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TEACHER EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Global competence and teacher education programmes. A European perspective

Davide Parmigiani^{1*}, Sarah-Louise Jones², Irma Kunnari³ and Elisabetta Nicchia¹

Abstract: Global competence is an increasingly important disposition for today's society. Prospective teachers will have to be able to teach effectively in multicultural classrooms as well as develop dispositions of global competence in their future students. This pilot study was aimed at investigating what aspects of global competence should be integrated into initial teacher education programmes. Twenty-four teacher educators from fifteen European countries were involved in a qualitative study to underscore the topics, the contexts, the actors and the methodologies that can support the integration of global competence into programmes for preservice teachers. The findings indicate that global competence is a multidimensional concept associated with aspects directly related with the teaching profession such as cooperation, inclusion, social engagement, multicultural dialogue. The results also identify the methods and the contexts for an educational pathway for preservice teachers where the idea of global competence can emerge more easily.

Subjects: Teaching & Learning; Education & Development; Teachers & Teacher Education

Keywords: Global competence; intercultural education; intercultural dialogue; global citizenship education; preservice teacher training

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Although based in different countries, the research activities of the authors share the fundamental idea that a good education path can be designed considering both local and global challenges. So, the study on Global Competence represents this point of contact between our activities. Davide Parmigiani, as president of the Association for Teacher Education in Europe and member of the European Commission Working Group on School, will use this research to support the creation of an European space for teachers as provided by the European Education Area. Similarly, Sarah-Louise Jones will develop this study particularly in relation to how digital technologies can transform practices and extend educational opportunities in professional contexts, locally, nationally and internationally. Irma Kunnari will continue to develop both national and global pedagogical development projects, especially related to competence based higher education, curriculum development and creation of innovative learning practices.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The paper entitled "Global competence and teacher education programmes. A European perspective" presents the notion of Global Competence and its relationship with the professional development of teachers. The Global Competence can be defined as the capacity to understand and appreciate the multicultural contexts, to engage effective interactions with people from different cultures and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development. Starting from this definition, it is clear that teachers should be able to educate the pupils as future adults able to face global issues living in their own local contexts. This paper can help the teacher educators to educate and develop future cohorts of teachers who are both globally competent themselves, but also have the skills to develop global competence in their students.

1. Introduction

Open any newspaper today and you will find a multiplicity of headlines that demonstrate the smallness of our planet. From melting ice caps to COVID-19 to BlackLivesMatter, we are surrounded by issues both complex and chaotic in nature (Kurtz & Snowden, 2003), resulting in challenges that affect every one of us in some way. The new geographical, economic, political and social connectedness of our worlds that has emerged largely through advances in technology (Schwab, 2016), has also meant that we now interact with people whose life experiences and backgrounds can be very different from our own. How do we educate for this new world? Momtpoint-Galliard (2015) argues that “our vision of education is tied to our vision of society” (Momtpoint-Galliard, 2015:105). Thus we can argue that we need to reframe both the process and content of education so that it is fit for the modern world. Indeed, the model of educating our students, to provide a literate workforce for the industrial age and manufacturing empires is no longer relevant for living or working in a complex global society (Dede, 2010; Facer, 2011; Takayama, 2013).

We argue for a different form of education that enables us to live harmoniously “with people from different cultures, and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development” (OECD, 2018:7) and there has been a transformation along these lines in education policy in many parts of the world for some time. This has been informed by such organizations as UNESCO who commissioned the Delors et al. (1996) in which the Four Pillars of Learning (learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together) were articulated. UNESCO added also the fifth pillar “to address the special challenge of sustainability: learning to transform oneself and society” (UNESCO, 2012: 35). The Five Pillars of Learning were conceptualized as “an integrated vision for education” (Tawil & Cougoureux, 2013: 1), and are now “widely considered to be a key reference for the conceptualization of education and learning worldwide” (ibid, Tawil & Cougoureux, 2013: 2). The report, although from 1996, still provides “a relevant guiding framework for education development” today (Tawil & Cougoureux, 2013: 22).

Over the last 20 or so years we have also seen tangible examples of how these policies are being translated into practice with the development of models, frameworks, continuums and assessment tools that scaffold concepts such as pluralism and diversity (Stanley, 1997), intercultural learning (Bennett, 2004; Hammer, 2009; Sorrells, 2016), multicultural teaching (Domangue & Carson, 2008; Harrison et al., 2010), critical global citizenship (Larsen, 2014), global citizenship (UNESCO, 2015), competences for democratic culture (Council of Europe, 2016) and global competence (Jones, 2018; OECD, 2018), for example.

Although such models, frameworks, continuums and assessment tools are beginning to emerge, it is recognized (Schleicher, 2018) that embedding the teaching of such concepts in schools has not been achieved. Reimers (2010) has in the past suggested that this is in part because of a lack of understanding on how activities which promote these, can be integrated into teacher professional development and school curricula and assessments.

Importantly, for students in schools to learn about and become interculturally sensitive or globally competent, for example, higher education needs to create and promote activities which develop such dispositions in teacher educators who in turn can embed this within programmes of study for preservice teachers. It is currently unclear to what extent such dispositions are embedded in teacher education programmes (Gaudelli, 2016; Longview Foundation, 2008; Zhao, 2010).

It is because of this lack of clarity that the authors embarked on the European funded Erasmus+ KA2 Global Competence in Teacher Education Project (GCTE) (<https://www.globalcompetence4educators.org/>). Through this project we are working with teacher educators and preservice teachers internationally to develop future cohorts of teachers who are both globally competent themselves, but also have the skills to develop global competence in their students. The first activity in this

Table 1. OECD Global Competence “Target Dimensions”

Target Dimensions

1. the capacity to examine issues and situations of local, global and cultural significance (e.g., poverty, economic interdependence, migration, inequality, environmental risks, conflicts, cultural differences and stereotypes)
2. the capacity to understand and appreciate different perspectives and world views
3. the ability to establish positive interactions with people of different national, ethnic, religious, social or cultural backgrounds or gender
4. the capacity and disposition to take constructive action toward sustainable development and collective well-being

project is a pilot study aimed at highlighting the ideas of European teacher educators concerning global competence and investigating what aspects of global competence should be integrated into initial teacher education programmes.

2. Conceptual framework

As an emerging field, the language and conceptualizations used to articulate what we are studying in this paper, are embryonic. Moreover, depending on different disciplinary, political, geographical and societal perspectives a variety of terms have been used such as cultural competence, global competence, internationalization, intercultural competence, international skills, 21st century skills, global citizenship, transversal skills, multi-cultural skills, transferable skills, to explore approaches that enable us to develop the necessary dispositions in citizens who can successfully engage on multiple and interconnected levels with the world around them. Although not the focus of this paper, it is important to note that these different conceptualizations of outwardly apparently similar terms, may foster divergent “imagined futures” (Vaccari & Gardinier, 2019: 81).

For this research we have chosen to use the term global competence as defined by the OECD. Although the OECD notion of global competence has been criticized regarding its neoliberalist heritage (Engel et al., 2019) and its use as a symbolic tool (Cobb & Couch, 2018), when viewed against other frameworks and models it appears the most inclusive of the knowledge, skills, beliefs, values and attributes that are argued for (e.g., Schleicher, 2018; Kahn & Agnew, 2016; Reimers, 2009) in our modern world. Additionally, this term appears to be more widely accepted than other terms, such as Global Citizenship for example, which has questionable relevance in the Global South (Jooste & Heleta, 2016). Finally, the notion of global competence “builds on the ideas of different models of global education, such as intercultural education and education for democratic citizenship (UNESCO, 2014; Council of Europe, 2016)” (OECD, 2018:7). The OECD define global competence as,

“the capacity to examine local, global and intercultural issues, to understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others, to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with people from different cultures, and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development” (OECD, 2018:7).

Thus defined, global competence is not just about knowledge and skills, but about the mobilization of these for active engagement, which is appropriate for the diverse societies in which we live and for the sustainable future of our world. Within their position paper the OECD expresses four “target dimensions”, as shown in Table 1. We have used both the OECD definition of global competence and the four target dimensions as a conceptual lens, through which to view initial teacher education programmes globally across Europe in this study.

3. Research design

3.1. Aims and research question

This pilot study focuses on the ideas of European teacher educators regarding the notion of global competence (GC) and what aspects of this complex concept should be integrated into Initial Teacher Education Programmes (ITEPs). It is important to underline that this study represents the first step of a large project split into three phases. In the first phase, we concentrated our efforts in underscoring the features of GC related with ITEPs. In the second phase, we investigated how to create paths to train teacher educators on GC issues and make them globally competent. The last phase was dedicated to the student teachers, in particular, we examined the best modalities to assess their GC development. In this stage of our project, we did not have the intent to generalize the results but we wanted to create the bases to underpin phases two and three. Therefore, the overall research question that has driven this study is: what aspects of the GC concept should be integrated into ITEPs? Specifically, the teacher educators were asked to underscore the potential (a) topics, (b) contexts, (c) actors and (d) methodologies that can support the integration of global competence concepts into ITEPs.

3.2. Contexts and participants

Even if there was no intent to generalize the results, the recruitment and engagement of experts was crucial because it was important to have a panel composed of representatives from the different European countries associated with this project. The experts required four main characteristics: being teacher educators involved in the ITEP of their county; being involved in internationalization programmes concerning teacher education issues; being members of international associations focused on teacher education issues; having published papers on teacher education issues at international level.

We contacted twenty-eight experts from seventeen countries. Twenty-four participants from fifteen countries agreed to be involved in the study. [Table 2](#) shows the distribution, the features and a short description of the ITEP where they were working. Eighteen participants were female and six of them were male. Six institutions offer ITEPs for all school levels (kindergarten, primary and secondary), four ITEPs offer courses for kindergarten and primary teachers, two ITEPs offer courses for primary and secondary teachers, one ITEP is dedicated to primary teachers, another one is devoted to secondary teachers and the last one offers vocational teacher education. These ITEPs welcome different numbers of student teachers in total. Ten welcome less than 1000 student teachers, three ITEPs welcome between 1000 and 2000 student teachers, one ITEP welcomes between 2000 and 3000 student teachers and the last one welcomes more than 3000 students. Nine ITEPs are structured on four- or five-year courses, including bachelor and master degrees, three ITEPs are 3-year bachelor courses. Two of the ITEPs are at master level with two-year courses and the vocational teacher education is a one/two-year course.

3.3. Procedure and instrument

To investigate how GC is interpreted in ITEPs, a qualitative research design was chosen. The procedure was based on a semi-structured interview composed of four main sections. The first section was aimed at collecting information related to the ITEP, such as: levels involved, number of students, the structure of the ITEP, and so on. The second section was composed of only one open question. This question started with reading the OECD (2018) definition of GC to the person interviewed. After presenting this definition, the interviewer asked the following question: "What is your idea of GC and which are the main descriptors of GC in your opinion?" We started with this open question because we wanted to let the participants talk without interrupting them. It was important that the interviewees had the possibility to express their feelings and ideas about GC freely. The third section was focused on the specific aspects that can support the integration of global competence concepts into ITEPs. The researchers presented the following questions, concerning the five main facets of the relationship between the GC and a higher education institution.

Table 2. Participants' characteristics

Country	Part.	Gender	Age	Levels involved in the ITEP	Students involved in the ITEP	ITEP duration (years)	ITEP structure
Belgium	2	F	30–39	K-P-S	... –999	3	Bachelor
		F	40–49				
Croatia	1	F	40–49	S	1000–1999	5	Bachelor +Master
Finland	3	F	50–59	V	... –999	1–2	-
		F	50–59				
		M	40–49				
France	2	F	30–39	K-P-S	2000–2999	2	Master
		F	30–39				
Germany	1	F	30–39	P	... –999	3	Bachelor
Greece	3	F	30–39	K-P-S	... –999	4	Bachelor +Master
		M	50–59				
		M	50–59				
Ireland	1	F	50–59	K-P	... –999	3	Bachelor
Italy	3	F	50–59	K-P	... –999	5	Bachelor +Master
		F	40–49				
		M	50–59				
Latvia	1	F	50–59	K-P-S	3000–3999	4	Bachelor +Master
Norway	1	F	60–69	K-P-S	... –999	5	Bachelor +Master
Poland	1	F	30–39	K-P	... –999	5	Bachelor +Master
Slovakia	2	M	40–49	P-S	... –999	2	Master
		F	40–49				
Spain	1	F	40–49	K-P	1000–1999	5	Bachelor +Master
Sweden	1	F	60–69	K-P-S	1000–1999	4/5	Bachelor +Master
Turkey	1	M	40–49	P-S	... –999	4	Bachelor +Master

K = kindergarten; P = primary; S = secondary; V = vocational

- Topics: what are the competencies, dimensions, outcomes, aspects of GC included in your ITEP?
- Contexts: where is the idea of GC situated in your ITEP?
- Actors: who is/are the person(s) responsible for implementing GC issues in your ITEP?
- Methods/strategies: how are GC activities carried out in your ITEP?

The interview's fourth section was composed of one final question focused on the future: "Given the actual situation of GC in your ITEP, what would you like to implement to arrange an ideal situation where the idea of GC is carried out?" This last question was aimed at uncovering the opportunities and prospects for the characteristics of the potential activities concerning GC at higher institution level, in particular, within the ITEPs. The interviews were conducted in English to simplify the data analysis.

3.4. The coding process and qualitative data analysis procedure

The interviews were analysed following the grounded theory analysis methods formulated by Glaser and Strauss (2017), using in particular the technique based on the three-step coding process presented by Corbin and Strauss (2015) and explained by Vollstedt and Rezat (2019): (1) Open coding: the text was organized into “codes” or “nodes”. In particular, the coding procedure is aimed at creating concepts from the data, represented by the participants’ answers. (2) Axial coding: after defining the nodes, the concepts were systematized and grouped into categories. (3) Selective coding: the researchers highlighted and focused their attention on the main categories and the relationships among the categories around which to set the data interpretation.

4. Data analysis and findings

The findings highlighted five main categories (in Figure 1, these categories are shown as ellipsis with thick borders) as follows: “Organizational”, “Educational”, “Teaching”, “International” and “Need to change”. The categories are composed of sub-categories (in Figure 1, these sub-categories are shown as ellipsis with thin borders), and each sub-category is composed of various codes which specify and describe the sub-category and category’s characteristics as it relates to GC.

4.1. Global competence categories

4.1.1. Organizational category

This category includes three sub-categories. The first of these is “GC & ITEP” and articulates if the notion of GC should be included in ITEP in a formal or informal way. The second sub-category is “OECD definition vs ITEP” and shows if the OECD definition of GC can fit or not, in terms of accordance or distance, with the ITEP’s structures and activities. The final sub-category is “People for GC development”, which indicates if it is necessary or not to appoint explicitly some people to develop the idea of GC within ITEP. Table 3 presents in detail, the codes and the sub-codes included into the sub-categories; examples of sentences which describe the codes; the number of participants who stated sentences related to the code and the frequency of the codes.

Figure 1. Map of categories and sub-categories.

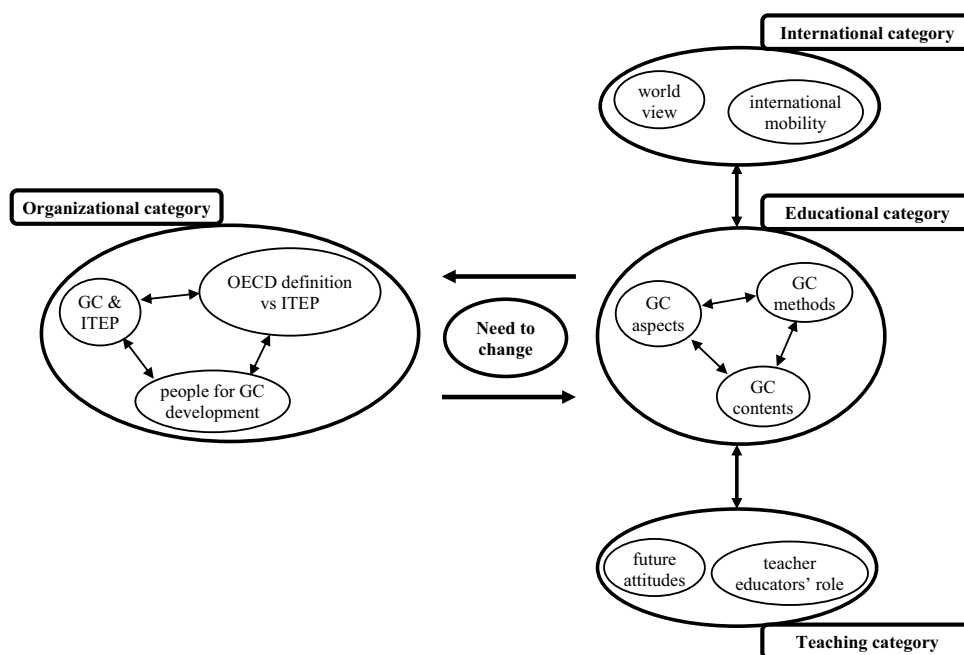


Table 3. Organizational category

Sub-category	Code/Sub-code	Sentences	Participants	Frequency
GC & ITEP	Explicit	In our courses there should be specific GC aspects which could be implemented explicitly in all subjects	10	19
	Implicit	We try to create activities to connect different cultures but the GC aspects are quite informal and implicit	8	31
	Spread	The idea of GC should permeate the whole ITEP's curriculum	10	18
OECD definition vs ITEP	Accordance	The OECD definition of GC is in line with the ITEP's curriculum	8	21
	Distance	There are some sentences related with the OECD definition only in science education programme but nothing in the ITEP	9	17
	Holistic	The OECD definition of GC can underlie all aspects of the programme but it is not clear how to specify it	4	7

(Continued)

Table3. (Continued)

Sub-category	Code/Sub-code	Sentences	Participants	Frequency	
People for GC development	Nobody	Someone should be appointed but, usually, nobody is formally assigned to implement GC in the programme	5	7	
	Shared responsibility	Sometimes the development GC issues are shared among the teacher educators but it would be important to appoint someone otherwise anybody does anything	4	5	
	People to be appointed	Teacher educators	One or more teacher educators should be encouraged to collaborate and share the GC issues with preservice teachers	4	5
		Student teachers	In some cases preservice teachers themselves are encouraged to include GC topics in their own professional work but it's not enough	3	5
		Responsible for internationalization	If a teacher educator can't, an important role could be played by the responsible for international relations	4	4

Table 4. Educational category

Sub-category	Code	Sub-code	Sentences	Participants	Frequency
GC aspects	Citizenship education	Citizenship education	GC involves the sense of belonging not merely in a national group but it is the sense of being a global citizen	6	11
		Sense of community	GC promotes the sense of community	3	4
	Cultural, multicultural, intercultural	Multicultural, intercultural	GC supports preservice teachers in considering the impact of cultural diversity on the work of a teacher	18	65
		Immigrant and refugees	GC helps to understand the immigrant-background students in their integration into the society	6	9
		Inclusion	GC refers to more inclusive approaches in teaching	4	5
	Communication and cooperation	Interaction and cooperation skills	I think interaction and cooperation skills are the core of GC	14	36
		Linguistic aspects	Students should have more lectures about GC and learn different foreign languages	9	21
	Acceptance of diversity	equity, equality, democracy	The concept of global citizen is related to the skills relevant to a democratic citizen	7	15
		social justice	GC refers to children's rights, social justice perspective, global poverty, differentiation in the classroom, marginalization rights	6	14
	Reflection and understanding	Self-reflection, self-awareness	We ask preservice teachers to consider various world views, their inherent values and attitudes, and reflect on how they affect the roles of teachers and students	10	18
		Understanding each other	GC is an ability to understand different people, from different cultures, without having rigid preconceptions	7	14
	Sustainability and well-being	Sustainability	Sustainability is connected to GC	14	23
		Well-being	GC means to be responsible for our common well-being and sustainability	6	7

(Continued)

Table 4. (Continued)

Sub-category	Code	Sub-code	Sentences	Participants	Frequency	
GC methods	Lectures		Theoretical lectures cannot be the best way to educate preservice teachers about GC	10	14	
	Projects		Specific projects focused on the areas of immigration, intercultural competence, etc. might be useful	12	29	
	Teaching practice		Placement represents a privileged setting to integrate GC issues in the everyday teaching practice	11	20	
	Teamwork		Collaboration is the base to improve the interaction between preservice teachers and various kinds of people from several cultures	11	24	
	Workshop, seminars		GC issues can be faced during structured debates with roles' exchange, critical reflection on practices and incidents	14	34	
GC contents	Self-reflection		Preservice teachers should reflect on how they are developing the GC issues	16	35	
	International and cultural issues		International projects and practice can easily develop multicultural attitudes	12	37	
	Pedagogical awareness		Students should be involved in real situations dealing with cultural diversity, exploring pathways to understand heterogeneity as a positive characteristic of our societies	11	23	
	Technical skills	Digital competences		Digital literacy can play a role in better networking and understanding in various professional and socio-cultural contexts globally	4	8
		Linguistic competences		Students should be able to speak many languages to face global contexts	8	18

The analysis showed that the notion of GC should not be included implicitly into ITEPs. Additionally, teacher educators underline that the OECD definition can fit with the ITEP's structures and activities. Lastly, thirteen experts declare that it is necessary to appoint one or more teacher educators to develop GC issues. Alternatively, they suggested that the person responsible for international relations can take this role.

4.1.2. Educational category

The analysis identified three sub-categories, the first of which was "GC aspects". This sub-category reports how GC should be interpreted within the ITEPs, specifying the different ideas and notions related to the GC definition. The second sub-category, "GC methods", indicates the potential strategies to be used to face GC issues. The third sub-category, "GC contents" presents the main content which should be related to the GC definition. Table 4 displays in detail, the codes and the sub-codes included into the sub-categories; examples of sentences which describe the codes; the number of participants who stated sentences related to the code and the frequency of the codes.

The sub-codes most quoted by the participants in the first sub-category are "multicultural, intercultural" and "interaction and cooperation skills" together with the nodes related to the "acceptance of diversity" and "citizenship education". Conversely, "sense of community" and "well-being" have been cited only a few times (n = 3 and n = 6 respectively). Regarding teaching methods, GC issues should not be addressed during the theoretical lectures (n = 10) but they should be woven into workshops and seminars (n = 14). The content related to GC should be

Table 5. “Need to change” category			
Code	Sentences	Participants	Frequency
Making GC explicit	The programmes should make GC more explicit to develop a common language among teacher educators	3	4
Improving GC issues	We could do a better job, as a programme be more consistent in when and how those competences are carried out	5	10
New guidelines	It needs a change in the direction of new and innovative thematic sessions	4	6
More internalization & collaboration	It is crucial to implement international initiatives, projects, seminars and workshops	7	9

principally the ability to “self-reflect” (n = 16), “international and cultural issues” (n = 12) and “pedagogical issues” (n = 11).

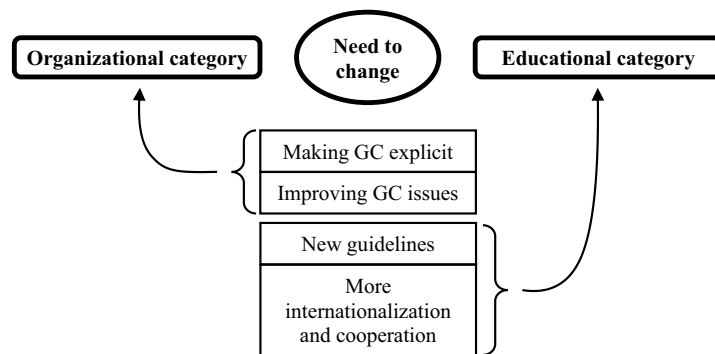
4.1.3. International category

The international category includes two sub-categories, these being “World view” and “International mobility”. In “World view”, the most cited codes are “global perspectives” (n = 8) and “world interconnected”, (n = 7). The second sub-category, “International mobility” was stated by 16 participants, involved all countries in the study and occurred on 54 occasions.

4.1.4. Teaching category

The teaching category is composed of two sub-categories, named “teacher educators’ role” and “future attitudes”. Teacher educators should play a crucial role according to four participants who stated this topic on seven occasions. Additionally, teacher educators are seen also as moderators to coach preservice teachers within GC issues. The sub-category named “Future attitudes” indicates the potential approaches which can be developed by preservice teachers. Eight participants stated eighteen times that preservice teachers can foster positive attitudes towards multiculturalism by implementing global competence activities.

Figure 2. Relationships among “Need to change” and Organizational/Educational categories.



4.1.5. “Need to change” category

This category contains the sub-categories that indicate what should be changed to integrate GC into the ITEPs. The sub-category “Making GC explicit” was quoted by three participants on four occasions. The sub-category “Improving GC issues” was raised ten times by five participants. The sub-category “More internationalization and cooperation” was stated nine times by seven participants.

5. Discussion

The map of categories that we constructed during data analysis (see, [Figure 1](#)) visualizes the characteristics, potential and obstacles for integration of GC issues in ITEPs. The two larger categories are called “Organizational” and “Educational” and are connected by another category named “Need to change”. In addition, the Educational category is directly associated with a further two categories called “International” and “Teaching” respectively. The associations among the categories explain the ideas about GC issues expressed by the participants. Additionally, the associations represent the ways to understand, on the one hand, how GC should be integrated within the ITEPs and, on the other hand, how to create and plan new paths to develop GC issues.

The Organizational category concerns the relationship among the ITEP’s structure, key people within the organization and the notion of GC. These sub-categories show that the concept of GC should be included more explicitly into the ITEPs since the experts see an essential accordance between the GC issues and the ITEP’s activities. These first observations indicate that the GC idea should be quoted formally into the programmes and, consequently, integrated officially into the educational activities otherwise, as emphasized by Schleicher (2018), the GC concept cannot be embedded effectively in the ITEPs. Additionally, the institutions should appoint specifically a person as responsible for the development of GC issues.

Whilst the organizational sub-categories were focused on the institutional issues, the educational sub-categories express and reveal the diverse aspects in which GC is interpreted by the participants. GC is a multifaceted concept and presents various meanings, as indicated by Vaccari & Gardinier (2019). Not surprisingly, the persons interviewed indicated a wide range of meanings and connotations. First of all, GC is seen as a way to develop multicultural and intercultural issues and topics, concerning also the inclusion, in particular, of migrants and refugees. The second perspective is represented by communication, interaction and cooperation skills, including also linguistic aspects. Then, there are three interesting codes, the first of which is related to the acceptance of diversity, illustrated through the nodes “equity, equality and democracy” and “social justice”. The second is the ability to self-reflect and understand each other and a third aspect, demonstrates how participants view GC through the lenses of “sustainability” and “wellbeing”. A further code is associated with “citizenship education”. The sub-category named “GC methods” includes sentences which indicate the strategies that should be used to carry out GC issues within the ITEPs. The analysis showed that GC topics should be faced mainly during workshop/seminar or project activities. Also, the teaching practice is seen as a good moment to address GC through mainly the collaborative approach. The key contents are represented by viewing international and cultural issues together with meaningful possibilities to self-reflect and develop, in real contexts, a pedagogical awareness about cultural diversity and exploring multiple points of view.

As shown in [Figure 1](#), the Educational category is directly connected with two further categories. The first being the International category. The sub-category named “World view” shows how GC can be connected with the development of different visions of the world and it is composed of two main codes. The first one is named “Global perspectives” and refers to the importance of GC to develop a global understanding of the worldwide challenges. In this regard, a teacher educator said: “We believe in both local and global impact and that researchers should always look from a global perspective”. The second node is called “World interconnected”. A participant said: “The prevalent increasing online interactions, not necessarily physically travelling but people are

interacting increasingly in different venues online as well with globally”. This sentence implies clearly that new teachers will have to work and act in educational contexts both locally and globally, at the same time. The second sub-category is called “International mobility” and it shows how much international mobility can support the development of GC issues and contents. This category is particularly significant because it has been stated by most of the participants in all the countries involved on multiple occasions, for example, “What we see with the students who go on an exchange programme is that they come back and have broadened their own view and are more motivated to learn more about other countries”. The data suggests that international mobility is considered one of the most important ways to develop the GC issues among the preservice teachers, in particular, through the placement in schools abroad as articulated by Marx and Moss (2011), Lupi et al. (2012), and Ateşkan (2016).

The second category connected with the Educational category concerns two main aspects. The first one shows the importance of the teacher educators’ role in developing GC issues within ITEPs whilst the second illustrates how GC can allow student teachers to develop a future attitude towards multicultural contexts and an overall sense of responsibility and awareness about the importance of teaching in enabling students to be open to multiple points of view. The sub-category named “Teacher educators’ role” denotes the teacher educator as a crucial role, as illustrated by Kelly (2006) who underlined that teacher educators will have to educate new teachers in managing activities in settings where several factors and needs are concentrated, arising from different histories and cultures. In addition, the teacher educator is seen as a moderator: “We can compare our pedagogies with discussed interactions with our teacher candidates”. The sub-category called “Future attitudes” is based on the code “Attention to multiculturalism” expressed by the sentence: “Student teachers will be familiar with the characteristics of different cultures and cultural theories related to teaching work” and the code named “Responsibility” demonstrated by the following extract: “Preservice teachers will be key actors in raising awareness related to how important it is to be open minded and good in dialogue”.

Lastly, the “Need to change” category represents the key factors and the things to do to include, formally and explicitly, GC issues into ITEPs. The codes shown in Table 5 can be split into two sections. “Making GC explicit” and “Improving GC issues” indicates the changes to be done within the institutional and organizational structure of ITEPs. In particular, it is necessary to mention explicitly GC in the documents related to the ITEPs, indicating also the strategies, the activities, the moments and the people involved. The second section includes “New guidelines” and “More internationalization and cooperation” and is concerned with the contents and educational styles to be used in order to make GC issues part of the essential activities of ITEPs. Figure 2 makes these relationships visible and evident.

6. Conclusions

After having presented and discussed the findings, we can specify in detail the connections between the codes, the sub-categories and within and between each category. This enables us to give an interpretation of the participants’ interviews and the answers to the research question.

The aspects of GC concept that should be integrated into ITEPs—point (a) of the research question—can be found mainly in the educational categories, in particular in the codes multicultural/intercultural, interaction/cooperation skills, acceptance of diversity and reflection/understanding. These topics are partially included also in the content and international issues which are usually concerned and included in projects and practical activities so, through them, it is possible to modify the ITEP regulations and documents and solicit the GC development with the organization of new activities (workshops, seminars, modules, etc.) or through setting up agreements for international exchanges and projects.

The contexts—point (b) of the research question—are mainly located in the organizational categories in particular, within “GC & ITEP” and “OECD definition vs ITEP” but they are also

connected with “GC aspects” and “GC methods” included in the Educational categories. There is a kind of antinomy and semantic polarity between the educational categories and the organizational ones. The first seems fundamental from a theoretical point of view whilst the second affects the ITEP structure from an institutional perspective. The possibility to increase and enhance the opportunities to carry out GC issues within ITEPs depends on the questions raised by the organizational categories.

GC should be considered in an explicit way and included formally in ITEPs, so it is possible to find also a clear and positive accordance between GC and the ITEP purposes and the actors, teacher educators or the person responsible for internationalization—point (c) of the research question—can be officially appointed to deal with this task.

The methods/strategies—point (d) of the research question—are mainly located in the sub-category “GC methods” but also in the teaching categories. The projects, the workshops/seminars and the teaching practice represent the ideal situations to develop international/cultural issues, pedagogical awareness and self-reflection among preservice teachers. It remains an issue on how to integrate GC education within lectures. Probably, it would be necessary to integrate theoretical lectures with active methods and contexts such as workshops and seminars, between formal and informal events through the role of teacher educators who can mix these two aspects effectively. However, it might also be the case that GC education necessitates experiential learning which is not best suited to the lecture format.

In summary, this study makes three contributions to the field. The first is associated with the Delors et al. (1996) and UNESCO (2012) in their presentation of the fourth and the fifth pillars of learning (“learning to live together” & “learning to transform oneself and society”). Our study identifies how these can be developed within teacher education programmes. Second, this study tries to clarify how GC issues can be actually integrated into preservice teachers’ professional development as proposed by Reimers (2009) and Gaudelli (2016). Lastly, we propose suggestions and identify the key aspects suitable to understand how to face the future global educational challenges, as indicated by Schleicher (2018).

6.1. Implications for policy and practice

This study indicates that it would be necessary to make some changes within the ITEPs both from the institutional and the educational points of view. The experts underlined a broad awareness of the importance of GC but such responsiveness cannot be put into practice due to technical and organizational reasons, such as the centrality of the subjects, difficulties in arranging international activities, etc. Two final quotations underline the advice suggested by this research for the future application of GC in the ITEPs. Firstly, “I think that the extent by which they are carried out in individual courses depends upon each individual professor a little bit too much”. This sentence implies not to create a course named “Global Competence” but to share in each subject some aspects and strategies related to the GC issues. Secondly: “I would like to make our institutions more open to let students see not only our context but to see how education looks from other perspectives to see cultural differences”. It means that the teacher educators should dedicate their efforts in, on the one hand, arranging multiple educational experiences for the preservice teachers in local schools and universities and, on the other, let them cooperate internationally through the organization of exchange programmes both for studying and experiencing teaching practice in schools abroad. Many institutions are increasing their international mobility programmes but the number of student teachers involved is still low so it is necessary to consider alternatives such as virtual exchanges (Garcés & O’Dowd, 2020) or online placements (Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020), particularly in the time of global pandemics. In this way, our teacher education programmes have the possibility to be globally competent and are prepared to face different challenges in diverse contexts and situations.

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Ethical statement

All procedures performed in this study, that involved human participants, were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional committee and with the Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants involved in the study.

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