A Social Network Analysis of Global Citizenship Education in Europe and North America

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Introduction

In the last decade global citizenship education (GCED) has developed in Europe and North America (EUNA) through conceptual, political and pedagogical negotiations among policymakers, educators and community members. According to UNESCO's geo-scheme, EUNA is one of five world regions, together with Africa, Arab states, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America, through which UNESCO organizes the world to provide programmes and activities that are supposed to be tailored to the needs of specific territories. While we use this descriptor of the region, we also recognize that it does not capture the intra-regional geopolitical relations that influence relations which is beyond the scope of this study. While it is very diverse, EUNA is a geographic area understood as 'the global north', therefore its actors are positioned within complex global relations with much of this complication related to the history of colonialism, and this is definitely an unavoidable prerequisite of every perspective of GCED as global social justice. Therefore, it is relevant to enquire about the way in which organizations from other parts of the world see EUNA as a cohesive region regarding approaches to GCED and the extent to which organizations in these countries collaborate on GCED activity, and if so, what is the nature of these collaborations. Our study findings support insights shared by key actors early in the planning stages of the research that Europe and North America are not often conceived of as one region by people within these areas. However, data showed that there is a strong network formed by organizations working in GCED.

Many studies conducted in Europe and/or North America have mapped how North–South relations have shaped GCED (see, for example, Andreotti and de Sousa, 2008; Shultz, 2007; Gaudelli, 2009; Pashby et al., 2020; Pashby

and da Costa, 2021). In the United Kingdom, Continental Europe, Canada and the United States much of the work of GCED is related to larger development education that in some cases supports, but, in other cases, seeks to dismantle established norms of 'global north' to 'global south' transfer of ideas and activity (Acharya, 2004). Against this framework, GCED is practised in ways that inform, support and sometimes offer challenge to education policy and practice, bringing transformational justice potential in communities and their global relationships.

The study we present in this chapter is located in this complexity, in the entangled network of significant relationships through which GCED policy and practices take shape. We understand the manifoldness of GCED work in the EUNA region to be aimed at very different goals, audiences, funding models and policy processes impacts. In spite of these differences, the region, collectively, has had a powerful impact on GCED in the world.

GCED has been widely taken up in the EUNA region over the past two decades. Studies have looked at curriculums, pedagogies, policies and theoretical foundations, and have identified a range of GCED actors including multilateral organizations, national and local civil society organizations, schools, universities and many non-formal organizations working within and beyond state boundaries. GCED has had many different frames, goals and imaginaries (see, for example, Yemini, Tibbitts and Goren, 2019; Bosio, 2021; Bourn, 2020). Drawing on the results of a social network analysis (SNA), this chapter is a contribution towards understanding patterns of relationships among key GCED actors across the region.[1]

After a brief methodological section on SNA, this chapter addresses some of the results of a larger study aiming at mapping relationships that connect GCED key players as a network of GCED providers in Europe and North America. Based on maps created through SNA procedures, four main relevant results are presented here which contribute to making sense of the network, especially as a knowledge network. Finally, we conclude by identifying within this network a space for global social justice, by proposing to read the maps with the participants as social cartographies highlighting power relations intrinsic to them.

Adopting social network analysis[2]

Global citizenship is an idea or cluster of ideas (Oxley and Morris, 2012) that is a movable feast, conceptually rich in an increasingly interconnected world

but with a tendency for conceptual drift in different contexts and with different actors, leaving it difficult to study through specific curriculum guides or policy statements or organizational reports. Mandates from policy authorities, for example UNESCO or state education ministries, look very different when implemented in the diverse educational settings across the EUNA region. This is why the significance of ideas travelling through networked relations provided a novel way to understand the fluidity and diversity of GCED policy and practice. This is particularly important to our overall concern that GCED work, especially in the global North, was not achieving its transformational potential towards social, economic, environmental, epistemological, decolonial or any other aspects of justice.

According to a social network perspective, a social, political or educational phenomenon cannot be understood if it is segmented or isolated from social relations (Kadushin, 2012; Knoke and Yang, 2008). Using SNA to study relationships in a field of organizations that act as a network makes visible how these relations contribute to the enactment of particular social, cultural and political norms. While in recent years some research has explored the role of both offline and digital networks (Schuster, Jörgens and Kolleck, 2021) in shaping educational policy, GCED has not been investigated specifically. With the exception of a study combining SNA and discourse analysis (Kolleck and Yemini, 2020), SNA has never been used to investigate GCED educational policy and practice. This chapter aims to fill this gap, by analysing the structural and functional effects of GCED enactment, where social relationships are prevailing over organizational characteristics.

We understand the parameters of our study as a field, in line with Bordieu's concept of *field* (1975) where social actors – in our case, organizations – are positioned within the field as a result of interactions and particular power relations. Within organizational studies, an organizational field is made up of agents that represent a recognized area of institutional life and a focus on some particular social action (Di Maggio and Powell, 1983; Dian, 2015). GCED within the EUNA region forms a field of practice that is shaped by social structures, networks of relationships and historical contexts that locate organizations in particular ways in the network. The social capital dimension (Bourdieu, 1986) that emerges from these relationships appears to be a strategic lens through which we look at the material benefits and resources generated by the possession of a stable network of relationships, or by being part of a group and sharing the capital collectively owned. As power moves within these networked relationships there are dynamic shifts in competition, collaboration and positioning among

organizations in the network to remain relevant and active in the field. In addition, this network is crossed not only by power relations but also by the flow of knowledge about GCED. It is therefore also significant to explore how knowledge moves and what knowledge moves within this field.

The starting assumption of the SNA methodological framework is that individual characteristics (attributes) are not enough to capture the complexity of the phenomenon we aim to observe (Scott and Carrington, 2011). SNA methods enable the measurement and description of the structure of relations (*ties*) among social entities (*nodes*). In this study of GCED, we investigated the structural characteristics of the network and were able to make visible the main features of the patterns of collaboration, information exchanges and meetings among the networked organizations.

In sum, the main goal of the study was to map multiple ties among active promoters of GCED in Europe and North America, where promotion is understood broadly to include funding, education, programming, policy development, networking, research and teacher education.

To build the dataset for data collection, the research team selected a list of organizations based on the following criteria:

1. *Geographical location*. Each participating organization conducts their work or should be based in Canada, the United States, Europe or the United Kingdom.
2. *Influence*. Each organization has contributed to shape GCED implementation in the region through its work.
3. *Conceptualization of GCED*. Each organization plays a role in the conceptualization and/or defining of GCED through its work.
4. *Promotion*. Each organization is active in disseminating, promoting and fostering GCED in the region or worldwide.
5. *Education*. Each organization provides courses, programmes, research, guidelines or reports about GCED at any level of education which may include formal, non-formal and informal education activities.

The limitation of this sampling process it that less visible organizations were not included. In order to address this and include actors outside the mainstream but which provided significant contribution to GCED promotion, we designed our survey questions to include the opportunity to identify additional organizations with whom they had GCED relationships. Eventually we identify fifty-six key organizations, forty-five of them accepted to be interviewed. The sample included different typologies of actors, as shown in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1 Distribution of the organizations interviewed in Europe and North America.

After receiving ethical approval from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta, we developed a questionnaire ensuring it captured the attributes (individual characteristics), ties and nodes (relations) among organizations. After a pilot phase, six researchers carried out structured interviews via Zoom with leading figures in each organization.

The structured interview was organized into five parts:

1. Description of the organization;
2. The views of the organization on global citizenship education;
3. The organization relationships with other key actors;
4. The organization affiliation to regional networks;
5. The organization values and beliefs about GCED (qualitative open-ended questions).

We also used a digital method approach as parallel and complementary strategy to trace the links between GCED actors on both (a) organizational websites, and (b) Twitter, using crawler techniques. But in this chapter, due to the space limits

we narrow our report to some of the results of the SNA investigation which can provide a critical perspective on the space of global social justice in the regional debate surrounding GCED.

Three networks emerged in the data, based on relations and activities among the actors: namely, technical information sharing, mutual collaboration and meetings between organizations. Each was one-mode network (actor to actor) and based on direct ties between the organizations. One network related to the use and sharing of information and knowledge. A second formed around activities of mutual or reciprocal collaborations such as providing support to another organization on a policy issue and receiving support in return. The third network was based on organizational relations that included face-to-face meetings about GCED (including using online platforms during the global pandemic).

Maps from these networks were processed and visualized using data gathered in the interviews through the UCINET software.

Making sense of the maps

In examining the maps and the multiple ties among active GCED promoters, instead of an 'egocentric' study, we adopted a *whole network* design. We were interested in the structural properties of the whole network, rather than in the position of single actor in the network. Moreover, this seems to be confirmed by the fact that the network cannot be easily divided into smaller subgroups based on common characteristics of the organizations.

This is important because 'network properties' have implications for understanding how information flows and organizations interact.

In this chapter, we will discuss some of the structural properties of the network based on a number of network measures such as density, connectedness, network closure, emerging from our analysis which can be helpful to understand and to further improve this network.

Due to space limitations, we will just report here four main results that stand out for their relevance in unfolding the features of the complex map of relations that connect them as a network.

A first consideration concerns the possibility of considering EUNA as a uniform region with regard to the enactment and promotion of GCED. While a group of actors has close connections across the two geographical areas, a regional homophily tends to prevail, which indicates the propensity of actors to create ties with others that have the same geographical location and therefore the division of two geographical areas is clearly visible in the network graphs.

In Figure 6.2, the node colours indicate the same geographical region with European organizations coloured dark and North American coloured light. The node size indicates the percentage of resources allocated to GCED. The larger circle means the organization devotes more than 50 per cent of its resources to GCED. The position of the node is determined by the number of ties with other organizations. The nodes with the higher number of ties are the most central in the map, while the organizations that are in the periphery have fewer ties. The graphs are spatialized according to the Multi-Dimensional Scaling in UCINET[3] which overlaps organizations that have a similar pattern of ties.

A knowledge network becomes visible

Among the three networks we analysed based on relations and activities among the actors, the relations were most dense in activities of *knowledge sharing*. This indicates an important feature of the network and of GCED in the EUNA region. A strong *knowledge network* is formed around the work of GCED with dense knowledge sharing relations evident in the maps. In particular, actors positioned at the core of the network tends to be at the centre of intense knowledge sharing processes, but innovation and original knowledge tend to come from periphery.

Core-periphery

Looking at the ties depicted in the map in Figure 6.3, it is evident that the network cannot be easily divided into smaller subgroups based on common characteristics of the organizations. So, while organizations tend to connect with others from the same geographical area there is a low level of clustering. This suggests that even though there are differences in the number of connections among organizations at the centre of the network (orange) and those with fewer connections (green), it was not possible to divide the network into smaller subgroups based on common characteristics. Therefore, the maps also show an important set of relations that in SNA is described as a core-periphery model of interaction (Borgatti and Evertt, 2000). The main characteristic of a core-periphery network map is that a small group of densely connected actors are located in the centre of the network and a larger group of actors are in in the periphery, characterized by a lower level of exchange. The organizations that are at the core of the network generally benefit from a dense flow of information exchange, collaboration and meetings. It is at the core where we find organizations sharing similar conceptualizations of GCED and more mainstream and sanctioned activities. However, looking at the whole network, we see a different pattern.
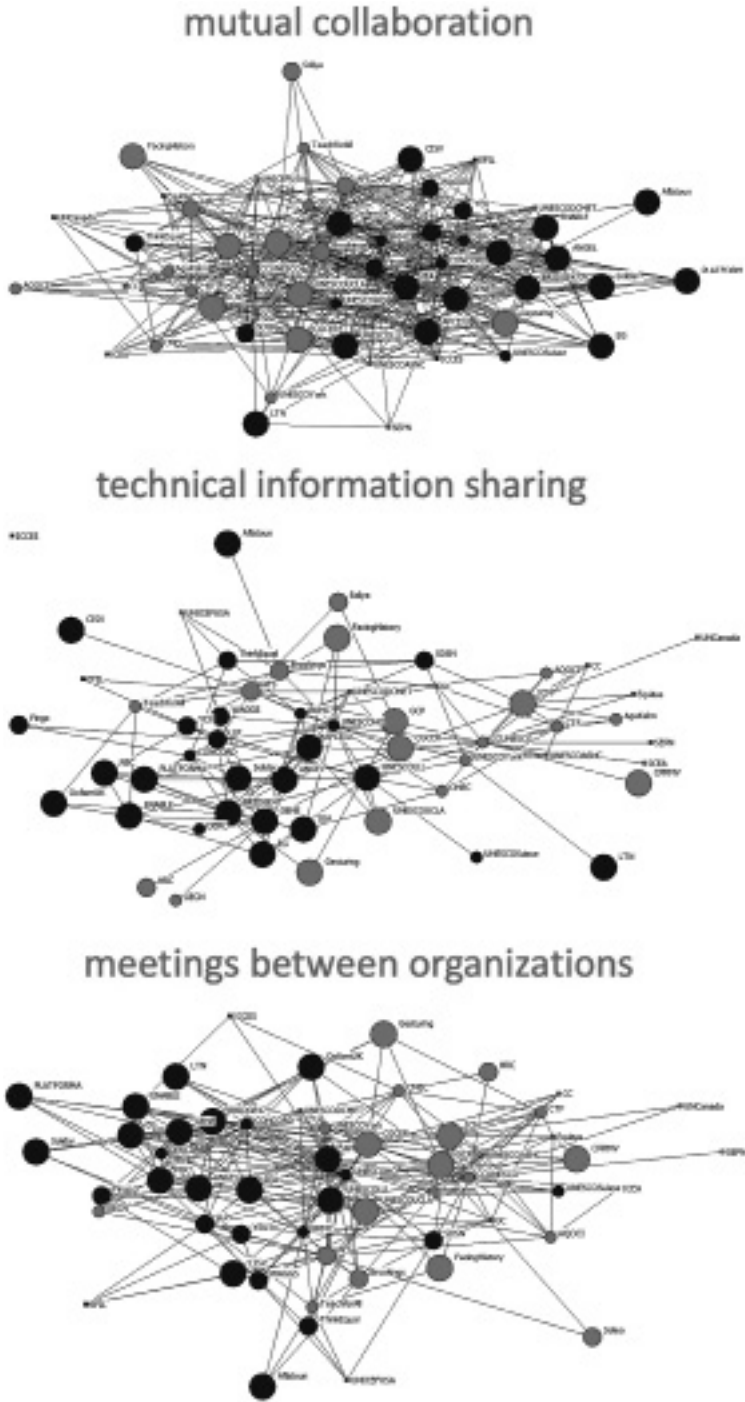
mutual collaboration

technical information sharing

meetings between organizations

Figure 6.2 Three networks emerged in the data, based on relations and activities among the actors.

Figure 6.3 Core-periphery mode of interaction (light= periphery dark= centre; Triangle= multiscalar).

While in many cases the amount of resources available determines the size of an organization's impact in a network, our study shows there is no clear pattern related to the resources devoted to GCED. This suggests that the centrality of organizations within the network is not a function of the resources devoted to GCED. It is also notable that the majority of organizations that are in the core of the three networks are 'multiscalar' (triangle node shape in Figure 6.3), so they are working at local, national and international levels providing a density of ties that position them centrally. These organizations were of varied sizes, so the location in the network core was not a result of large financial resources. In addition, the data suggest the organizations located on the periphery do not play a diminished role in the network, even though they have fewer ties. While this seems a contradiction, when we looked at the extent that these ties were strongly related to knowledge exchange where organizations on the periphery played important roles in providing technical and scientific knowledge to the network. In particular, we can see the importance of the organizations working outside the centre in the provision of new ideas outside the mainstream. New ideas and experiences can be moved into the network from positions on the periphery.

Networking

Organizations tend to have a higher number of outgoing than incoming ties. This is especially evident for multiscalar actors positioned at the core of the network. This seems to indicate that actors in this sector consider networking an important

activity and they are aware of the material benefits and resources generated by the possession of a stable network of relationships, or by being part of a larger group.

Networking is perceived as crucial: efforts to strengthen the network without forcing a homogenizing agenda on GCED can contribute to stronger GCED work at the individual organization level as well as a sector. Similarly, multi-stakeholder collaborations seem to be well established in this network, especially in Europe. This collaborative environment, if not just created by the need to share resources and increase one's lobbying and advocacy power, can be used to deepen and expand the important contributions of GCED to education policy and practice.

GCED conceptualizations across the network

Alongside quantitative data, we also collected some qualitative data through open-ended questions. Qualitative data included the organizations' definitions of global citizenship and GCED provided by participants in the interviews.

We then used 'networked keyword analysis' to investigate these definitions seeking patterns of conceptual relations among GCED actors. Our preliminary data in this part show that there is much diversity in the language used by organizations, indicating diverse positions, an intermixing of goals, actions, concepts, orientations, issues and future visions. We saw no overarching guiding or shared definition of GCED, although there was evidence of cohesive use of language related to Agenda 2030 and SDG Target 4.7, which is especially evident among the actors located at the core of the network. Significantly, many organizations have developed individual or nuanced definitions. This provides important information given the strong role of knowledge sharing in this network. The organizations appear to support and value sharing new ideas through relations of knowledge exchange where the ties are both dense and reciprocal. This suggests the organizations do not simply use the network to broadcast their own organization's ideas or that there is support for only dominant knowledge. In particular, as we noted earlier, when we combine the core-periphery maps with the GCED conceptualization, we can see the network data where novel ideas and experiences can be moved into the network from positions on the periphery or radiated out from core organizations.

Conclusion: Significance of the EUNA GCED network

A main objective of this chapter was to explore the social network of organizations working on GCED and located in the EUNA region from the

concern for global justice as an educational practice. Through the methods of SNA, we were able to carefully build maps of the network of organizational relationships. These maps made the relationships visible, and we are able to see that the network 'works' as a knowledge network where knowledge moves mainly through informal relations and less through formal structures such as meetings, shared resources and specific project collaborations. Instead, this network is highly engaged in sharing ideas. Global social justice is definitively one of these ideas, but it is not the only one, nor is there shared and broad consensus on its definition. This echoes the very nature of GCED, which is the result of conceptual, political and even pedagogical negotiations. So this network is not just *about* GCED; it *is* GCED. The educational aspect of the knowledge sharing is significant.

We understand that social relations are not neutral and are embedded in power relations that, in turn, enable or constrain particular ideas, actors and actions. These relations reflect key justice concerns of how and by whom GCED is undertaken. While SNA, as a predominantly quantitative methodology, does not seek to examine relations of power or justice, the maps that are created can serve as potential social cartographies (see Paulson, 2000; Andreotti et al., 2016) that can be engaged by communities, practitioners and policymakers for generative projects for justice. Therefore, as a research team we are planning to extend this to dialogues with organizational representatives to develop even deeper understanding of this dynamic network through future research.

There are many studies that have provided descriptions of different approaches to GCED (see, for example, Andreotti and deSouza, 2007; Shultz, 2007; Pashby et al., 2020; Pashby ad da Costa, 2021; Torres, 2017). These studies position different aspects of GCED as highly contested and in conflict, often set up as dichotomous to the degree that there is little overlap or even communication between actors holding opposing views. Our data confirmed there were significantly different conceptualizations of GCED related to different geographies, organizational types and organizational sizes. Organizations that worked with an economic focus on education named relationships with organizations that challenged the very foundation of these same economic structures; organizations that challenged global scaled efforts as directly in conflict with local experiences showed ties of knowledge exchange. However, despite the differences, dense ties indicate a strong network exists.

It will take further research to understand the dynamics of the network over time and what kind of mimetic or isomorphic pressures are exerted as different and difficult knowledge is presented to the network. More research

is also needed to explore the link between different GCED conceptualizations and types of actors. This study makes clear that networking is perceived by the study participants as crucial. Efforts to strengthen the network without forcing a homogenizing agenda on GCED can contribute to stronger GCED work at the individual organization level as well as a sector. The network showed many characteristics of a transnational advocacy network, a network that advocated for the idea of global citizenship. Further study with organizations outside of the EUNA region would provide another view of how networked relations 'work' in GCED. They would also provide a different and critical way to understand GCED and the way in which EUNA, the 'global north', can be regarded as a cohesive region promoting the mainstreaming idea of global citizenship. To replicate a similar study in other regions of the world could represent an important step forward not only for comparative research but also to use evidence to facilitate relationships within and across various regions of the world and expand the movement of ideas across a global knowledge network.

There are, of course, limitations to this study, not the least that it was conducted during the global pandemic where there were almost universal lockdowns and restrictions disrupting organizations, along with profound personal disruptions in the lives of our team and the study participants. We are grateful to all who supported and participated in the study.

But the very fact of having conducted this research at such a complex juncture and of having found full and convinced cooperation from the diverse community of GCED actors in these difficult times is in itself a reason for hope.

Notes

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2 For a full description of the methodological approach, data collection and analysis, see the full research report (Shultz et al., 2021).

3 Graphs in Figures 6.2 and 6.3 have been developed with UCINET by Carla Inguaggiato.

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