

Environmental Education as key element of Global Citizenship Education

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Introduction

What does being a global citizen mean today? What is the value of being a global citizen? John Dewey, contemporary of Makiguchi, gave “value creation” the meaning of daily basis actions for the greater good. Global citizenship finds its roots in those definitions of value creation (“What is,” n.d.). Global citizenship education is the form of learning to understand the interconnectedness of all living things. In the definition of Global Citizenship education by Daisaku Ikeda develops the idea of environmental education. Daisaku Ikeda develops the idea of three goals for sustainable development education ; “Learn, Reflect, Empower” which is a concrete action and practice of how to create a consciousness for the environment from a root (“Education,” n.d.). How can we not only learn from the facts, but be able to reflect and embody that vision and education to ourselves while influencing others are the main objective of this research. We are convinced that environmental education must be part of Global citizenship education programmes, for environmental education is key to becoming better global citizens. For this reason, this presentation is mainly focused on; the definition of Global citizenship, concrete action on “Learn, Reflect, Empower” and the significance of environmental education as a part of Global citizenship education.

What makes you a global citizen ?

Are you a global citizen by the amount of languages you speak ? by the amount of countries you visited ? by the amount of international friends you have ? by the amount of information you know about the world ?

Is a diplomat a better global citizen than a farmer who never left his country ?

Is a person with a multicultural background a better global citizen than someone whose both parents are from the same country ?

Let me talk to you about my grandfather. He’s a farmer. He never left his farm. Today he is 97 years old and he never stopped growing his own vegetables in his garden.

He does not speak any other languages than french. He never left his country. He doesn’t know any people from other cultures.

But his vegetables and fruits are organic. He’s always taking care of the flowers, and each year, when spring comes, he lets the barns open for the swallows to nest in there.

My grandfather is aware of the seasons, the changes in temperature, he knows the names of the flowers, the trees, the animals... He knows it better than me ! And everytime he can, he

watches documentaries about places far away from his home that he will never be able to visit, and that fascinates him.

Is my grandfather a global citizen ?

If I take my example, I am from France. I have studied translation and intercultural communication. I speak 3 languages, I am learning a 4th one. I have studied in France, but also in Spain. I have worked in England. And Now I am studying International Peace Studies in Japan. I have a lot of friends from all around the world. They feel my heart with joy !

But I don't know anything about the nature around me. I know a bit about the birds, but I couldn't tell the name of the trees or the flowers. And I consume a lot of plastic everyday (Welcome to Japan).

I can tell you I have a greater carbon footprint than my grandfather. So who's the best global citizen between us ?

You don't have to answer this question. Of course, the reality is more complex. But through this example, and through this paper, we want to show that global citizenship education and environmental education are two sides of a coin.

If we take a closer look to the definition of Global citizenship, we can read ("What is," n.d.) :

"Global citizenship is how we talk about the social, environmental and economic actions of people and communities who know that every person is a citizen of the world. It is about how decisions in one part of the planet can affect people living in a different part of it. And about how we all share a common humanity and are of equal worth. It means being open to engaging positively with other identities and cultures and being able to recognise and challenge stereotypes. It is also about how we use and share the earth's resources fairly and uphold the human rights of all."

"Global citizenship is all about encouraging young people to develop the knowledge, skills and values they need to engage with the world. And it's about the belief that we can all make a difference."

According to Daisaku Ikeda, a global citizen should possess three essential qualities ("Thoughts on," n.d.) :

1. "The wisdom to perceive the interconnectedness of all life and living.
2. The courage not to fear or deny difference; but to respect and strive to understand people of different cultures, and to grow from encounters with them.
3. The compassion to maintain an imaginative empathy that reaches beyond one's immediate surroundings and extends to those suffering in distant places."

He further mentions that Environmental Education should be incorporated as an integral element of education.

What is environmental education ?

Environmental education aims at understanding the complexity of the world that is around us, awakening critical thinking, taking action and living together.

Environmental education is an emancipatory education whose goal is the empowerment and the commitment of citizens to take action.

It give the necessary knowledge and consciousness so that everyone considers the Earth as a common good which we have to take care of, that every human being express mutual solidarity with this Earth and all living beings on it;

It forges critical spirit of the citizens, allowing everyone to think, decide and take action

It seeks to increase the ability of caring, to cultivate fraternity and replace human at the core of our choices

Ecological transformation needs a cultural change of the society through understanding, support and participation of the citizens, companies, institutions and any organizations. Indeed, the adoption of virtuous life styles and organization is necessary to face the economical, social and eco-systemic troubles.

In his proposal titled The Challenge of Global Empowerment: Education for a Sustainable Future (July 2002), Daisaku Ikeda insists on three pillars of environmental education.

1. To learn and deepen awareness of environmental issues and realities.
2. To reflect on our modes of living, renewing these toward sustainability.
3. To empower people to take concrete action to resolve the challenges we face.

Through this paper, we would like to follow those three steps. Let's start with learning.

To learn

Welcome to the era of the Anthropocene !

What happened during the 250 past years ? What did we do ? Our planet is suffocating, acidifying, hurt by the action of man. Man that doesn't think about slowing down his mad race towards wealth. Why do we prefer our greed for resources over the protection of our planet ? 250 years ago, man took a deadend, and today, he hit the wall : the Anthropocene.

The Anthropocene Epoch "is an unofficial unit of geologic time, used to describe the most recent period in Earth's history when human activity started to have a significant impact on the planet's climate and ecosystems."

Thus, in the course of a few centuries, humans contributed to what is considered the 6th mass extinction of plants and animals, to the acidification and pollution of the oceans, and so on. Humans left their footprint in the sedimentary layers of the planet, and they are different from the ones of the Holocene.

After introducing the Anthropocene, let's see what characterizes our period ("How do," n.d.):

- Global temperature is rising
- The ocean is getting warmer
- The ice sheets are shrinking
- Glaciers are retreating
- Snow cover is decreasing
- Sea level is rising
- Arctic sea ice is declining
- Extreme events are increasing in frequency
- Ocean acidification is increasing
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The last report of the IPCC is clear :

- Climate change, induced by Man, including the increase **of the intensity and frequency of extreme climatic phenomena** had generalized negative impacts and led to losses and damages for nature and people, beyond the natural variability of climate.
- In every region of the world, the most vulnerable systems and people are affected disproportionately by climate change.
- The vulnerability of ecosystems and populations to climate change changes from a region to another in the same region.
- The increase of meteorological and climate extremes led to irreversible effects, natural systems and humans have been pushed beyond their ability to adapt.
- A global warming reaching +1,5°C in the short term would lead to an inevitable increase of the climate risks and would present risks for the ecosystems and human beings.
- The extent and the pace of climate change and the risks resulting from it depend on the attenuation and adaptation measures adopted in the short term.
- Efficient and feasible adaptation solutions that can reduce the risks for people and nature do exist
- With the increase of climate change, the losses and damages will increase and other human and natural systems will reach the limits of adaptation
- The resilient development to climate is possible when governments, civil society and private sector make choices of inclusive development that give the priority to risk reduction, equity and justice
- Social and climate justice contribute to multiple advantages for health, wellbeing and ecosystemic services

- The prospects of resilient development to climate change will be more and more limited if greenhouse gases don't decrease rapidly, in particular if global warming of 1,5°C is exceeded in the short term.

Now that we know the facts about our planet and its current state, we can reflect and understand more about our interconnectedness with our environment.

To reflect

“Information and knowledge alone can leave people wondering what this all means to them”, Daisaku Ikeda explained that it's necessary for us to reflect back to ourselves what is the connection and choice we can choose to take for a greater good.

To understand all the interconnectedness between all living things, it could be explained by the form of complex systems that work together to make a balance to all. With the interconnected four components, which are Geosphere (lithosphere), Atmosphere, Hydrosphere and Biosphere, the environment and nature can be how it should be.

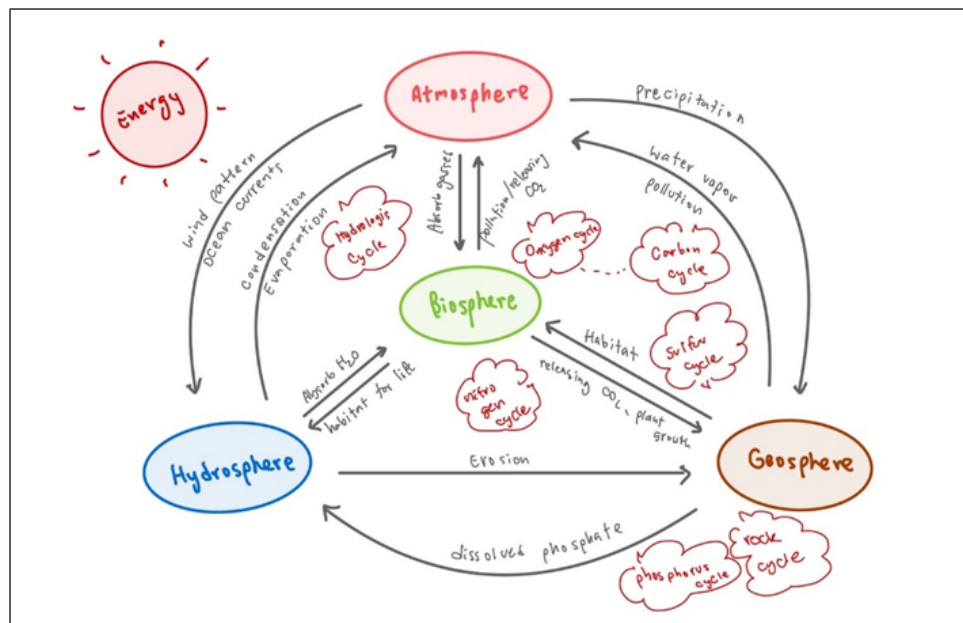


Fig 1: The interaction between Geosphere, Atmosphere, Hydrosphere and Biosphere by cycle in nature. Courtesy; Miyuki Banno.

The four spheres of the Earth are like systems inside of the human body, each system has its own duty and responsibility, but at the same time each system connects and helps each other to survive. We can show the interconnectedness of these spheres through the cycle in nature and various events that occur on the Earth. Humans are part of the biosphere which basically means that the existence of humans is definitely interacting with other spheres. Same as other living

things on this planet, we all use and create in the big cycle of the natural biogeochemical cycles. Each living thing relies and uses each other to survive, this makes the environment a diversity. However, the increasing and developing of human society can reduce the diversity that was made from the natural biogeochemical cycles and all spheres. For example, burning fossil fuels will soon ruin the atmosphere and cause pollution, leaving trash on landfill will affect the geosphere and take away animal habitat, and releasing chemical substances to the ocean creates wastewater in the hydrosphere. Farming and overfishing will soon ruin the balanced diversity in nature. These actions of humans are ruining the ecosystem and how each sphere works to create balance in nature.

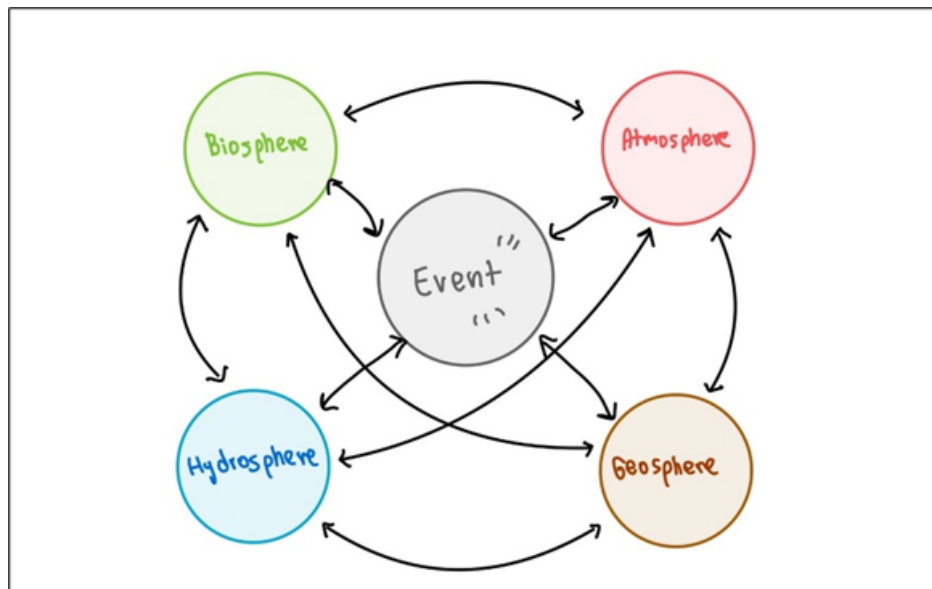


Fig 2: The interaction between Geosphere, Atmosphere, Hydrosphere and Biosphere in Event on the Earth. Courtesy; Miyuki Banno.

However, in opposition, the positive effect that we create on the environment will continue as a wave to improve the ecosystems. In another term, it is called sustainable investing, which is the investment that considers the benefit of people and the environment at one time. British businessman John Elkington invented the concept of sustainable investing, Triple Bottom Line, which includes three elements: the three Ps of 'People, Planet, Profit' as each being equally important for the long-term success of society (Kenton, 2022, September 9). One of the misconceptions people have about forward investing in the environment is that it does not result in any substantial change, however, the sustainable investment will create a long-term sustainable benefit. For example, the natural capital committee in the UK calculated that every one pound people spend on forests, wetlands, and biodiversity, gives us four to nine pounds back in social and economic benefits (Francis, 2019).

The important part of reflecting is to be able to see the connection between issues and to see the power we can make for a change. “The desert does not come from the Sahara--it begins in our backyards.” is one of the themes of the Kenyan Green Belt Movement (“Education,” n.d.). In every action we take, impacting the environment invisibly. The greatest impact we can make to protect the environment needs to start with understanding and appreciation of nature, and it will lead to the true rooted in the felt realities of daily life, and that is the role of education to provide power and raise responsibility to effect positive change on a global scale (“Education,” n.d.).

To empower

To appreciate nature and take responsibility to change the environmental issue does not mean to become an environmentalist or climate change activist, you can be a person who takes a concrete action and empower others on climate change in any position.

Trash-less art to art from trash (Miyuki Banno)

One of my passions since I was young is art, however, I also have a big concern of the way climate and environment are changing. After experiencing the world of art, I realized how much trashes we created after making art, so my determination is to raise an awareness of environmental issues along with creating trash-less art. From junior high school, I had a chance to deepen my interest in creating art out of trash in the recycling way.





In Soka University, every October, we have a huge university festival where all students work on preparing a performance or food shop. When I was in my second year, I was in the department of creating the background for the performance's stage background which is my starting point for creating art from trash. We used more than 100 potato chip bags, 100 plastic bags and threw away fabrics that we collected from more international students and dormitories to create the wings for the stage background. It was an amazing experience to see how art could be created by any kind of materials, and to see and hear visitors amazed by the idea of using trashes.

This year, 2022, as the head of the general art department, I still continue my determination on "Trash-less art to art from trash". However, my additional mission for this year is to leave a message to people and show that in any position and in any form we can make a movement and influence people. I would like to create a new culture in my university that beautiful art is the art that is created with heart and message, and to raise an awareness in climate change and environmental issues. Even this culture is a small movement inside just one university, but I believe that this determination will leave on to my juniors and to create a new wave of awareness and creativity.

Workshops about climate change

Climate Action Soka, a group composed of students from Soka University, decided to hold workshops during the Soka University festival in order to raise awareness among students about climate change and the emergency to take action towards it. The workshops will allow the student to understand better what is currently happening in the world and what they can do at their scale to contribute to protect the environment.

On a regular basis, Climate Action Soka also advocates for more vegetarian menus in the cafeterias on campus.

Through these actions, led by students from all over the world, students can understand that being a global citizen starts from deeply understanding that every action they take has an impact on the other side of the planet.

Conclusion

Today, climate change is undeniable. The younger generations are growing up in a world where hitting extreme weather conditions and temperature records is no more an expectation but a norm.

What kind of future do we want to have ? What values do we want to create ? Nowadays, it became clear that embodying the values of global citizenship goes beyond the sole knowledge of languages or the travels around the world. Being a global citizen, on the contrary, starts with being deeply aware that what we consume and what we do have an impact.

Environmental education is a key element of global citizenship education for it allows young people to understand the interconnectedness not only between other humans, but between humans and their environment. The first step for being a global citizen is to know how to respect each and every form of life on earth.

As such, a farmer producing organic food in the countryside is a global citizen as much as a student of Soka University. The most important thing is to be deeply aware of our impact.

If you want to change the world
you must change man.
If you want to change man
you must make him want to change.
--Esther Gress (1921-2002)

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