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# Understanding of Global Citizenship among Higher Education Teachers: Implications for Graduate Attributes

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## Abstract

Global Citizenship (GC) has recently claimed its position as desired graduates' attribute in many Higher Education (HE) institutions in different non-Western contexts. However, ambiguity and complexity still linger over what GC means contextually and how this understanding may shape educational outcomes. Taking cognizance of this, a study was carried out to investigate the understanding of GC among Vietnamese HE teachers as major agents in Global Citizenship Education (GCE), in order to discuss their implications for graduate attributes. This study adopted purposeful sampling strategy to conduct in-depth interviews among 14 teachers from 4 different faculties of a private university in Southern Vietnam. Emergent themes were then compared with GC conceptions theorized in the literature. Data analysis revealed a three-fold dimensions in teachers' perception: (1) GC understanding was ambiguous and divergent and uniquely nuanced by personal and contextual factors, (2) triple helix of GC conceptions were intricately entwined in GCE rationales, and (3) GC notion was framed with juxtapositions of conceptions. The findings highlighted an implementation gap in GCE which might subvert the intended educational aim, especially in the context of unavailable official documents to guide GCE. In this way, the paper contributes to the ongoing discussion regarding GCE implementation, and indicates a need to have clearer instructional GCE-related policies and more comprehensive teacher trainings.

**Keywords:** Global Citizenship, Global Citizenship Education, Teacher Training, Graduate Attributes, Educational Outcomes

## 1. Introduction

### *1.1 Background to the study*

The economic, social, and political disruptions brought about by globalization have required Higher Education (HE) worldwide to transform their internationalization agendas to prepare graduates to work and live in the global community. The importance of cultivating global citizenship as graduate attributes has featured prominently and vociferously in recent narratives (Arvanitakis & Hornsby, 2016; Oliver & Jorre de St Jorre, 2018). However, despite the many efforts made to delineate varied dimensions of global citizenship (GC) and global citizenship education (GCE) (see Morais and Ogden (2011), OECD (2018), UNESCO (2015)), there has been little consensus on the aims and denotation of GCE to guide implementation. GC and GCE, as a result, have become umbrella

terms for many divergent ideologies and educational practices in different educational settings (Horey, Fortune, Nicolacopoulos, Kashima, & Mathisen, 2018).

The lack of clarity on what GC denotes and what purposes GCE is for has been further confounded when local contexts and teachers are taken into the scenario. Contextually, Dvir, Shields, & Yemini (2018) suggest that GCE is highly context-dependent, and thus the same agenda can be articulated and translated differently. To further this dissenting landscape, educators integrate into GCE their identities, experiences, dispositions, and imaginaries about their students' future (Goren, Maxwell, & Yemini, 2019). This necessarily leads to a more nuanced GCE compared to what has been categorized in literature. Teachers' epistemological stances are critical in constructing graduate attributes since, as stated by Goren and Yemini (2016), they (re)configure the form and concepts of GCE to be taught and the pedagogical directions to be taken, especially when official policies related to GCE are not available.

Several attempts have been made to investigate local teachers' understandings and perceptions of GC on different contexts (as per Çolak, Kabapınar, & Öztürk (2019), Goren et al. (2019)). Still, compared with a plethora of studies focusing on GCE policies, the perspectives of individuals involved in GCE delivery have been underrated, and related inquiries are highly limited in scope to cover West Europe, East Asia and North America (Hou, 2020). This study expanded the scope of inquiry by investigating how HE teachers in Vietnam perceive GCE and its dimensions as compared with theoretical conceptualizations and discussing implications for intended graduate attributes. The following questions guide the present study:

1. How do Vietnamese HE teachers perceive GCE and its dimensions?
2. How is the teachers' perception of GCE compared with the theoretical conceptualizations in the literature?

This paper contributes to the ongoing discussion on GCE implementation in two ways. Firstly, it addresses a potential gap in GCE implementation that might subvert the intended outcomes outlined in the agenda. Specifically, it helps to redirect attention to teachers' understanding as a disruptive force in GCE. Secondly, it contributes to the nascent body of work on GCE reconceptualization in non-Western contexts. The value of this should not be underestimated, due to the culturally inclusive and decolonizing currents that are presently promoted in GCE (Dreamson, 2018).

### *1.2 Vietnam Context*

In alignment with its commitment with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Nguyen, 2017), Vietnam has recently set out to integrate GCE across different education levels, and many HE institutions have announced GC as graduate attributes in their agendas. However, GCE-related policies in Vietnamese HE has remained generic, and according to Truong-White and Ho (2020), teacher training programs in Vietnam need improvement to better prepare teachers for GCE.

The literature on GCE implementation in the Vietnam context has been scarce, especially in relation to HE graduate attributes therein. Despite being underrepresented, Vietnam poses an interesting case to investigate GCE implementation, given "its socialist political organization, open market economy, and Confucian-Buddhist cultural heritage" (Truong-White & Ho, 2020, p. 179). Moreover, there exist varied ideologies within the country due to its historical background of imperialism and colonialism and its permeating nationalist and collectivist stances.

### *1.3 Divergent Conceptualizations of GCE*

Although GCE has been embraced as a globally-oriented education trend worldwide, its development has not involved consistent understandings, practices, and politics. Attempts to categorize divergent directions of GCE have culminated in two popular approaches.

The binary approach towards GCE classification has coined dichotomies of terms to contrast varied currents. For example, Dill (2013) distinguished between two overarching, yet dissenting, currents of global competencies and global consciousness, with the former approach focusing on necessary skills for students to survive and compete in the global market and the latter cultivating students towards humanistic values and assumptions. In a similar way, Andreotti (2006) provides a bifurcation for GCE under two umbrella terms of 'soft' and 'critical' GCE. While 'soft' GCE emphasizes on the knowledge about the world and humanitarian and moral norms to guide attitudes and actions, 'critical' GCE calls for a deeper level of engagement and informed actions guided by social justice.

Other works acknowledge the pluralistic nature, rather than the duality, of GCE with multiple conceptualizations (see Oxley and Morris (2013); Pashby, Costa, Stein, & Andreotti (2020); Veugelers (2011)). In one of the most comprehensive classifications, Oxley and Morris (2013) developed a typology consisting of eight different conceptions of GC to denote complicated, overlapping, and flexible outcomes of GCE. These categories are spread along two domains: cosmopolitanism and advocacy. Despite multiple approaches towards GCE classification, three facets of conceptions emerge as theoretical foundations for GC/ GCE. Among this, neoliberalism is premised on market-based economic rationales and free-trade globalization, with an emphasis on social justice as individual freedom to participate in global economy (Rizvi, 2009). As a result, education is meant to prepare students for this neoliberal knowledge society by possessing 'strategic economic possibilities' and cultural flexibility and adaptability (Rizvi, 2009, p. 268). This agenda orientates towards individual and national economic prosperity and subsumes the modernist form and human capital perspective of education (Evans, Ingram, MacDonald, & Weber, (2009)). The second agenda, namely liberal humanist approach, is rooted in the idea of common humanity, human rights as universal values, and moral responsibilities of GC (Dill, 2013). This agenda aims to cultivate better understanding, empathy, and appreciation of differences, and create moral imperatives for students to challenge global poverty and oppression (Stein, 2015). Predominant discourses as they are in the field of GCE, neoliberal and liberal humanist approaches have been criticized for enforcing hegemonic power relations built upon the superiority of Western voices that they are supposed to address (Andreotti, 2006; Borkovic, Nicolacopoulos, Horey, & Fortune, 2020). These modernist discourses of education necessarily entail certain forms of exclusion and marginalize voices of global 'Others.'

The third wave – critical approach – is widely supported by many theorists and practitioners (see Anderson (2019), Andreotti (2015b)) as a way to challenge social injustice and hegemony. This approach of 'critical' GCE, which is also coined as post-colonial and post-critical GCE, extrapolates on power relations inherent in the global system and the domination of Western power, ideologies, and imaginaries about global 'Others.' Andreotti urges that GCE should equip students with skills and literacy to 'unlearn' their hard-wired assumptions, engage in critical reading of the world, and disrupt the status quo. The critical approach towards GCE is also reverberated in many other works on transformative/ alternative approaches such as in Bruce, North, & FitzPatrick (2019), Truong-White and McLean (2015).

In this study, I took on the triad of neoliberal, liberal humanist, and critical approaches as theoretical framings against which teachers' understandings were compared and analyzed.

## **2. Method**

Due to the exploratory nature of this research and the purpose therein, a qualitative method involving principally in-depth interviewing was employed to elicit relevant data.

### *2.1 Participants*

Fourteen teachers participated in the study. Purposeful sampling method was used as the basis for selection based on the following criteria: (1) having at least 3 years' teaching experiences at HE institutes, and (2) having integrated or having the intention to integrate GCE in their teaching. A private university was chosen for this study due to the inherent integration of GC in its educational outcomes and its heterogenous student populations. Prior to selecting the participants, approval was first sought from the four faculty heads. Following this, a recruitment email and an information sheet were sent out to prospective participants, outlining the purpose and the extent of

involvement required for the study. A total of 23 teachers replied to the call for participation. Following a brief screening process, 14 teachers volunteered to participate in the study.

Prior to the interview, a survey was delivered to the participants to collect relevant background information. Demographic information related to age, gender, courses of teaching, years of teaching experiences, and experiences in GCE integration were collected. The participants were also asked to list their international or intercultural experiences such as their overseas education or working or intercultural interactions. Out of the 14 participants, 8 were females and 6 were males, with ages ranging from 28 to 45. All the participants were involved in teaching for students from varied backgrounds. The following table summarizes the background information of the participants.

Table 1: Participant details

Pseudonyms	Years of teaching experiences	Disciplines	Outstanding international/ intercultural experiences
Tam	12	ESOL*	Working with UK and Australian counterparts
Suong	8	ESOL	6-month exchange program in Singapore
Thuong	7	ESOL	2-year master in England
Long	5	ESOL	Participating in joint international research projects
Chi	6	Economics	Working for international companies
Hieu	12	Economics	4-year PhD in Malaysia
Huan	20	Economics	4-year PhD in England
Mai	15	Economics	Working with German and Japanese counterparts
Tri	3	Tourism	Participating in international projects
Phong	5	Tourism	International travel
Hanh	8	Tourism	Participating in international projects
Thu	18	Social sciences	International travel
Phan	6	Social sciences	International travel
Ha	15	Social sciences	Participating in international projects

\*ESOL: English as the second language

## 2.2 Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were employed to provide the teachers with the opportunities to expound and reflect on their personal views as much as possible without losing the focus of the conversation. Moreover, semi-structured interviews, with the retained elements of reflexivity and openness, would offer chances for further probes and follow-up questions, which facilitate clarifications for an in-depth understanding (Wellington, 2000). Participants were asked to give the definition of GC and elaborate on what GC meant to them, what rationales underlie GCE, and who they think would be more inclined to become GC. They were also requested to elaborate two important aspects of GC: diversity and social responsibilities.

The interview protocols followed the following procedures. First, a list of interview questions was distributed to the participants so that they could have some time to reflect and feel more comfortable with the questions. Following that, interviews were conducted in-person in Vietnamese and recorded with the participants' consent. Each interview lasted for approximately 60 minutes. After initial analysis, follow-up questions were sent to teachers via emails to ascertain data that were vague and ambiguous.

## 2.3 Data analysis

All the recordings were transcribed, and pieces of quoted data were translated forth and back into English and Vietnamese to maintain the original meaning and intentions of the participants. Efforts were made to maintain the veracity of the participants' responses and to minimise any misinterpretations that might arise.

The analysis followed the procedures of grounded theory analysis, as suggested by Thornberg and Charmaz (2014). The interview data were first explored via open coding to identify emergent codes. Thereafter, they were

grouped under overarching categories. For selective coding, I sorted and analyzed data in reference to GCE conceptions in literature and the initial categories. I also employed constant comparative approach to identify similarities and differences within and across teachers' narratives. To ensure reliability in the coding process, the emergent codes were cross-checked by two of the researcher's colleagues who had prior experience with qualitative coding. Any disagreements were discussed until congruence was reached.

### 3. Results and discussions

The analysis reveals that teachers' understandings of GC are divergent and overwhelmingly nuanced in accordance with the specific context within which it is delivered.

#### 3.1 Ambiguous and Divergent Understanding of GC

Findings show that GCE notion remained a gray area despite the official claim of GC as graduate attributes. Many participants emanated lack of confidence and certainty in defining GC, with spotted concern about whether their understanding is the 'right' GCE that should be delivered, as can be seen in the following excerpt.

TAM: It's hard for me to say that on the top off my head ...uhm... I know it is included as the learning outcomes of the program here, but I don't know whether what I understand is right or not.

Some participants attributed the lack of GC cognizance to insufficient guidelines from the school and department about what they should strive for. Interestingly, this deficiency provided a lens into how contextual factors might shape GC understandings. Specifically, despite a general convergence on certain GC aspects such as intercultural communication, global employability, global issues, and English language competence, the teachers tended to affiliate GC with their professional domains. For example, three ESOL teachers mentioned "tolerance for global Englishes" and "respect for cultural differences" to illustrate intercultural skills, whereas Economics teachers emphasized on the ability to function well in multicultural working environment for the same notion. Furthermore, the terms justice, war, and peace were identified in two Social Sciences teachers' responses on global issues, while the Tourism teachers discussed more intensively on cultural and environmental preservation.

In addition, GC was also understood based on teachers' engagement in international experiences, community projects, and personal beliefs. In his narrative, HUAN framed his understanding of GC from his 4-year experience of in UK, where the completely new culture disrupted his identity and life perspective. TRI described how his volunteerism to a mountainous region in Southwestern Vietnam helped him understand roots of poverty. Surprisingly, one participant associated the unfamiliar notion of GC with familiar concepts in Buddhism: "I believe all human beings are equal, and the same, regardless of race, nationality, and gender, just as in Buddhism. We are all brothers and should treat each other with kindness, empathy, and forgiveness."

The lack of clarity regarding the term GC among teachers has been documented in varied studies (see Cotton, Morrison, Magne, Payne, & Heffernan (2019)). However, as mentioned in the introduction, many HE institutions have not addressed this shortfall. The analysis redirects attention to this issue by emphasizing the implication of this ambiguity for educational outcomes. Evidently, the inclusion of the term alone in policy documents cannot guarantee a consonant understanding of what to include in the classroom, given the contested nature of GCE, and thereby cannot bridge the gap between policy and practice. This reason might explicate fractured efforts to find positive students' outcomes that are correlated to curricular transformations in GCE (as per Jones and Killick (2013)).

The intertwined nature of GC understandings and contextual factors strongly connects to Goren and Yemini (2016)'s study of Israel's teachers and to Rapoport (2010)'s investigation on Indiana teachers. Both studies highlight the dependence of teachers' understandings on their personal experiences, national contexts, and even school contexts. This part of the analysis expands this conversation by adding in aspects of personal beliefs and values and raising an interesting question concerning the validity of employing the term GC to direct educational outcomes. However, while Goren and Yemini and Rapoport state that intercultural engagement alone cannot guarantee GC understanding, this finding suggests that oriented and selective international and community

experiences can help to foster a more critical perspective towards GCE. These results have important implications for developing a curriculum to cultivate GC among students.

### 3.2 Triple Helix of Rationales

An overwhelming impetus for GCE integration engrained in teachers' narratives was national and individual economic thrive. From the national perspective, GCE was considered as a means for Vietnam to gain higher status in global arena, emulate other 'advanced' or 'developed' countries, and eventually claim global leadership. The following narrative demonstrates the typical perception of the importance of GCE.

LONG: Our students should strive to be a global citizens (→ global citizens) , having the skills and competencies to be able to compete in the global market [...] It'll mean our country can have higher position in the world, become richer, gain global prestige, and achieve the things that we cannot achieve now.

Individually, GC was considered as a tool for empowerment and improving graduates' employability and mobility in the global market. Some teachers also believed GCE could motivate students and help them experience a "more meaningful education journey" as "many students don't know why they need to take university education."

These conceptions of GCE, when mapped with those in the literature, reveal two major orientations. Firstly, the predominant impetus for GCE is couched within neoliberalism. This approach considers economic advantage as an important tool to fulfill human rights, and the role of GCE as preparing students to function well in the global knowledge-based economy (Pais & Costa, 2020; Shultz, 2007). Secondly, the narratives reflect a teleological approach to the world and human development, which converges all progress under Western modern metropolitan and technological societies (Bruce et al., 2019; Wright, 2012), which is a major thread of cosmopolitanism. In general, teachers adopted utilitarianism towards GCE, promoting national and individual aims, rather than advocating for those marginalized by the status quo as expressed in the critical approach.

Although this findings echo those from previous studies (e.g Cho (2016)), the analysis also reveals a novel helix underlying rationales for GCE: the nexus of national pride and inferiority complex. On the one hand, teachers admitted the inferior position of Vietnam by placing significant value on Northern-based knowledge and applying binary thinking to compare Vietnam with others (i.e. 'poor' vs. 'wealthy,' 'backward' vs. 'advanced,' and 'developing' vs. 'developed'). An English teacher, described the time when she studied a short course in Singapore with an Australian instructor: "I was exposed to different theories and different ways of looking at English language and pedagogies. I believe I couldn't have got all of these if I had just stayed in Vietnam". HA also reflected on her root of inferiority:

HA: My father used to tell me Vietnam reigned the Southeast Asian countries in his time; we dominated in many fields: manufacturing industry, education, and healthcare [.....]. I feel it's a shame now we cannot compete with them anymore- we are still a developing country.

From a different angle, teachers expressed their belief in the future of the country and the great potential of Vietnamese human resources. HUAN posited that Vietnamese students possessed great dispositions such as diligence and tolerance, and as such GCE could offer them opportunities to prove themselves in the global market and make their name and national identity is seen in the global arena.

This outcome does not support previous research which reported overwhelming ethnocentrism in GC/ GCE understanding (Evans et al., 2009; Kim, 2015). In this context, there is a tendency to appreciate 'Northern-based' norms, and a desire to internalize these norms to better national standards. This finding points to an interesting implication for decolonizing study: imaginaries about global 'South' are not only pertinent to the Northern world, but also ingrained in the Southerners' perception. The acceptance of Northern domination might explain the persisting North-South divide, and propose a new way to look at the issue of self, identity, and social justice in non-Western contexts.

### 3.3 *Juxtapositions of GCE Imaginaries*

#### 3.3.1 Difference and Sameness

Narratives surrounding the diversity dimension of GCE reveal the tension between difference and sameness, and between universality and uniqueness. On the one hand, most educators agreed that human beings share universal basic values that make all of us the same by nature, regardless of race, nationality, or skin color. In this light, global citizens should strive to straighten out these disparities with ‘acceptance,’ ‘tolerance,’ and ‘understanding.’ The following narrative emphasizes sameness over differences and tends to simplify, or even nullify, the disparities among people and cultures.

TRI: We are all the same – people all over the world. We all share the same need: food, clothes, good education, air to breathe, love, and dignity. We all share the same humanity and values. So why different? All the differences are external and artificial: white skin or dark skin, Christian, Muslim, or Buddhist....

The tendency to simplify cultural differences strongly relates to works of Campbell and Walta (2015) and Kirk, Newstead, Gann, & Rounsaville (2018). However, while Kirk et al. (2018) attributed teachers’ overlook of diversity to insufficient intercultural interactions, this study emphasizes that diversity cognizance might not correlate to intercultural exposure. This finding also casts doubt on whether teachers have already been in a good position to prepare students to engage with others and cope with differences.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, some teachers acknowledged the complexity of differences and the challenge of reconciling clashing cultural norms. HIEU, an economic lecturer, stated how expectations for differences, rather than similarities, should guide intercultural encounters.

HIEU: When I studied in Malaysia, many of my friends were from India, Singapore, China, Philippines, Indonesia.....Initially, I found it embarrassing to see my classmates worship cows while I ate beef. And then others found it uncomfortable to watch me eating pork. We didn’t accept each other fully, inside. I feel it’s hard sometimes for these differences to be negotiated. But then we learn to respect these things ...

Similarly, two participants construed diversity beyond the notion of acceptance to encompass the possibility to reflect on personal values and learn from each other. The previous analysis reveals liberal humanistic understanding of GC, which emphasizes sameness and minimizes differences (Bauman, 1995) and applies universal norms for human values (Fendler & Popkewitz, 1999). The predominance of liberal humanism among practitioners is not unknown (see Bruce et al. (2019)), yet teachers in this context did reveal sporadic criticality in their reflection of self and others and a deeper engagement with aspects of diversity, a result which has not been previously described in the literature.

#### 3.3.2 Ideal Inclusion and Hidden Exclusion

Another important thread in participants’ narratives is the hidden exclusion in tandem with the inclusive ideal of GCE. Some teachers admitted that those with international experiences or coming from wealthier families seemed to appreciate GCE better. In their observation, economic constraints seemed to reduce students to practical concerns, making them reject the notion of GC as irrelevant. However, other participants expressed a differing viewpoint, highlighting inclusivity dimension of GCE and its potential to foster active agency among students. For example, in the following quotation, the teacher indicated how global knowledge and skills could help underprivileged students get beyond their limitations and imagine otherwise.

MAI: I think all students benefit from global knowledge and skills – the good students and weaker students, rich and underprivileged students.....Underprivileged students can understand that their situation is not fixed, it can be changed, and they can open their horizons and think about a different future for themselves and their families...

This finding partly accords with earlier observations, which reported a strong relationship between students’ social background and teachers’ perception of their mobility and imagined future (Goren & Yemini, 2016, 2017). According to these studies, students’ social-economic status might shape how teachers perceived the relevance of different GCE skills and the inclusion of these skills in their classes. Nevertheless, one significant discrepancy



found in our study is the thread of narratives which supported the teaching and learning of GCE skills beyond social-economic considerations. This critical discourse is very encouraging, although future research will need to focus more on how this perspective can be translated into practice to endorse a more justice-oriented education.

### *3.4 Social Responsibilities: Global and Local Nexus*

In describing social responsibilities of global citizens, most participants emphasized environment protection as the major tenet that should be fostered in GCE. Iterations of environmentalist ideas such as saving our environment, alleviating air and water pollution, reversing climate change, or using biodegradable packaging were noticed across the responses. These notions seemed to trigger active citizenship and a sense of global interconnectedness among the teachers, as they added in aspects of individual complicity, concerted efforts on the global scale, and individual active participation to address this issue. The following quotation represents most of the teachers' responses.

TRI: People are both victims and culprits of severe pollution and widespread climate change today. In some of my lessons, I showed my students how we are all responsible [....]. As a global citizens, students should learn to work with people around the world to solve this [...] Individuals should also contribute to this in many ways .....

However, while environmentalist discourses pervaded many narratives, little was mentioned about other human rights issues such as wars, international conflicts, or unequal power relations. When asked about this, most educators were not very willing to share their opinions and explained this as irrelevant in Vietnam. Furthermore, although individual active participation was drawn into the discussion, global-scale social and political activism was sparsely mentioned. For some participants, it would not be much help to include global issues which were beyond students' experiences. "We can only ask students to be responsible for things that are somehow relevant to them, their family, and at most their country," as one of the teachers admitted. Apparently, global issues, except for environmentalism, were perceived from the local perspective, and 'being relevant' was one important criterion to include a global issue into the curriculum.

This finding is consistent with much of the literature on teachers' hesitation in introducing controversial topics in the classroom (see Cotton (2006)). Complementary to this, our research found that teachers' hesitation, or even complete avoidance, in GCE may originate from their evaluation of local relevance. The incomplete introduction of GCE among HE students raises the question of what attributes will be cultivated among graduates. Furthermore, in Andreotti (2015a)'s rendition, the awareness of political complicity is important for critical GCE to foster social justice; therefore, incomplete understanding of this progression may lead to the subversion of GCE aims.

## **4. Conclusion**

This explorative study set out to discover distinctive features and nuances couched in Vietnamese HE teachers' understanding of GC as graduate attributes. Despite its established position in many educational agendas, our → my research uncovers ambiguity and considerable variations associated with GC meaning, which is configured by different personal and contextual factors. Broadly speaking, in the context whereby official guidance for GCE implementation is not provided, teachers tended to frame the notion within their intercultural experiences, social engagements, personal values, and professional background. Furthermore, their interpretations are shaped by juxtapositions of conflicting yet incomplete imaginaries of GC/ GCE. Concerns thereby are raised on what attributes will be inculcated among graduates, and whether these outcomes are to serve national or global aims.

Similar to other internationalization agendas, the integration of GC into graduate outcomes can be problematic due to its complex nature. Taken together, the findings of this study draw attention to a significant gap in the implementation of GCE which lies in the volatility of the vocabulary used in policy documents. Inherently, since teachers are major agents in curriculum enactment, they should be equipped with clear-defined goals and an elaborate guidance on what to be expected among graduates. To resonate with the message: "We cannot teach what we don't know" in Rapoport (2010), this paper suggests the role of clarity over terms, in order to foster pedagogical transformation and teacher agency. Lack of clarity may result in hesitation, avoidance, or even

aversion to teaching. This study also strengthens the idea that sufficient training should be offered to both pre-service and in-service teachers regarding GCE integration in their discipline. Reilly and Niens (2014) point out how teachers' experiences and perspectives can substantially impact educational outcomes, regardless of the presence of policy. Therefore, if one of the major aims of HE is to create global citizens, practitioners should be well-informed about what global knowledge, skills, and competencies should be fostered in the classroom.

As one of the preliminary reports on GCE implementation gap in Vietnamese HE, this study adds to the growing body of research into GCE implementation in non-Western contexts and the contextual forces that shape GCE realization. A key significance of the present study lies in the in-depth investigation and analysis of teachers' understandings, thus shedding light on contextual nuances that contributes to theoretical framings of GCE. However, the in-depth data also means the negotiation of the sample size in this research, which makes the generalizability of these results difficult and limited. Therefore, further studies need to be conducted to corroborate findings from different populations of teachers, encompassing wider consideration of social, cultural, and political factors.

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**Appendix A****Main questions for semi-structured interviews:**

1. How do you define global citizenship as graduate attributes at your university?
2. Personally, how do you understand global citizenship? What knowledge, skills, and values should be fostered?
3. Do you think global citizenship education is important? Why or why not?
4. Do you think global citizenship education is for all students, or is more relevant to some than others?
5. How do you understand diversity as a dimension in global citizenship education?
6. How do you understand social responsibilities as a dimension in global citizenship education?