etc), but its true effect was immersive – one felt fully present in a series of dynamic exchanges and continually learning in contact with different people.

All our participants contributed enormously to the events, but my sense with the primary school children was that they had spent time previously exploring the purposes of education, alongside questions of fairness, justice and so on. It is incredibly refreshing to debate such matters with young people informally. In one of the activities, the participants at each table had to manifest their agreement/disagreement with several sentences around the topic of global citizenship (see figure 3). I felt the activity was really useful, from a future teaching and learning perspective, for scaffolding individual responses and enabling debate. Later, we left some time for an 'entanglement' activity, in which participants were free to engage with others and with the resources available, also featuring the primary
school participants, is indicative of the enthusiasm for alternative research forms in our Research Institute (ESRI) – and was fascinating for me as a new approach to capturing data.

Figure 3. Resources for the agreement/disagreement activity in one of the tables of discussion

Reflections 3: Jay Henry, senior lecturer in Education Studies and co-organizer of the project

I was involved in the live project on an organisational level. I identified pupils from a local primary school that I felt could have benefitted greatly from involvement with the project. In order to raise the status of the project in the eyes of the pupils, I asked them to take part in a writing competition. Here they were asked to comment on any global issue that they had concerns about. They produced some wonderful scripts that highlighted some surprisingly deep thoughts about issues such as war and poverty. I was struck by the level of worry, but equally by their hopes for a better future. These pupils were ethnically and socially diverse. I felt it was important to ensure that this was the case given the nature of the project. Some of the pupils have refugee status or are unaccompanied asylum seekers. In addition, the school had defined these selected pupils as ‘academically gifted’ Year 6 pupils. Their levels of participation revealed that this was indeed the case. The pupils participated fully in the project and did not feel academically intimidated. They even challenged ideas presented to them and they felt incredibly comfortable presenting in front of peers and academics alike. I was touched by the levels of idealism amongst these primary students. Despite the fact that some had witnessed horrors in their own lives,
hope was something that lived in them. I wondered whether the secondary school children were equally idealistic on their project day. These primary school pupils saw themselves as global citizens. I wonder how many adults do.

**Reflections 4: Chris Chambers, senior learning and teaching fellow for PGCE History and co-organizer of the project**

I was involved in the live project as a participant on both 12th and 14th October. It was a privilege to be involved and to see how primary and secondary aged children were able to discuss global citizenship issues with undergraduates and postgraduates. As a teacher educator, my interest was more focused on how the school children responded compared to the university students. I was impressed by how the young children were able to participate on equal terms with older adults and this was exemplified in their confident and articulate presentations.

The tasks devised for the two days were excellent, and were very successful in stimulating open discussion. Although the tasks were identical, it was interesting to reflect on the differences between how the groups, with whom I worked, addressed them. For example, one of the tasks required the group to consider the purpose of education and schools. On my table, the primary aged pupils prioritised values over knowledge and skills whereas secondary pupils had a more...
utilitarian view of education, seeing its main purpose as preparing them for the world of work or further study. It would be interesting to note whether the differing ethos of the two sectors has any bearing on this, or whether it is reflection of their different ages.

All the children appreciated the value of global citizenship education. The tables were multi-cultural and this enabled us to have fruitful discussions around the value of different cultures, but the tensions these may create. They displayed an empathy for humanity and an idealism which is refreshing in these cynical times. It was encouraging to note the children espoused values wholly consistent with being a global citizen.

**Reflections 5: Pura Ariza, senior lecturer in PGCE MFL and co-organizer of the project**

I was very pleased to be a member of the project team, and very much enjoyed the discussions we have had as academics, researchers and participants. My field is foreign languages, and we generally feel it is natural for us to be looking at the international world in everything we do. Learning a foreign language is one of the best ways to build a bridge to that wider world, so my interest was partly about exploring the concept of citizenship from a range of perspectives, not limited to the UK.

I think my first point of interest (as a linguist), was that although we were using the word 'citizenship' in a number of languages, it was very clear that the meaning of the word differed, and sometimes significantly (see figure 5). This was very apparent for me in the international meetings. Translating words is not the same as translating meanings, and the weight of the different education systems, their philosophies and drivers, were apparent in the

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Figure 5. Summary of the PGCE MFL table of discussion
meanings, not in the word. Some of our discussions had to deal with the semantic differences of the translated word, and to the political context to which they responded.

I think my second point of interest was seeing how teachers and pupils relate citizenship to school subjects, and how they would mould the concept of citizenship into another discrete subject for a lesson. The division between subject areas differs from one country to another, according to historical approaches and the philosophy of learning which has influenced the education system. It was interesting to discuss how Citizenship can be integrated into the learning of all pupils in all areas, recognised as a part of all subjects and all learning. In other models, it is addressed as a discrete school subject, possibly with drawbacks of fragmentation and lack of coherence.

Like all school subjects, Citizenship responds to national priorities and policies, although as a relatively new subject for schools there are perhaps more opportunities for innovation and development. I cannot think of a better way to do this than in an international context.

**Reflections 6: Marta Costa, former MA Education Studies student, Research Assistant of the project and present tutor of Education Studies**

I was involved in this project as a Research Assistant, responsible for collecting data from the event. During the activities on 12th October that is exactly what I did – through photography (see Figures 2-7) and note taking, I captured key moments of the day, the surrounding environment, arguments and outputs from the discussions. However, on 14th October I had the chance to participate in the activities, which was a completely different experience. During the course of both days, I was able to have an outsider and an insider perspective, allowing me to reflect not only on the process, but also on its experience.

I remember paying somewhat more attention to both Primary and Secondary school students, at the start of each day. I was wondering how they would be affected by the environment and contact with the older participants. I was also concerned that the discussions would be dominated by the adults on each table. It was interesting to notice the differences between the age groups. Primary school students seemed to come in with quite open expectations about what the day would bring and what their role would be. On the other hand, secondary school students showed a lot more awareness
and intention at arrival, looking to establish contacts that could be useful to them in the near future, and start building networks. In the latter case, the ‘neoliberal’ understanding of global citizenship seemed to inform the start of the day. However, the activities carried out were developed in order to promote the ‘democratic’ conceptualisation of global citizenship, and I feel they were very effective in doing that. Once the activities started, both age groups got deeply involved in the discussions – there were students standing up to make their points to the group, others so involved in reflection they were completely leaning on the table, in order to be closer to the resources being used. Primary and Secondary school students were as present in the discussion as PGCE students, lecturers and other professionals taking part. There was a genuine dialogue, with strong arguments put forward by all participants, which I felt affected everyone, influencing re-conceptualisations of Global Citizenship Education, and indeed provoking a personal reflection on the purposes of education. For instance, some of the participants start problematizing some ideas (e.g. what a better world means) that they have initially taken as granted (see Figure 6).

I would argue that for PGCE students this activity had an added value. Not only did they have the opportunity to reflect, discuss, and negotiate understandings of global citizenship, they did so in cooperation with Secondary school students (representing the group of students trainee teachers will be working with), and their Teacher Training lecturers (specialists on the trainee teachers’ specific subject). What is more, the discussion was not

Figure 6. Participants' ideas in a post-it
limited to understanding of different concepts and functions of
global citizenship; the groups considered and discussed practical
implications to teaching and learning, in the context of their different
subjects (English, History and MFL). Following the 'Live Project',
students seemed to have enjoyed the experience, and find it useful.
The trainee teachers expressed how important they thought the
discussions were, not only at a personal but also professional level,
with some of them suggesting the teacher training programme should
include activities along the lines of the ones developed in the 'Live
Project'.

Reflections 7: Bobbie Dutton, BA Education Studies student
(presently graduate) and research support
I took part in the Global Citizenship Education Live Project on the
12th and 14th of October 2016. My role in the Project was Research
assistant, which on the 12th of October was my primary function,
including taking photos, voice recording participants' views on Global
Citizenship, and making notes. On the 14th of October however,
I was able to play a part in the day, taking part in the activities
arranged and was able to share my own personal opinions of Global
Citizenship.

Although it was only on the 14th of October that I was able to fully
interact with the other participants and the activities of the Project as
a contributor, I feel that whilst acting as a Research Assistant on the
12th I was still mentally engaged with the day. Going into the project
my mind was more concerned about collecting data correctly and
doing a good job as a Research Assistant rather than focused on the
topic of Global Citizenship. However, once in the swing of things I
was able to take in the discussions happening around me, which got
me thinking not only of the views and opinions of the participants but
also of my own.

What I noticed more than anything else were the very individual
responses to the discussions of Global Citizenship and how
individual views and responses were shaped by personal life
experiences. Rather than viewing the participants as groups
(Primary School Pupils, High School Pupils, Undergraduates, etc.)
and expecting their responses to the activities to be similar based
on these groups as I originally expected, I experienced individuals
coming to conclusions based on personal life experiences or their
own individual understanding of the world. During the agreement/
disagreement activity, for instance, the views of the participants
appeared not to be conditioned for the groups they belong to. Quite
often the primary pupils, the university students and the academics sitting in the same table disagreed on their understandings on global citizenship (see Figure 7). This was especially delightful to see in the Primary School pupils, who I did not expect to have such well-formed, individualised opinions on a topic that was so contemporary. It was good to see everyone, from such diverse backgrounds, coming together to share and experience one another’s understanding of Global Citizenship, a topic that can be quite divisive.

Figure 7. Group of three participants (primary pupil, undergraduate student and international researcher) sharing the same view on global citizenship

Final Remarks
Our reflections illustrate some of the possibilities and challenges of a democratic approach to global citizenship in the context of higher education. Our experiences suggest that it is not easy to challenge the neoliberal assumptions often underlying discussions on global citizenship. As some of us expressed in our reflections, competitive and instrumentalist approaches appear to be the dominant discourses among university (and even secondary) students. But we found that these discourses can also be (at least to a certain extent) challenged when face to face discussions and disagreements take place. In our case, neoliberal understandings of global citizenship were on some occasions questioned by the personal experiences of others. Primary students, bilingual and non-British participants were more likely to challenge the dominance of the neoliberal discourse providing space for alternative discourses to appear. All participants were able to recognize that the way they would understand and know about the 'global' was not universal and rather was only one possibility among others.
More widely, these reflections might also be helpful to those willing to organize similar activities to the 'live project' here discussed. On one hand, bringing together different people demands economic, staffing and time resources that need to be guaranteed before the project takes place. These resources might need to be proportional to the number of people involved as well as the different type of participants. Without this support, live projects might be - as in our case-a one-time activity rather than an activity that can be easily integrated within the curriculum. On the other hand, 'live project' activities can be, in our understanding, worthwhile educational experiences. 'Live projects' are often organized considering employability purposes (see our examination of Sara’s (2006) quote in the beginning of the article). However, our experience suggests that live projects might be an excellent opportunity to create forums of dialogue between those having personal expertise (students, patients, etc.) and those having - or gaining - professional expertise (teachers, nurses, etc.). Live projects, we argue, might simultaneously allow knowledge exchange and the creation of new forms of knowledge.

References


