Lund University
Department of Political Science
Bachelor in Development Studies

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Supervisor: Anders Uhlin

CONSTRUCTING GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS OF
OECD DISCOURSE ON GLOBAL COMPETENCE

Ida Andrea Nilsson
19871123-5500

LUND UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Social Sciences

Abstract

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) has gained increasing conceptual popularity in recent years. The term has been used by governments, NGO's and international agencies alike to promote a larger inclusion of global skills, values and attitudes in curricula across the world. However, GCE as practice is not a clearly defined framework and may involve many distinct themes and rationalities in its different expressions. A recent development has seen the OECD decide to include global competences as a field for testing in the 2018 round of PISA. As the largest scale attempt yet to measure the outcome of GCE, this decision will have implications for how GCE is conceptualized and approached in the more than seventy countries currently participating in PISA. This thesis therefore examines how the OECD discursively determines GCE by employing discourse theory as developed by Laclau & Mouffe. On the basis of this analysis, the implication of OECD's discursive articulations for educational practice are discussed. The thesis concludes that the OECD constitutes GCE as an enhancer of global competitiveness, which creates an antagonistic relationship to the cosmopolitan conception of GCE as fostering global community.

Key words: Development studies, discourse theory, global citizenship education, global competence, Laclau and Mouffe, OECD, PISA

Word count: 9778

Abbreviations

DT	Discourse Theory
GCE	Global Citizenship Education
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Global citizenship has become a buzzword in development contexts during the recent decade. Popularized by campaigns like Make Poverty History, NGO's and the United Nations it has also found its way into educational initiatives across the world in the form of global citizenship education (GCE). Albeit relatively new in this expression, GCE builds on longer traditions of cosmopolitan values and attitudes to education, emphasizing the commonality of humanity across national borders (Balarin 2011, Tiessen 2011, Schattle 2015, Carter 2001). The cosmopolitan citizen has been a figure in philosophy for centuries, a tradition of thought associated with famous stoics like Marcus Aurelius as well as philosophers like Erasmus and Kant (Carter 2001). In recent years, the focus on processes of globalization has given new life to the cosmopolitan ideal, especially in the somewhat newer form of a global citizenship discourse (Desforges 2004, Balarin 2011, Myers 2006). The rise in prominence for this new cosmopolitan education is demonstrated by the inclusion in several important international narratives. Already in 2002 the European Union adopted the Maastricht Declaration on Global Education, which included working towards an "integration of global education perspectives into education systems at all levels" (Carvalho da Silva et al 2008). GCE has also become a flagship term for the UN as one of the three priority areas of the Education First Initiative initiated by secretary general Ban-Ki Moon (Balarin 2011, Global Education First Initiative 2015).

The increasing relevance of the GCE concept has recently also been highlighted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In 2013, the OECD began preparations to include 'global competence' in their international student assessment program PISA[1]. PISA program head Andreas Schleicher referred to the decision as a 'new phase' of the international assessments, asserting that: "we need global competence as governments around the world seek to equip young people with the skills they need for life and employment" (Pearson 2014). However, it has frequently been noted by researchers of the topic that global citizenship and GCE are still concepts fraught with ambiguity (Myers 2006, Fanghanel & Cousin 2012, Balarin 2011, Carter 2001, UNESCO 2014). There is a lack of conceptual clarity and a width to the term that has led to criticism from many directions. The initiative by the OECD to onset assessment of GCE will thus be an important step in direction of crystallizing the concept, as the act of measuring undeniably requires normative

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[1] A brief background of PISA and the OECD will be provided in section 2.1

decisions on content and expected outcomes. These decisions may prove crucial for the future of GCE practice.

Further accentuating the importance of the OECD initiative is the inclusion of GCE as an educational target in the newly finalized Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). In a working paper put forward by the technical assistance group in charge of developing indicators for the education goal, it was suggested that the PISA framework for measuring global competence be used as foundation for the SDG indicator on GCE (UNESCO-UIS 2014)[2].

All things considered, it is likely that global citizenship education is arriving at a critical juncture of conceptual determination. This thesis will therefore focus on one of the important actors in this process, by mapping the OECD discourse on global competence using the analytical tools provided by Laclau & Mouffe's (2014) discourse theory.

1.2 Aim and Significance

The overall aim of this research is to contribute to the understanding of GCE discourse as it is increasingly put into policy programs and educational efforts around the world. My choice of topic stems from an interest in how global issues are communicated and constituted in educational practice. A fundamental component of discourse analysis is the acknowledgement that language is not simply reflecting the social world but is actively part of constructing it (Jørgensen & Philips 2002:1). The constitution of a global education for global citizenship thus has implications for how global issues are perceived and addressed for decades to come. The significant impact of PISA on national education policy in the last decade has positioned the OECD as a powerful actor in the educational sector (Froese-Germain 2010). I therefore argue that the way the OECD chooses to discursively constitute GCE will affect not only with what motivations policymakers, teachers and students approach the subject, but also the contents of what will be taught under the GCE umbrella. GCE is thus important to development studies as it has the potential to affect attitudes of youth towards issues like foreign aid and international cooperation. GCE is also part of the SDG declaration; and as such, it will be at the center of development discussions and practice for at least the next 15 years. Mapping and analyzing this discourse as it develops through different interventions will therefore be

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[2] The TAG is coordinated by UNESCO Institute for Statistics and composed of representatives from UNESCO, UNICEF, Education for All Global Monitoring Report (EFA-GMR), the World Bank Group and OECD.

important to enable debate on how the discursive space around GCE is constituted, and what consequences for educational outcomes this implies. This thesis aims to contribute to this process.

1.3 Research Questions

- How is GCE constructed discursively by the OECD through their articulation of global competence?
    - o What are the main antagonisms in the OECD construction of GCE?
    - o What are the implications of the OECD articulation for the future practice of GCE?

1.4 Delimitations

This study focuses on how the OECD constitutes the concept of GCE in terms of measuring global competencies. Being a very large and productive organization, there are a lot of materials that could have been used to supplement the analysis of OECD discourse. However, due to time and space constraints I have chosen to focus on materials relating to the PISA 2018 round that were published on the OECD web page. Interviews, blog posts or news articles concerning this subject will thus not be included in the analysis. The analysis has been performed on documents in English, and I acknowledge that the discursive construction might have been different in another language. Furthermore, materials referenced in this thesis are limited to what was accessible to me through Lund University databases and free downloadable documents on organization websites. The sampled texts will be more closely described in section 3.3.3.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

The thesis continues in the following section by addressing previous literature on global citizenship. This includes a short background on the OECD and PISA as well as a brief review of the concept of global citizenship education. The chapter further includes an overview of research concerning global citizenship that has employed discourse analysis. Subsequently the methodological and theoretical framework of the thesis, discourse theory (DT) as conceived by Laclau & Mouffe, is presented. Thereafter follows the analytical section, where the discursive construction of the OECD is outlined with focus on discursively enabled subject positions, antagonisms and hegemonic articulations. The main finding in the analysis is that the central antagonistic relationship within GCE as constituted by

the OECD is between concepts of global community and global competitiveness. Finally, the thesis is concluded with a discussion of the findings, methodological considerations as well as suggestions for further research in this field.

2. Previous research

In this section I will present a background to studying GCE as a discourse. The first section provides a general overview of the OECD and PISA as well as the GCE concept, connecting to its cosmopolitan roots. Thereafter, section 2.3 and 2.4 zoom in on the work of scholars who have approached global citizenship with discourse analysis as their framework. The two latter sections offer a more critical view of the GCE discourse. Through these chapters I aim to shine light on the contrasts and tensions that have previously been identified within the concept of global citizenship education.

2.1 OECD and PISA background

The Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) was established over 50 years ago as the institution in charge of administrating the Marshall Plan financed by the U.S. Since then the number of members has continually increased and today the OECD has 34 members as well as counting the Brazil, India, China, South Africa and Indonesia as key partners (OECD 2015a). Furthermore, the OECD maintains several regional partnerships and initiatives in Europe, Latin America, Central Asia, the Middle East and North and West Africa. The overall mission statement of the organization is to work to: "promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world" (OECD 2015a).

In 2000, OECD launched the first rounds of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the initiative has thereafter continued as a triennial event. The survey aims to test students' skills in the areas of math, science and reading. The 2012 version of testing also included the themes 'financial literacy' and 'problem solving' (OECD 2015b). PISA is designed as a comparative tool for making educational policy and has as such been very successful (Froese-Germain 2010). This is shown by research on how many countries have justified educational reforms by PISA results and the reporting of participating countries that they consider PISA "an extremely important measure of the performance of their school system" (Froese-Germain 2010:10). Voices critical of PISA claim that the OECD is using the assessments to exert so-called 'soft power' on the educational policies of participant states to push reforms in a neoliberal political direction by emphasizing competitiveness and efficiency and that proper consideration is not taken in regards of cultural differences across and within countries (Froese-Germain 2010).

2.2 What is global citizenship education?

As mentioned in the introduction, many researchers on the subject have pointed out that the concept of GCE is ambiguous (Myers 2006, Tiessen 2011, Carter 2001). Adding to the confusion is the often synonymous usage of GCE, global education, future oriented education and education for 21st century skills and global competences (Dill 2012, Lee 2012, Osler & Vincent 2002:7, Myers 2006). Although sometimes used to put focus on different areas, these terms will in this thesis be understood as belonging to the conceptual umbrella of GCE.

There is some consensus on the underlying cosmopolitan framework of the mentioned definitions and terms. All approaches are considered to include notions of understanding of other peoples and their culture, an interest in and knowledge about global themes and issues as well as a sense of community and responsibility for the world.

One of the most cited definitions of GCE was developed by Oxfam. They position education for global citizenship as:

- "critical thinking,
- equipping young people with the knowledge, skills and values to participate as active citizens
- acknowledging the complexity of global issues
- revealing global issues and connections as part of everyday life, whether in a small village or city
- understanding how we relate the environment and each other as human beings
- relevant to all areas of the curriculum"

(Oxfam 2008:3)

While also leaning on the definition provided by Oxfam, UNESCO (2014) supplements their definition by connecting GCE to other fields, most prominently peace education, human rights education and education for sustainable development. They also underscore the importance of values and attitudes to the foreign: "It [GCE] promotes an ethos of curiosity, solidarity and shared responsibility" (UNESCO 2014: 15). Carter (2001) has identified three different meanings of 'global citizenship'; a) a neoliberal conception of the global citizen as a consumer of globally produced goods and services, b) a right's and duties-based conception grounded in nineteenth century ideas of

political citizenship, which highlights democracy and participation in national affairs and finally c) an understanding of the global citizen as a rights activist involved in globally relevant issues like social justice, poverty or climate change. She thus creates a large span moving between the individual, the national community and the global activist that shows the width of the concept but also points to very different rationalities. Fanghanel and Cousin (2012) construct GCE in two different categories: 1) as a tool shaping multiculturally aware and responsible citizens of the world and 2) as a new expression of westernization and cultural hierarchization. This latter conception is common among researchers within the postcolonial field who generally place global citizenship as part of a narrative of neo-colonialism. Fanghanel & Cousin (2012) use the Arendtian[3] concept of a 'worldly pedagogy' to describe how an approach to teaching can balance these inherent tensions. Finally, Schattle (2015:55) positions the 'traditional western' global citizenship debate as a "counterweight to globalization" where cultural, economic and political interconnectedness enables the formation of new identities that transcend the national and individual in favor of a global community. This is further accentuated by Myers (2006:376) who states that in a GCE practice, a human rights based approach should form the basis of teaching about globalization rather than global markets.

2.3 Global Citizenship as a national narrative

The dominant perspective using discourse analysis when approaching global citizenship is the postcolonial. A central scholar working with this perspective is April Biccum who aims to make connections between the work of postcolonial authors like Said, Spivak and Bhabha on colonial discourse and the development discourse represented by the British authorities of today. Her work should be put into context of a growing body of research on new imperialism since the events of 9/11, which from different perspectives has highlighted a return of colonial power structures in foreign policy (Biccum 2010:1). In focus of her investigations is the Department for International Development (DfID), which Biccum claims to be reproducing colonial discourse and reinforcing the legacy of empire. According to Biccum (2007,2010,2014), there has been an attempt at popularizing development through communication strategies and events during the last two decades. This has followed an increased criticism of the development agenda from civil society actors and serves to not

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[3] 'Arendtian' here referes to a term belonging to German-American philospher and political theorist Hannah Arendt.

only create awareness of development initiatives but also to legitimize actions of development institutions nationally:

> "the 'new' development agenda is reinforced by efforts to produce appropriate subjectivities *domestically*, appropriate for the 'new' imperialism and for the neo-liberal project by repacking and marketing the nineteenth-century civilizing mission" (Biccum 2014:7).

The domestic subjectivity being produced is that of the global citizen, a subject position within a discourse of development as 'the right thing to do'. Biccum refers to this as "development-as-civility" (Biccum 2010:110). This relates to the construction of the global citizen as a moral subject, which in Biccum's narrative serves as the pillar in a larger strategy of portraying development as a "moral imperative of the British nation" (Biccum 2014:50). By constructing global issues in this way, Biccum argues, uneven power relations are concealed and the responsibility for global issues is effectively moved away from global governance structures to instead be put on the shoulders of the 'empowered individual'. These processes are thus creating a false sense of individual agency. Central to Biccum's understanding of the global citizen is the dichotomous "us" and "them"-relationship she identifies in the construction of global citizenship: the 'us' in the richer countries and the 'them' in the global South. This becomes painfully apparent, she argues, when looking at how the government promotes a national discourse of global citizenship while simultaneously closing the borders to individuals with the more specific citizenship of the 'underdeveloped' countries (Biccum 2010:148,163). This understanding enforces her argument of the marketing of global citizenship as a tool for shaping the national subjectivities, producing citizens complacent with neoliberal development policies.

Biccum further argues that marketing of development is being performed in primarily three ways; first through the establishment of centers of Development Education by the DfID as well as the introduction of 'global competencies for global citizenship' in the school curriculum, secondly through an encouragement of national voluntarism and increased responsibilities to civil society actors such as NGO's, and finally, through what Biccum refers to as "mass popular spectacles" – the celebrity-thick events organized to involve the public in addressing issues such as poverty or hunger (Biccum 2001:1120). These initiatives are according to Biccum part of a larger strategy of legitimization of a neoliberal development agenda where individual responsibility of the northern

citizen is encouraged and criticism of power structures and inequalities forgotten. Voices raising critical concerns of current development priorities are actively being drowned out by the buzz created around events like the LiveAid and Make Poverty History campaigns, which instead positions the global citizen as both the means and ends of neoliberal development policy (Biccum 2007, 2010: 6,123). Biccum writes:

 "In short, the global citizen embraces the architecture of globalization under neoliberal terms of trade, and admits to the necessity of development as a crucial function of that architecture, which is simultaneously a part of both the individual's moral conscience and political interests, just as it is crucial for global stability and security. What is endowed in the figure of the global citizen, therefore, is an echo of the dual mandate of late nineteenth century colonial policy (Biccum, 2005), whereby the civilizing mission is simultaneously a moral obligation and in the domestic economic interest." (Biccum 2007:1123-1124)

Biccum thus portrays the global citizen as a player in the narrative claiming that there is no alternative to global governance but neoliberal capitalism, and as a discursive figure that effectively garners support for the British role as a development actor abroad, while simultaneously encouraging national citizens to gain competencies for global competition.

Schattle (2015) provides another example of how global citizenship can be used to construct a national discourse. In his study of South Korean newspapers' use of the term 'segye shimin' (global citizen) from 1990- 2011, Schattle concludes that the global citizenship discourse is being used to create an individual responsibility for national development and South Korean success in the global economy. In Schattle's analysis, the global citizenship discourse has taken the place of national narratives used during authoritarian rule in South Korea. Thereby it is replacing phrases like "Let's live well" – a country slogan meant to encourage citizens to work hard to achieve national development goals (Schattle 2015:58). Accordingly, 'segye shimin' in South Korea belongs to a narrative of national competitiveness and economic development and does not, like its counterpart in the West, in the same way bear connotations of solidarity or a struggle for equality and human rights. Being a global citizen is instead tied to "the country's efforts to position itself favorably for economic globalization" (Schattle 2015:55). The global citizenship identity has therefore in South Korean discourse become synonymous with being a citizen in a developed country, a goal to reach

by increasing individual competitiveness so that the country can become more competitive and successful as a consequence. Schattle (2015) associates this with the neoliberal reforms implemented in South Korea during the nineties, as the discourse goes hand in hand with a focus on the relationship between the individual and the marketplace, effectively positioning both the success and the failure of development policies as a result of individual actions. Global citizenship in South Korea has therefore worked as a discursive tool for nation building and creation of national identity.

Interestingly, the two authors reviewed here seem to describe similar tensions but from different perspectives. Biccum argues that the global citizenship discourse, although under the guise of promoting the common responsibility of humankind for our wellbeing, has in reality been coopted as a tool for legitimizing a neoliberal development agenda that increases the competitiveness of the UK in the world. Schattle on the other hand argues that the same has openly and purposefully been done in South Korea as part of the machinery of the developmental state. However, both authors note the connection between global citizenship and neoliberal economic policies and the focus on the empowered, responsible individual as the driver of change.

2.4 Global citizenship in (I)NGO discourse

The postcolonial and critical approaches to global citizenship are also common when analyzing NGO and INGO discourse. Tiessen (2011) focuses her work on global citizenship in the discourse used by the increasingly popular Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) organizations. Identifying global citizenship as part of a new "normative architecture of world order values", she positions her understanding of the term within the cosmopolitan tradition of aspiring to global community and unity (Tiessen 2011:573). By studying the language adopted by eight of these organizations when promoting their activities, Tiessen argues that even though global citizenship terminology is not always explicitly used, it is part of the general framework being communicated by the organizations. Competing for scarce resources, the language of global citizenship, she claims, is a way for the organizations to play into a larger trend in the development industry of promoting international voluntarism and individual action. Tiessen's main conclusion is that the global citizenship language employed by SDP organizations perpetuates a charity-based approach to development while glorifying the role of western volunteers in problem solving in the global south. The social change being promoted is in Tiessen's analysis based on western values and implies a hierarchical

citizenship structure where those in the global south are at the bottom of the chain waiting to be helped up by western citizens.

This analysis is echoed in the work of Natasha Shukla on the protest movement against dam building in the Narmada Valley in India. In her analysis of transnational INGO involvement to support the local struggle against the building of the dam in the start of the 90's, Shukla finds that: "[t]he discursive construction of dependency of the Narmada people on the Western public is further achieved by constructing the Narmada problem as local rather than global" (Shukla 2009:140). Through adopting a certain language the INGO's involved in the struggle constructed a hierarchical relationship between Western citizens and the locals in the struggle that resulted in what Shukla refers to as a 'vertical global citizenship'. In this language, the participation and contributions of Western citizens were communicated as crucial for the success of the protest, reinforcing colonial stereotypes and asymmetrical power relations. On the other hand, Shukla's analysis reveals that the global citizenship being constructed locally by activists in the struggle in Narmada Valley was more of a 'horizontal global citizenship'. Through connecting their struggle to other ongoing actions around the world and learning from them as well as sharing their own knowledge and stories with others, local activists were able to build a sense of global community and agency. Shukla (2009) thus argues for the learning of global citizenship as a bottom up process, emphasizing mutual learning and structural criticism rather than individualized charity-based actions.

These examples of how global citizenship can be interpreted as part of a national or (I)NGO discourse portray the existing tension between globalization as economic competitiveness and a more universal cosmopolitanism building on ideals of unity of humankind. The dichotomy of individual and community is present in these analyses: in whose interest is the construction of the global citizen working? They furthermore show how the asymmetrical power relations built into the term can be part of reproducing and cementing stereotypical colonial discourse of underdeveloped and developed, civilized and savage. It thus becomes clear that the global citizenship discourse is multifaceted and contains antagonistic relationships. The following section will present the theoretical and methodological framework that will be employed in this thesis to analyze such antagonisms in the OECD discourse.

3. Theoretical and methodological foundations

This chapter will introduce the theoretical and methodological framework of the thesis. As such, the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe has been chosen, based primarily on their most influential work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* from 1985. Discourse theory (DT) is to be considered both a theoretical framework and a methodological toolbox for analysis (Jørgensen & Philips 2002:4). Therefore these two sections of the thesis have been merged in one chapter. Section 3.1 will deal with the theoretical foundations of this work derived from DT and section 3.2 will concern the practical steps of analysis.

3.1 Theory

The choice of DT as the theoretical and methodological framework for this particular thesis is based on its focus on competing discourses. In contrast to critical discourse analysis, which has change as a central area of interest, the key word for DT is discursive struggle (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:6). This thesis concerns a concept that has long been established as ambiguous and ultimately aims at investigating competing articulations within the discourse. Laclau & Mouffe's framework provides tools to do this, using their focus on antagonism and hegemony. These concepts will be described more in detail in the upcoming sections, which aim to describe the theoretical cornerstones of DT. Due to the complexity of DT and the limitations of time and scope, it should be acknowledged that there are many nuances to DT that will not be addressed in this thesis. I will specifically address my use of terminology in sections 3.1.2 and 3.2.2.

3.1.1 Social constructionism

As previously mentioned, discourse analysis rests firmly on the premises of social constructivism, which can be defined as "an umbrella term for a range of new theories about culture and society" (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:4). Social constructionism at its core is interested in the subjective representations and categorizations of reality rather than attempts at unveiling objective reality – if there is such a thing. The approach thus stresses the culturally and historically determined positions which affect the way we perceive the world, and in so doing claims all knowledge to be contingent (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:5). This also means that our understanding of the world around us is based on social processes that are constantly constructed and have an effect on the choices of action we perceive as relevant and rational (Collin 2012:364). In line with this, Laclau and Mouffe claim

that our access to reality is through language. Even physical objects are discursive, in the sense that the only way they are meaningful to us is through discourse (Laclau & Mouffe 2014:93). Discourse is thus to be seen as integral of the world, an all-encompassing network. We cannot conceive of things outside of discourse, and even though external reality exists, the only way for us to approach it is through discourse. However, contrary to the realist assumption, reality is not static and objective but rather contingent (Collin 2012:366). This means that discursive content is constantly changing as a range of discourses are competing to define the truth.

3.1.2 Laclau & Mouffe – Discourse Theory

The foundation of DT is language, which is broken down to a large network of signs. The discursive process of change is spurred by how we constantly strive to attach meaning to signs through contrasting them to what they are not. In this way, the sign 'global' makes sense to us by being constructed as the opposite of 'local', 'specific' or 'particular'. The meanings of signs are constructed through relationships with other signs, and have no connection to external reality (Jørgensen & Philips 2002:25). A discourse is therefore to be seen as " the structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice", where articulation is defined as the act of creating relationships and meaning for signs with multiple meanings (Laclau & Mouffe 2014:93).

Discourse analysis entails breaking down language into smaller parts and investigating the way signs - words - are filled with meaning. This is done using several discursive tools. An example of this that will be of importance to this thesis is the term 'key signifier'. Key signifiers are words or terms that do not have a fixated meaning by themselves but instead attain meaning by being placed into a chain of equivalence with other signs (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:50). A chain of equivalence should be understood as a map of the signs connected to the key signifier, showing how they are organized (Laclau & Mouffe 2014:115). As an example, a key signifier in the development studies discourse might be 'developing country', which could be determined by relating to words like poverty, global south, inequality, aid-receiver etc. in a chain of equivalence. There are three types of key signifiers. The first is the nodal point, which is used to organize discourses. Also of importance are the key signifiers 'master signifier' and 'myth'. Where nodal points are used to organize discourse, master signifiers organize identity and myths define the social space (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:50). According to Laclau & Mouffe subjects cannot " be the origin of social relations" but are instead dependent on subject positions defined in discourse (Laclau & Mouffe 2014:101). In this thesis, a

nodal point will be 'global competence'; a master signifier 'global citizen' and the myth 'the globalized world'. Important to mention is also the term 'floating signifier', which is similar to key signifier but furthermore implies an ongoing antagonistic discursive struggle for meaning. GCE is an example of a floating signifier.
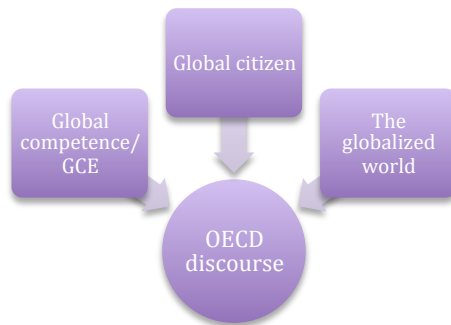
Figur 1: Key signifiers in OECD discourse

3.1.3 Antagonism and hegemony

The concept of antagonism is important within DT as it highlights what happens in a discursive struggle. As previously mentioned there is a constant struggle for fixation of meaning within and between discourses. Basically this means that there is more than one discourse attempting to fixate the meaning of a key signifier – there is an overdetermination allowing for different fixations in different situations (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:43). Discourse analysis thus represents an attempt to ''plot the course of these struggles to fix meaning at all levels of the social'' (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:24). Antagonism arises when identities, that could have previously co-existed, contradicts one another in a new articulation. For example, a politician can be both a local representative and a national one at the same time, however if the national parliament decides on policy contrary to the local interest, the politician ends up in an antagonistic situation as their identities clash. The competing antagonisms that arise from these situations can be resolved through what is referred to as a hegemonic intervention (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:48). When this occurs, one of the discourses is installed as a temporarily fixed meaning while the other is discredited. However, it is central to DT that total fixation of meaning, so-called closure, can never take place. Therefore there is a constant ongoing struggle of power and resistance to negotiate and articulate meaning (Tregidga, Milne & Kearins 2013).

The concept of hegemony was originally coined by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci and is by many deemed as his most important contribution to contemporary Marxist thought (Månsson 2000:147).

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Laclau and Mouffe's understanding of hegemony is very closely related to that originally posted by Gramsci, and has to do with the creation of consensus. In short this implies an understanding of hegemony as: a) the creation of a new ideological language, b) the creation of a new understanding of reality, c) the mobilization of support for that understanding and finally d) the creation of political antagonisms which make opposing understandings appear illegitimate (Frølund Thomsen 2001:190-191). In this thesis, a hegemonic intervention should be understood with these building blocks in mind.

3.2 Method

3.2.1 Research design and strategy

This thesis is a qualitative case study with discourse analysis as its methodological and theoretical framework. An important point of all discourse analysis is that the constitutive nature of discourse makes it impossible to approach the pre-discursive or "what people really mean when they say this or that". (Jørgensen & Philips 2002:21). The role of the researcher is therefore to investigate the discourse itself, not in the sense of what is right or wrong, but to be concerned with the content of what is being communicated and how that relates to other content, discover patterns and discrepancies. Furthermore, it is important to note that as mentioned in the theory section, discourse analysis is based on a social constructionist framework, meaning that the researcher is not to be seen as an objective reporter of truth, but as part of discursive relationships. As a researcher my cultural and historical contextualization as a Swedish citizen studying development studies at a Swedish university is therefore a determining factor of my interpretations (Jørgensen & Philips 2002:22,49). It should furthermore be acknowledged that my first encounter with global citizenship education was through NGO's in Denmark, where it is closely associated with notions of solidarity and bottom-up activism.

3.2.2 Research methods

Utilizing Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory is a way of asking the questions: "What different understandings of reality are at stake, where are they in antagonistic opposition to one another? And what are the social consequences if one or the other wins out and hegemonically pins down the meaning of the floating signifier?" (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002:51). In this thesis I am thus investigating the OECD understanding of GCE and how this is creating internal and external

antagonistic relationships as well as what the future implications of a hegemonic intervention in favor of the OECD articulation would be. In the analytical section I will therefore identify key signifiers of identity, social space and discourse in the materials to provide a picture of how the discourse on GCE is organized. As Laclau & Mouffe have provided few examples of how to operationalize their framework, my practical analysis relies mostly on examples by Jørgensen & Phillips (2002) and Tregidga, Milne and Kearins (2013).

The analysis was conducted through several close readings of the materials followed by a process of coding to plot out the themes present in the texts and organize them into chains of equivalence. Coding in qualitative data analysis is a way of organizing the data by labeling it according to themes in the text (Bryman 2008:550). Coding was performed in relation to the key signifiers myth (social space), master signifier (identity) and nodal point (discourse) developed by Laclau & Mouffe. As the relationships between signs were mapped, I started looking more closely into situations where the signs attempting to define the key signifiers were in antagonistic relationships. Important tools I use in my analysis from the framework of Laclau and Mouffe are the terms articulation, nodal point, myth, master signifier, antagonism and hegemony, as well as hegemonic intervention.

3.3 Materials and sampling

The analysis is conducted on two documents. The first is *" Beyond PISA 2015: A Longer-term Strategy of PISA",* a strategy paper put forward by the OECD aiming to map out some of the challenges and opportunities for the PISA- initiative after 2015. The other is the position paper *"Assessing Global Competence: An Opportunity for the OECD"* written by American OECD affiliated professor Fernando A. Reimers on the reasoning behind the decision to include global competences in PISA testing. Both documents were found on a page on the PISA website where background documents for bidders of the 2018 round of testing had been collected.[4] Besides the two documents I selected there were ten other documents on the page containing the technical instructions for setting up the test. Global media and education group Pearson eventually won the bidding to lead the development of PISA 2018 (Pearson 2014). The rationale behind the selection of materials for analysis was to use documents that allowed me to contextualize OECD work with global competences and investigate their definitions and reasoning. Materials were thus selected with

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[4] Documents can be found here: http://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/pisa-2018-documents-for-bidders.htm

a convenience sampling method (Bryman 2008:183). These documents were at the time of research the only documents on the OECD website dealing specifically with global competence.

3.4 Methodological strengths and limitations

Criticism has been directed towards discourse analysis mainly on the basis of its subjectivity (Tregidga, Milne & Kearins 2013). As it depends completely upon the researchers interpretation, the analysis cannot be generalized in the same way as other approaches. However, the aim of this thesis is not to generalize but to provide one interpretation and contribution to the contemporary understanding of global citizenship education. Furthermore, I have attempted to address the issue of replicability by in detail describing my understanding of Laclau & Mouffe's framework, the terms important for the analysis as well as my procedure in reaching my conclusions. I must also address the fact that the analysis is being done on strategy papers, not the finalized outcomes of testing indicators, which could be considered a weakness.

According to Ziai (2015), discourse analysis within the field of development studies is relatively new, albeit on the rise. This increased presence of discourse analysis has been met with criticism from some scholars, who argue that focusing on the theoretical side of the development world, including representation, language and identity issues, takes away focus from the real world material problems that these critics hold as central to the field of development studies. Furthermore, they argue that the focus on development discourse does not allow for discussions of agency and is therefore not capable of providing positive agendas of action and problem solving. However, Ziai (2015) claims that without critical examination of social constructs no alternative conceptualizations can be conceived.

Furthermore, the contribution of discourse analysis to the field of development studies includes important work with situating social phenomena in historical and political contexts and critically examining relations of power that are hidden by naturalization and cultural hierarchization. Or in the words of Philips & Hardy (2002:84) discourse analysis "subverts and challenges taken-for-granted assumptions and undermines the tendency to reify and solidify knowledge". In line with this, I argue that discourse analysis has a lot to contribute to the field of GCE research.

4. Analysis

The analytical chapter is structured as follows. First I will analyze the construction of myth in the OECD discourse on GCE. Thereafter the nodal points global competence and GCE will guide my analysis of the overall discourse and subsequent subject positions made available. Finally the analysis chapter will conclude with a discussion on the implications of these findings for GCE practice. I will refer to both empirical materials as 'the OECD', as these are materials that the OECD has approved of to represent their standpoint by including them in the package to bidders of the 2018 PISA round. The analysis will not make a difference between the two documents it is based on as they are seen as parts of the same discursive construction.

4.1 GCE Myth - social space

The social space constructed by the OECD in the material is characterized by its construction as a series of unavoidable events. We are looking at a world that is modernizing and changing technologically at a fast pace. The gap between the local and the global is getting smaller. Populations are interconnected and exchanging information but also competing against each other on a worldwide labor market. There is a sense of urgency communicated with the use of words like 'rapid', 'change', 'demand' and 'compete' and competitive education systems are presented as the solution to the challenges. The globalized world is here the dominant social space, forcing other spatial constructions to adapt to its rationalities.

> "Rapid globalisation and modernisation are posing new and demanding challenges to individuals and societies alike. Increasingly diverse and interconnected populations, rapid technological change in the workplace and in everyday life, and the instantaneous availability of vast amounts of information are just a few of the factors contributing to these new demands. In this globalised world, people compete for jobs not just locally but internationally. In this integrated worldwide labour market, there are many occupations in which highly-paid workers in wealthier countries are competing directly with people with much the same skills in lower-wage countries." (OECD 2015c: 2)

'Wealthier countries' are in the above quote being constructed as a counterpart to 'lower-wage countries' and it is the latter that has the upper hand in terms of competitive advantage. There is thus a message here particularly to the 'wealthier countries' of the need to find new ways of being

competitive: "Competition among countries now revolves around the quality of their human capital." (OECD 2015c: 2). However, it is not only markets, information and jobs that are becoming increasingly globalized, it is also people. The globalized world is therefore also characterized by cultural pluralism and increasing interactions between people of different heritage.

The social space in the OECD papers is constructed as if the globalized world is happening to us and we need to react to it. This myth thus represents both opportunity and threat. The opportunities for individual countries lie in taking up the challenge, transforming, competing. The threat is in the passive, the traditional, the non-adaptive and more specifically in not investing in competitive human capital.

> "Jobs are moving rapidly to countries that can provide the skills needed for any particular operation at the best rates. And the rate of automation of jobs is steadily increasing in both high- and low-wage countries. (OECD 2015c: 3)"

These developments are affecting individual countries and individual subjects; there is no community constructed in this social space. The group formations that are made are constructed between high wage-countries and low-wage countries, which could be said to contradict the 'global community' construction, put forward by Fanghanel & Cousin (2012), Myers (2006) as well as the UN (2015). This above quote is furthermore an example of how the construction of social space lacks depictions of agency. 'Jobs' are moving rapidly – not companies. There is no mention of this being a process initiated by someone or, for that matter, as something possible to counteract.

In summary, the OECD constitutes the globalized world as one where the local and the global are increasingly connected and previous borders have been erased for labor markets, companies and people alike. Competitive is the adjective in the center of the discourse of this social space. The space is further organized into countries as the primary social organizers, and thus suggests homogenous goals and motivations internally as well as in the high/low-wage country groups created. The OECD is painting the picture of changes happening faster than countries are adapting. Reminiscent of Biccum's (2010) assertion that the global citizenship narrative is part of a discourse of 'no alternatives' to neoliberal global governance, the only way forward made available in this social space is for countries to pick up the pace in

the competition. The globalized world as a social space is a zero sum game, and as such it is a threat to 'wealthier' countries currently at the top of the ladder. Economic competitiveness as the goal is connected to human capital development through global competencies as the means. This is thus where GCE comes into the picture.

4.2 GCE Discourse and subject positions

The nodal point 'global competencies' is used throughout the texts as synonymous with 21st century skills, which are to be achieved through 'global education'. Global education is posited as " the new civics of the 21st century" and thus highlights that these are skills belonging to a very contemporary society and its demands. When providing examples of how global competencies are taught, references are made to human rights education, development education, future studies and intercultural understanding. These are however positioned as *possible* ways of approaching GCE. The quality of these different approaches will be part of what is evaluated through PISA. Thus, the OECD is interested in looking at the outcomes, not in developing or suggesting a framework for how to teach global competence.

 So what are the skills needed in the globalized world of the 21st century? First of all global competencies are constructed as a set of attitudes and skills that are both economical and social. In terms of attitudes, the social components are present in two different expressions, one as a skill in relation to others and one as primarily for the good of the individual. These are however intertwined to a certain degree. GCE is here constituted as a way of preparing students to "develop autonomy and identity that is cognizant of the reality of national and global cultural pluralism" (Reimers 2013:1).

> "The same student assessments would measure attitudes, for example attitudes
> towards global covenants or organizations, towards international trade, migration and
> other aspects of the process of globalization." (Reimers 2013:15)

This also includes a set of attitudes that are posited as expected outcomes of GCE. These are attitudes that concern relationship to others, and are defined through the suggestion of a number of specific areas that could serve as indicators in the test. Knowledge about cultural expressions other than your own and the amount of trust towards other demographic groups in your nation are mentioned, as well as attitudes towards different religious groups and immigrants. There is also an emphasis on skills

like empathy, open mindedness, creativity and innovation. The more economically related skills that are suggested as possible cognitive indicators include attitudes towards globalization, international trade, international organizations and their covenants. Furthermore there is an element of self-reflection relating to identity of the individual in the globalized world, where it is suggested that having global competence includes positive and optimistic attitudes to processes of globalization. To receive a high score, we must assume that students should claim high levels of trust, tolerance and openness towards others and positive attitudes to globalization and trade. The outcome of GCE should thus both be independent, autonomous individuals as well as individuals with very specific attitudes and values that fit the construction of social space discussed above.

In terms of skills-related global competencies, certain knowledge relating to subjects like geography, international relations as well as knowledge about international statues and covenants is addressed. There are also references to the 'knowledge economy' and specialized knowledge needed to compete on the labor market:

> "The knowledge workers of today are required to have deep knowledge, but the
> knowledge workers of tomorrow will need deep and wide knowledge: knowledge that
> can be moulded and shaped to fit a transforming world. (OECD 2015c: 3)"

The type of knowledge that workers of today have will not be enough in the future, where knowledge should be both specialized and broad to be competitive. Knowledge should be adaptable to be useful, implying that the 'knowledge workers' of tomorrow need to be taught how to be versatile and flexible in their skills and that the market will decide what knowledge is relevant. This comes back to the often-used term 'life-long learning' which is posited as an important part of GCE:

> "More than ever education systems need to help students learn how to learn: only if
> students have the capacity, the motivation and enthusiasm to be life-long learners will
> they be able to remain active and productive citizens throughout their lives and reap
> the full benefits that life offers." (OECD 2015c: 3).

GCE should thus also involve notions of preparing students for flexibility in knowledge and skills, leading them to constantly upgrade themselves as well as perceiving this as an enjoyable activity, something that motivates and creates enthusiasm. A 'life-long learner' is someone who independently

of state structures continually improves their human capital and thus their competitiveness. Attaining the 'full benefits that life offers' is positioned as directly dependent on the level of activity, productivity and participation of the subject on the labor market. And not only participation but also success, the individual must succeed at being a learning subject and adapt to enjoy these benefits. GCE is in this sense not only teaching specific skills and facts about how the world is constituted, but also constructing the mindset of how to behave and how to be as a successful global citizen. GCE should furthermore prepare students " to make meaning of their lives in a highly interdependent world" (Reimers 2013:1). 'Make meaning of their lives' is supplemented with 'living with meaning and direction', which is closely connected to the articulation of contribution to society. GCE thus in extension becomes a way of increasing the contributions of the individual to their nation; global competencies are essential to 'engage and contribute as citizens'. What they contribute to is the economic efficiency and competitive advantage of their country, highlighting how the individual, as in Schattle's (2015) analysis of the South Korean discourse, is the crucial actor in the narrative of national success. Ultimately GCE becomes about promoting skills that are essential to stay ahead in the global competitive economy.

There is some connection with Tiessen's (2012) articulation of global citizenship as pertaining to a new 'normative architecture of world order values' here. In the construction of these attitudes and skills, there is an inherent normative construction of the 'good citizen' – a flexible, open minded, active and productive life-long learner. OECD is in this sense using GCE to provide a normative framework for how to perceive and relate to process of globalization.

4.3 Antagonism & hegemony

Thus far, my analysis has shown how the OECD has constructed GCE as motivated by unavoidable economic processes involving technological change and increased interconnectivity of markets, people and countries. It has further stated that in the OECD narrative, fostering competitive human capital is the only alternative of states if they do not wish to 'fall behind' in international competition. I have also argued that the global competencies that will ensure this human capital improvement are related to a set of very specific skills and attitudes that form a normative narrative of the global citizen. In this section I will analyze the antagonistic positions in the OECD discourse as well as potential hegemonic interventions.

4.3.1. A depoliticized space

As exemplified in the following quote; "global education is not indoctrination into a particular set of beliefs or values, it is a process that helps students become autonomous individuals" (Reimers 2013:2) the OECD construction is posited as being value neutral. This is accentuated by the fact that critical literacy, a skill often mentioned in other conceptualizations of GCE (Myers 2006, Oxfam 2006) is not present in the OECD construction. Instead the myth is articulated around a concept of accepting the world 'as it is' and engaging in it on the existing terms. The subject position of 'autonomous' individual is highlighted by the OECD but stands in clear contrast to the usage of words like 'molded' as a way of describing the type of knowledge global competence entails. Global competence is thus not about questioning structures or institutions that are conditioning international relations, but about making sure that the nation becomes the most competitive it can be under a determined set of conditions. Being autonomous and independent is constructed in terms of behavior on the labor market, not as aspects of democratic citizenship.

Myers (2006) argues that in U.S versions of global education, global issues that are considered controversial in the eyes of a national political narrative are reluctantly addressed. As an example he mentions the prominence of human rights education in other countries, and the very circumcised and apolitical version of this adopted in the U.S; a version that is nationally focused and in avoidance of polemical subjects like social and economic inequality. In the OECD discourse, the global space is similarly depoliticized and constructed as a natural, objective perspective. Furthermore, this one directional depiction of global competence, rather than being apolitical, is the result of very political processes and power struggles relating to the constitution of the 'factual', the 'natural' and the 'free of values' image of the globalized world. Thus, the positioning of 'no alternative' to fostering competitive human capital through GCE is in fact a hegemonic articulation in the struggle to represent subjective reality as objective truth.

4.3.2 Global community and global competition

As outlined above, the OECD discourse on GCE is primarily articulated around economic concepts of competition, advantage and markets. It is also, similarly to Schattle's (2015) analysis of South Korea, closely tied to a narrative of national progress. The 'global' in global citizenship thus becomes about the social space the citizenship exists in as opposed to an association with fostering a sense of

community with other people and countries. On the one hand there is an emphasis on active citizenship, community, social action and common responsibility, represented in the discourses of Oxfam (2008), the UN (2014) as well as definitions by Fanghanel & Cousin (2012) or Myers (2006). On the other hand this is contrasted by individual competence, adaption and flexibility and contribution to the development of the national advantage in the OECD articulation. Is there an antagonistic relationship here? It is possible that an identity could be part of both the discourse on fostering competitive advantage and global community. However, there are situations where these positions might clash.

The OECD points to one of these situations here:

> "High-wage countries will find that they can only maintain their relative wage levels if they can develop a high proportion of highly skilled workers and keep them in their work force." (OECD 2015c: 3).

There is a logic of individual self-interest rooted in the discourse on competitiveness. This logic is accentuated by the OECD in their conception of the globalized world as a zero sum game. For individuals this means that they might discard national communities in favor of other, more rewarding ones as demonstrated by the phenomenon of 'brain drain'. For countries this means that there is little incentive for sharing capital, whether human or monetary, to an extent that will affect the power balance in a negative direction for them. Thus, to stay competitive, a nation would always have to contribute less to the community than what would result in a competitive advantage for the other members. 'Maintaining the relative wage level' in the quote above is thus synonymous with maintaining competitive advantage, and maintaining competitive advantage means maintaining power. The SDG declaration is highlighting this dilemma as it builds upon the idea of the global community working together to solve the issues being faced by developing countries as well as global issues like creating a sustainable world. As put in the declaration:

> "[A]s we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. […] we wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society"(UN 2015:3)

However, following the competitive logic, when a national competitive advantage is threatened by action on the SDG's, the national interest will be first priority. Thus, global competitiveness is in an antagonistic relationship with global community as these are two discourses of different rationalities attempting to fixate their meaning of GCE as the hegemonic articulation.

The central antagonism in the GCE discourse can thus be illustrated a follows:

Figur 2: The main antagonism of the GCE discourse

4.4 Implications for the future of GCE

In 2009, the Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen made a top 5 ranking in the PISA by 2020 one of his country's top ten overall political priorities (Jessen 2013). Initiatives like this from politicians affirm the hegemonic position of the competitive articulation of education. While the (I)NGO perspectives on GCE, in this thesis represented by the UN (2014), Oxfam (2006,2008) and Shukla (2009) keep their discursive focus on learning and joint social action across borders, the national narratives are constructed as individualistic and competitive. This is in line with the articulations this thesis has found expressed by the OECD and is a construction that the PISA is seemingly reinforcing. With the previously described impact PISA has had on educational policy it is likely that global aspects become increasingly present in educational initiatives in the near future. GCE is thus likely to be incorporated into a preexisting conception of assessing education as part of improving human capital, where competition is the hegemonic articulation.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

This thesis has aimed to contribute to the understanding of the discursive articulations of global citizenship education at a crucial moment in the concept's development. The focus has been on studying the OECD, one of the actors currently contributing to the fixation of the GCE discourse through their adaption of global competence as an area for measurement in the seventy-plus-country cross sectional survey PISA. With discourse analysis as a theoretical and methodological framework, this thesis has found that the OECD positions GCE within an economic framework of global competitiveness. The main antagonism of GCE lies in the dichotomous relationship between an economic rationality for GCE and a morally inclined one. This puts global competitiveness and global community at the center of an antagonistic struggle.

I argue that the framework of Laclau & Mouffe has been a suitable method for this thesis as the focus is on abstract discourses and discursive struggle. In terms of methodology, other choices might have enabled different dimensions to the analysis. One advantage with using a content analysis approach as a compliment to discourse analysis or independently would have been the opportunity to investigate the discursive changes of GCE constructions over time. However, this would have had to focus on a different actor than the OECD, as their involvement in global competence is too recent for any significant changes to be present. An analysis of GCE discourse could furthermore have been made through interviews with teachers, school leaders or policy makers with focus on their understanding of the concept to gain a more practical insight closer to the ground. These alternatives now serve as suggestions for further research in the field.

This analysis has been made on a process that is not yet finalized, and the last word has thus not been said on the direction of GCE. Already constituting an extensive field, the research on GCE is likely to continue growing as it is more widely implemented in policy initiatives. As the OECD members prepare for and complete the PISA 2018 round of tests, public discussion on GCE will gain both national and international coverage. These discussions and reactions will also play their part in the direction GCE will take in the coming decade. And there are a lot of questions to be asked and taken into consideration. What kind of global citizenship do different societies want to foster? What kind of impact will GCE have on attitudes and actions of students? What will GCE look like in the SDG framework and how will the 193 members of the UN approach it differently? These are examples of questions that future research could address.

This thesis concludes that the discursive articulation of global citizenship education by the OECD is characterized by the hegemonic influence of global competitiveness. The globalized world is constructed as a naturalized and objective competitive marketplace where GCE ultimately becomes a way of strengthening national bargaining power. In constructing GCE in this way, the OECD is defining very specific skills and attitudes for global citizens, which limits the social space for action in a hegemonic manner. These processes are furthermore constructed as neutral, apolitical articulations describing an unavoidable reality. In the words of Laclau & Mouffe (2014:xvi-xvii) however, the globalized world as articulated by the OECD: "far from being the only natural or possible societal order, is the expression of a certain configuration of power relations. […] This hegemony can be challenged".

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