

## Empowering educators and students through contextualized global citizenship for sustainable development

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores how educators and students in Philippine secondary schools conceptualize global citizenship education (GCE) and understand their roles in advancing the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Despite its prominence in global education agendas, GCE remains inconsistently understood across local contexts. Using a qualitative research design, in-depth interviews were conducted with 21 teachers and students in Surigao del Sur. Thematic analysis revealed seven interconnected themes: i) holistic education: framing global citizenship beyond academics; ii) cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity; iii) active engagement and global awareness; iv) education as a channel for sustainable development; v) becoming a global citizen as a personal journey; vi) technology and global connectivity; and vii) teaching values for global responsibility. Findings indicate that while both groups support GCE, their interpretations are shaped by lived experiences, institutional conditions, and cultural environments. Teachers highlighted intentional instruction and moral formation, whereas students emphasized identity development, participation, and global awareness. However, gaps remain in critical reflection and structural understanding. In response, this study introduces the contextualized empowerment framework, a strategic model that integrates civic action, values, identity, and digital literacy to guide localized and ethical implementation of GCE. The framework offers actionable insights for curriculum development, teacher training, and educational policy reforms.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In our modern world, the need for inclusive and transformational education is pressing. Climate change, cultural and geographical fragmentation, and global inequality challenge societies must be addressed; education has a major role to play in equipping our learners to deal with these complex multifaceted issues. Global citizenship education (GCE) and education for sustainable development (ESD) provide powerful frameworks to prepare both the learners and educators with ethical values, knowledge, and skills for active participation in a sustainable global society [1], [2]. Existing studies have explored how sustainable development goals (SDG) 4 serves as a guiding framework for promoting global citizenship and sustainable development in educational settings, including secondary education [3]. In the Philippines, various national

education policies, such as the Department of Education's commitment to the SDGs and its integration of GCE in basic education curricula, reflect this alignment [4], [5]. Despite these efforts, few studies have comprehensively examined how GCE and ESD are experienced and enacted within Philippine secondary schools, highlighting a critical gap in the literature [6].

GCE suggests that education should connect people and build a shared respect for culture and a commitment to living sustainably as part of society [7], and the establishment of the United Nations (UN) SDGs especially SDG 4: quality education provides a strategic and institutional framework for national education policy that promotes global citizenship as a framework outcome of education [8]. Additionally, there is a growing expectation for educators to consider transdisciplinary, experiential, and digital pedagogies that nurture critical engagement, creativity, and civic participation [9], [10]. Despite considerable theoretical support for GCE and ESD, the practice, emphasis, or identity towards global citizenship in various educational contexts is inconsistent, under-explored, and mostly missing qualitative accounts. Much literature in this area is focused on implementation, policy integration, and an international perspective, but lacks detail on how individual students and teachers conceptualize or experience global citizenship in their own context [11]. There is a glaring omission in qualitative descriptions of teacher and student experience for GCE and ESD international education and research frameworks to make sense of, and to continue to evolve it. Many educators and learners are still unsure what it is, or can be, to be a global citizen, or how one can have meaningful engagement with global issues in an educational setting [12].

Recent studies demonstrate that direct experiences cannot be substituted by theoretical discussion around GCE; it has to be experienced for it to be meaningful for learners. The encouragement of student and teacher empowerment is observed to be central to GCE; however, empowerment as an element of GCE remains under-researched as an implementation concern within the literature [13], [14]. Another issue related to lack of attention is "what students and educators consider as significant roles and contributions" [13]. The literature endorses the role of education in sustainable development; however, there is a lack of literature documenting how these roles were being interpreted, valued, or enacted by schools or universities. For example, the importance of contextualized understanding as a core element of successfully implementing the SDGs in education has been highlighted, suggesting that a divide exists between educational policy and classroom practice [15]. Further evidence indicates that leadership and educational empowerment can significantly influence how sustainability is enacted in educational cultures [16].

Despite the presence of national frameworks mirroring global objectives in the Philippines, the prevailing literature lacks descriptions of local contexts, particularly among the actors in education, e.g. educators and students [17]. The number of diverse sociocultural and economic realities in the Philippines codependently highlights the need to develop localized interpretations of global citizenship - for educational reforms that are sensitized to context and sustainable. This research aims to address the problems by providing evidence of how educators and students conceive of, understand and enact GCE and ESD in their own educational spaces. More specifically, this research responds to the absence of qualitative research exploring how our understandings are taken up and enacted in those spaces through these educational frameworks.

This study aims to bridge these gaps by providing a deeper understanding of how GCE and ESD are interpreted and practiced by educators and students within their specific educational environments. The research questions/objectives of the study are: i) to determine the perspectives of students and teachers on GCE. This will explore how students and teachers conceptualize global citizenship and its relevance to their educational roles; ii) explore how students and teachers perceive themselves as global citizens within their educational settings. This will uncover the personal and professional engagement of participants with GCE and ESD, highlighting the nuances of their self-identification as global citizens; and iii) identify the roles that students and teachers recognize as significant in contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. This objective aims to investigate how students and teachers view their responsibilities in advancing sustainability and global development through education, specifically within the 2030 agenda framework. By addressing these objectives, this study will provide valuable insights that can inform more effective, context-sensitive educational reforms in the Philippines, fostering global citizenship and advancing the SDGs, particularly within regions that face unique sociocultural and economic challenges.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1. Research design

Given the nature of the research in this study, we used a qualitative approach and aimed to further understand the perspectives of teachers and students on GCE and their understanding of their roles in advancing the UN 2030 agenda and SDGs. A qualitative approach gave the ability to seek nuanced and contextualized knowledge aims associated with the lived experiences, understandings, perceptions, and values that intersect their understanding of global citizenship and sustainable development. This approach

grants researchers the capacity to critically examine and interrogate how participants defined and enacted GCE within their particular educational settings.

## 2.2. Participants of the study

The participants in this study were selected from junior and senior high school teachers and student representatives from secondary public schools under the Department of Education, Division of Surigao del Sur, Philippines. A purposive sampling approach was employed to intentionally select individuals with meaningful involvement in school-based programs or curricular activities that reflect the principles of GCE and ESD. The selection of the participating schools was based on their active engagement in educational programs, student organizations, and institutional initiatives that integrate global citizenship, environmental awareness, and sustainability themes. The decision to focus on these schools ensured that the study was conducted in an environment where exposure to GCE and ESD concepts was present, providing a relevant context for exploring the participants' perspectives and experiences.

The recruitment process involved close coordination with school administrators, who assisted in identifying potential participants based on established inclusion criteria. For teachers, eligibility requires a minimum of three years of teaching experience and active participation in implementing curriculum components or projects related to GCE or ESD. For students, eligibility includes enrollment in grades 10 to 12 and involvement in school activities, leadership roles, or subject areas that integrate global or sustainability themes. All identified eligible participants were formally invited to participate in the study through communication facilitated by the school administration. Participation was voluntary, and all invited individuals who expressed willingness to be part of the study were included as participants.

## 2.3. Data collection procedure

To examine a participants' understanding and perspective for global citizenship, for their understanding of education's role in the advancement of the SDGs, and of their experiences associated with GCE practices, semi-structured interviews were held. The questions asked were constructed to reflect the study's purposes and were pilot-tested to ensure clarity and relevance. The interviews took place in a face-to-face capacity in a quiet, school-based setting. Each session was approximately 15 to 20 minutes and informed consent was attained prior to the interviews. All interviews were audio recorded with permission for transcription and to provide an accurate reflection of the thoughts shared during the interviews. Non-verbal cues and active listening techniques were used in interviews to create unsolicited and unbiased dialogue according to established interview techniques [18].

## 2.4. Data analysis

The interviews were analyzed using a thematic analysis that allowed for an organized identification of themes, trends, and other significant findings. The analytical process began by creating a verbatim transcription of the recorded interviews and then iteratively coding the transcripts to form meaningful themes. The iterative coding of transcripts was guided by initially determining codes by making repeated readings of the transcripts, determining preliminary codes, which were then refined into broader thematic categories reflecting participants' views related to GCE, SDGs, and global citizenship identity. Additionally, NVivo software was utilized to assist organization and management of the data, increasing the accuracy, and efficiency of the thematic analysis. Throughout the entire coding and analysis process, the themes were analyzed, reflected upon, refined, and vetted against the full body of data/dataset. To develop trustworthiness, the research team discussed and confirmed coding decisions. These discussions provided consensus on code and narrative interpretations that assisted in reducing bias in the data interpretation.

## 3. RESULTS

The seven interrelated themes emerged from the data, reflecting teachers' and students' perceptions of GCE, their self-understanding as global citizens, and the roles they assume in relation to sustainable development. These themes reflect shared meanings, but also distinct positionalities informed by their roles in the educational environment.

### 3.1. Holistic education: framing global citizenship beyond academics

The participants, particularly the teachers, emphasized that GCE is not just about knowledge, but about development of intellectual, emotional, social, and ethical. Teachers believed that GCE will assist in helping students become responsible, holistic global citizens, asking them to move beyond their own academic achievements to think about their position in the world. One teacher expressed:

*“This is still anchored on the three domains of learning- cognitive, social emotional and behavioral, that aims to empower learners to develop holistically.”* (Teacher 1)

This teacher emphasizes the transformational aspect of GCE, where the focus is no longer just on the cognitive, but also on developing values, behaviors, and critical thinking. Generally, teachers viewed GCE as a holistic process that prepares students not just for exams but for the demands of real-life challenges in an interconnected world. One teacher stated:

*“Global citizenship education has been viewed as a means for students to gain a deeper understanding of citizenship, politics, democracy, and the globalization process, allowing them to identify how political, economic, cultural, social, and environmental constructs affect a global society.”* (Teacher 2)

From the students’ perspective, GCE was equally seen as a comprehensive educational framework. Students indicated that GCE offers them the tools to navigate global challenges with a broader sense of responsibility. One student reflected:

*“Global citizenship education is a learning strategy that aims to raise learners’ awareness and appreciation of the concept of inclusion, not only in their own culture and customs, but also in the cultures and practices of other countries.”* (Student 3)

The students indicated that GCE was important for preparing them not just for social responsibility, but also to think critically about global issues. This theme reinforces that both teachers and students considered GCE to be holistic education that contributed to what we already know about education, which is that education is not just about knowledge, but about developing global citizens who have the knowledge for social action and who can participate as global citizens with knowledge and understanding in a globalized world.

### **3.2. Cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity**

The importance of cultural awareness and respect for diversity emerged strongly across both teacher and student responses. Teachers viewed GCE as an essential means of fostering intercultural competence, helping students understand the value of different cultural perspectives. One teacher shared:

*“It’s about teaching our students to appreciate and respect the cultures of others. If we want them to be global citizens, they must understand that there’s not just one way to view the world.”* (Teacher 7)

For this teacher, GCE was seen as a pathway to inclusivity, where students not only learn about other cultures but actively engage in understanding them in ways that build social harmony. Another teacher stressed the societal benefits of such cultural appreciation:

*“By understanding other cultures, unity can be easily achieved.”* (Teacher 6)

Similarly, students recognized that learning to appreciate cultural differences is a key component of their development as global citizens. One student said:

*“Global citizenship education is an education that teaches us to appreciate cultural differences.”* (Student 6)

In addition, another student emphasized:

*“Global citizenship education is an approach that helps learners to become more aware of the relevance of connections and communications around the world.”* (Student 7)

These reflections show a shared belief that cultural sensitivity is a fundamental aspect of GCE and a key building block of effective global citizenship. Both teachers and students recognized that understanding and respecting cultural differences is critical to creating socially inclusive and cohesive societies.

### 3.3. Active engagement and global awareness

A central theme that emerged was the idea that global citizenship is an active pursuit, one that goes beyond knowledge to include active participation in solving global issues. Teachers emphasized that GCE should encourage students to move from theory to action. As one teacher described:

*“Becoming a global citizen means being active. You have the knowledge of the world’s outside or what’s happening. You come with your own attitude to what’s going on in the world perhaps you want to look at ways to change those attitudes and become active in order to develop empathy and respect in becoming active.”* (Teacher 2)

This teacher highlighted the importance of taking responsible action, engaging students not only in learning about global issues but also in contributing to real-world solutions. Another teacher elaborated:

*“It is also best to increase knowledge and learn about different countries with their culture so it can help to blend or adapt in the community.”* (Teacher 1)

This emphasis on active participation was echoed by students, who saw their roles as global citizens intertwined with hands-on engagement. One student shared:

*“A global citizen is someone who is aware of the larger world and understands their own role as a global citizen in which someone who respects and values diversity.”* (Student 3)

Another student highlighted the importance of local action as part of their global responsibility:

*“I attend to organizational group activities that tries to help the youth like me.”* (Student 8)

These responses point to a shared view that engagement—whether environmental, social, or cultural is a defining feature of global citizenship. Both students and teachers emphasized that global citizens are not passive recipients of information but active contributors to a sustainable world.

### 3.4. Education as a channel for sustainable development

Teachers consistently linked GCE to the advancement of SDGs, framing education as a tool for developing both the moral values and practical skills needed to address global challenges. One teacher explained:

*“My role is to educate and teach my learners not just the lesson itself but the values they get in that lesson. Teaching other subjects while integrating values on it. In that way I am not teaching them cognitively but also affectively which I strongly believe they can use in their lives.”* (Teacher 5)

This response underscores that education is not just about imparting knowledge but about instilling values that can drive global change. Teachers recognized that GCE is a vehicle for instilling the core principles of sustainable development, such as responsibility, equity, and environmental consciousness. Another teacher shared:

*“As a teacher, providing my learners with quality education is my number one role in achieving sustainable development goals.”* (Teacher 6)

Furthermore, students also related GCE to their understanding of their role in global sustainability. As some students reflected:

*“Participating programs that support taking good care and saving our nature.”* (Student 4)  
*“To become a global citizen, we have to become open in understanding and accepting other cultural practices.”* (Student 6)

These responses highlight that both groups view GCE as a critical educational tool for instilling the values and skills necessary to achieve the SDGs, with a focus on action and personal responsibility.

### 3.5. Becoming a global citizen as a personal journey

The idea that global citizenship is a personal journey emerged strongly in the findings. Teachers and students alike framed global citizenship as a dynamic and evolving process. Teachers stressed the importance of guiding students through this journey rather than prescribing a fixed path. One teacher noted:

*“Becoming a global citizen is a process that takes time. It’s about developing empathy and understanding through both education and lived experiences.”* (Teacher 2)

This perspective suggests that GCE is a lifelong journey—a continuous process of growth and reflection. Another teacher shared:

*“Students can’t learn everything about global citizenship in one lesson. It has to be something they work toward over time.”* (Teacher 11)

In addition, students also described their journey toward global citizenship as one of personal growth. Some students explained:

*“Global citizenship education is a learning strategy that aims to raise learners’ awareness and appreciation of the concept of inclusion, not only in their own culture and customs, but also in the cultures and practices of other countries.”* (Student 3)

*“It’s about growing in understanding and taking responsibility as you become more aware of the world around you.”* (Student 6)

These reflections show that global citizenship is viewed as a continuous, evolving process that is shaped by experience and personal reflection. Both teachers and students see it as an ongoing journey, one that is cultivated through education, experience, and self-awareness.

### 3.6. Technology and global connectivity

Both teachers and students recognized the role of technology in facilitating global engagement. While students were more likely to link digital literacy to global citizenship, teachers acknowledged the increasing importance of technology in both education and global collaboration. One student noted:

*“A global citizen is someone who knows how to use technology to communicate globally, whether it’s sharing ideas or collaborating with people in other countries.”* (Student 10)

For students, technology was not only a tool for information access but also a means of connection and engagement across cultural boundaries. Teachers, however, focused more on the role of 21st-century skills and digital literacy in global competency. One teacher stated:

*“We need to collaborate, innovate, and adapt to trends. Technology is a big part of that—it’s not just about learning facts but about connecting globally.”* (Teacher 6)

These responses show that both groups acknowledge digital fluency as an essential skill for global citizens, particularly in the context of intercultural exchange and global collaboration.

### 3.7. Teaching values for global responsibility

Finally, teachers emphasized that the core of GCE lies in values-based education, with a strong focus on teaching students the importance of social responsibility, empathy, and ethical decision-making. As one teacher put it:

*“It’s not just about teaching subjects—it’s teaching values that will stay with students for life. Global Citizenship Education has to be about values like justice, responsibility, and empathy.”* (Teacher 12)

Further, another teacher added:

*“We need to ensure that our students not only understand the global issues but also feel personally responsible for them. That’s the role of GCE.”* (Teacher 8)

Students similarly recognized that values are at the heart of global citizenship. One student shared:

*“Global citizenship is about having the right values—things like justice, responsibility, and empathy. These values shape who we are as citizens of the world.”* (Student 12)

This emphasis on values education highlights the broader aim of GCE not just to teach facts but to instill core principles that drive global responsibility and ethical behavior.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

This research examined how teachers and students perceive GCE concepts, identify themselves as global citizens, and recognize their responsibilities in relation to the SDGs. The findings identified similarities of thinking in terms of the values and holistic understanding of GCE, as also articulating differences in terms of role, access, and sociocultural context. While this discussion draws upon transformative education theories, such as Freire’s critical pedagogy [19] and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory [20], it will interpret empirical themes to highlight existing literature and emerging challenges.

Both teachers and students described GCE as a holistic and transformative educational undertaking, incorporating cognitive, emotional, and ethical aspects of development. Both perspectives are similar to that of the literature and demonstrate that GCE is a multidimensional process that can foster a greater critical consciousness and intercultural sensitivity [21], [22]. The organized perspectives bias towards specific domains of structured learning communicated an intention to align their experiences with institutional expectations placed on school systems. For students, GCE was described through conceptualizing new competencies, skills, or information for participatory global citizenship and their own human development. These views align with claims that GCE encompasses civic learning and identity development [23].

While both teachers and students recognized the importance of cultural sensitivity, their conceptions did not reach a deep enough level of global systems critique of intercultural engagement. While affirming the necessity for cultural sensitivity, the students and teachers were largely explicating diversity in terms of amended tolerance and appreciation, as opposed to engagement with power structures or systemic inequities. This aligns with cautions regarding GCE as a liberal humanist exercise to awareness without engaging structural violence and postcolonial legacies [24], [25]. Illustratively, the absence of dialogue around disconnects around economic inequity, neocolonialism, or global injustice leads to generative considerations of the need for a transformative and reflexively conscious GCE that is grounded in critical global citizenship educational frameworks [26].

The results also support the perspective that civic participation and local engagement are essential elements of a global citizen. Students were focused on action in their local communities through community projects, environmental works, or values education as participants in global citizenship. Both perspectives seek to center member action as part of their global citizen participation. These elements reflect some experiential models of GCE [27], [28]. In support of Freire’s notion of education as the practice of freedom in which participants become empowered to transform their social realities this finding aligns with previous literature [19]. However, while community engagement is practiced, many examples were limited to episodic acts, without a strong basis to sustain outcomes. Thus, while single acts of service or volunteering are important within communities, they require the institutional supports which serve as proper scaffolding to provide foundation for continuity and structural impacts to exist [29]. Without institutional supports or curricular integration, the ability for both teachers and students to transform acts of behaviors into actions of systematic change remain symbolic rather than transformative.

Connections between education and sustainable development were commonly noted by participants and most especially by teachers. They saw their role as educators, not simply in relation to educating the mind (cognition) but within a code of ethics (moral development) and in regard to care for the environment. This is in the spirit of, as mentioned in the literature, the dual objectives of SDG 4 (inclusive and equitable quality education) and SDG 13 (climate action). Students viewed education as contributing to their personal quality of life (improving their own life opportunities) and as a means to be a contributing member of society. However, if GCE is disconnected from its ethical, equitable, and sustainable commitments, it can be appropriated to be only about skills acquisition and employment [10], [30]. It seems both educators and students are able articulate a balanced approach in relation to departing from a future orientation where personal improvement and prospects for employment are paramount while fostering a sense of global citizenship based on solidarity.

Participants viewed global citizenship as a journey that involved continuous reflection, exposure, and education. They emphasized a learner-centered approach that further developed self-discovery. Both

perspectives align with the view that GCE is learner-centered and develops self-discovery [14], [31]. Teacher's spoke of purposeful education around GCE while students stressed lived experience. Both perspectives support the need for GCE to be dialogical, co-constructed and have the important input of planned pedagogy and intentions educational positioning with a level of identification of the importance of being an agent in one's learning and understanding.

A stronger commitment towards digital fluency and connectedness was notable in students who used digital technology to broaden their awareness and connect with others. Teachers, while acknowledging the importance of digital engagement and skills for the 21st century, tended to view it as a lesser priority. This may point towards the generational differences in how digital processes are perceived, especially in a GCE context; this highlights the need for teachers to possess or develop technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) in making decisions around GCE in education [32], [33].

Lastly, values-based education and ethical orientation was represented in all themes. Participants spoke of empathy, justice, and environmental responsibility as part of their identity as global citizens. These reflections reiterate the importance of incorporating moral and civic development as the focus of GCE, as noted in the previous work [34], [35]. However, values cannot be used alone when intending to move from aspirations of morality, towards social responsibility, without a critical literacy lens [36].

The findings of this study indicate that both educators and students view GCE as a process that is transformative, situated locally, and ethically engaged. It is from these descriptions that we suggest some implications for GCE practice framed by the contextualized empowerment framework, the implications of which bring a synthesis of the key themes and theoretical grounding of the educational developments, as shown in Figure 1. The development of the framework is aligned with Freire's teaching as critical pedagogy but also draws from Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory as referenced by Özdoğru [20], whose emphasis is on the nested social environment with which the individual is linked (e.g., family, school, community, and society), and that all the layers of influence have some impact on the individual's development. These conceptualizations consolidate positions on global citizenship not only as a competency, but a lifetime educational journey shaped by context.

The framework embraces and utilizes the principle of transformative identity development, and invites both educators and learners to imagine themselves as continually developing global citizens and as beings who are defined by experience, reflection, and informed and critically engaged capacity. This identity development relies on several interconnected facets, beginning with intercultural understanding and ethical awareness, which invites learners to move beyond 'tolerance' and towards a more profound appreciation and critique of cultural power relations. The second dimension, civic engagement and local action, emphasizes the value of community involvement and the need for locally based action that relates to global issues a style of "global" citizenship that connects individual responsibility with collective sustainability.

A third foundational layer in the framework is values-driven education, which brings foregrounds empathy, justice, and social responsibility as both terms and outcomes of how we teach and learn, urging educators to consider how ethical reflection and social critique are embedded in curricular content. The fourth dimension, digital literacy and global connectivity, expresses the transformative power of technology to expand learner's ideas and bring about the potential for global dialogue. Here, the framework positions digital competence as needing to go beyond access and tools, towards ethical and constructive engagement in the digital spaces as part of a global citizenship.

Covering these dimensions is the broader commitment to the UN SDGs, which serve as a global reference point, grounding personal and institutional transformations and linking them broader, shared international ambitions. As the framework rejects a perspective of global citizenship as abstract or separate, it exposes the need for education to be a bridge away from individual agency to systemic change. It supports the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) vision of global citizenship as developing cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral competencies in a way that similar learner values, practices, and behaviors emerge in relationship to local realities.

In contrast to prescriptive, 'one-size-fits-all' GCE opportunities, the contextualized empowerment framework offers an always adaptive, culturally-grounded, and theoretically-supported option for educational practice in the Philippines. It has potential to inform curricular development, teacher training, community-based learning initiatives, and institutional policy. By anchoring global citizenship to local narratives, and considering personal development and international priorities, the framework positions education for global citizenship as not beyond reach, but rather as life-long learning that begins in the classroom, develops into communities, and extends beyond borders. These interconnected dimensions are synthesized in the proposed contextualized empowerment framework, as illustrated in Figure 1, which visually represents the dynamic relationships among identity development, intercultural awareness, civic action, digital fluency, and alignment with the SDGs.

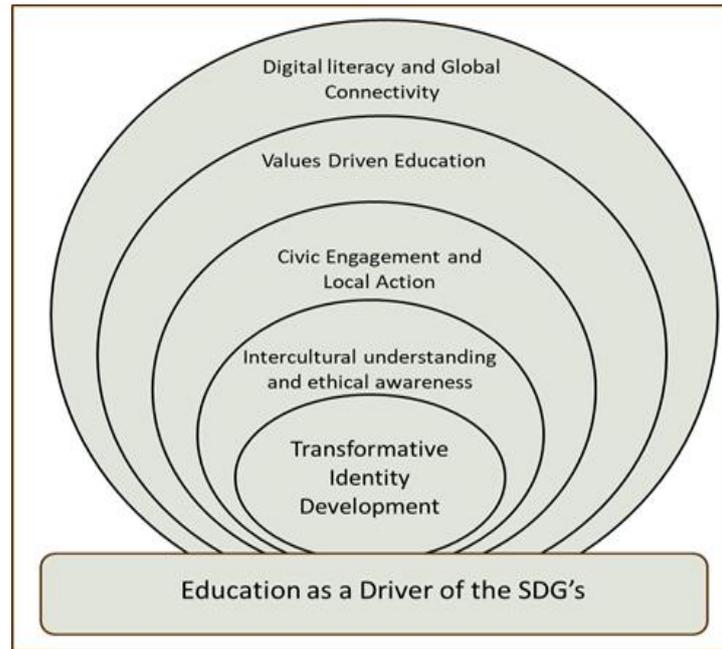


Figure 1. Contextualized empowerment framework

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study provided valuable insights into how educators and students perceive and enact GCE in relation to the SDGs within the secondary education system in the Philippines. The findings revealed that both groups view global citizenship as a contextualized and evolving process that connects personal development, civic participation, intercultural understanding, and moral responsibility. Educators tend to frame GCE through intentional, holistic education models, while students approach it as a personal journey of self-awareness and meaningful global engagement. Despite these positive orientations, the study highlighted limitations in critical inquiry and structural awareness within participants' interpretations of global citizenship, pointing to a need for stronger emphasis on social justice and transformative practice in GCE.

The study's limitations include its modest sample size and focus on a single school, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader educational settings. To address these gaps, the contextualized empowerment framework was presented, emphasizing intentional, digital, and culturally situated approaches to global citizenship. Moving forward, developing global citizens requires systemic changes, including enhanced teacher training, institutional culture building for the SDGs, and policy support. Future research should explore how these frameworks perform across different regions, educational levels, and institutional contexts, and should consider longitudinal, comparative, and participatory approaches to strengthen the impact of GCE in diverse settings.

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| Erwin B. Berry    | ✓ | ✓ | ✓  | ✓  | ✓  | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓  | ✓  | ✓ | ✓  |
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C : Conceptualization

M : Methodology

So : Software

Va : Validation

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I : Investigation

R : Resources

D : Data Curation

O : Writing - Original Draft

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Vi : Visualization

Su : Supervision

P : Project administration

Fu : Funding acquisition

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest.

## INFORMED CONSENT

We have obtained informed consent from all individuals included in this study.

## ETHICAL APPROVAL

The research involving human participants was conducted in compliance with all relevant national regulations and institutional policies, and in accordance with the ethical principles of the Helsinki Declaration. While North Eastern Mindanao State University (NEMSU) does not yet have a formal institutional ethics review board, the study underwent an approval process at the institutional and local levels. Prior to data collection, formal approval to conduct the study was secured from the Vice President for Research and Extension and the President of NEMSU. In addition, permission to conduct the study within public secondary schools was obtained from the Division Superintendent of the Department of Education, Surigao del Sur.

## DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that supports the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, [EDGP], upon reasonable request.

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