

## Article

# Teaching Global Citizenship in a Muslim-Majority Country: Perspectives of Teachers from the Religious, National, and International Education Sectors in Pakistan

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**Abstract:** Pakistan is a Muslim-majority country, and religion plays a great role in the life of society. This study examines how teachers from the religious, national, and international education sectors realize the concept of global citizenship education (GCE) in Pakistan. Based on 24 semi-structured interviews, this study found differences among the teachers' understandings of the concept of GCE and its characteristics. Teachers from the national and religious curriculum sectors viewed GCE as a threat to Islamic values, whereas those from the international curriculum sector regarded GCE as an opportunity for improving the economic development and image of Pakistan. Moreover, the teachers from the religious sector argued for the cultivation of Islamic identity instead of GCE. However, the teachers from the national curriculum sector noted the economic benefits of GCE and were keen on global citizenship principles that do not conflict with national and Islamic values. The different perceptions held by teachers from the three educational sectors indicate the need for more work on GCE to narrow the conflicting agendas and broaden the understandings within Pakistani society. Creating common ideas within these different sectors of education is significant for developing sustainable peace within the divided society.

**Keywords:** global citizenship education; teachers' perspectives; religion; divided society; Pakistan

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## 1. Introduction

Global citizenship education (GCE) has been taught in many countries at different levels of education for the last few decades. Some countries have incorporated GCE in their elementary schools, while others have done so in junior and/or secondary schools. As such, the development and advancement of the GCE curriculum have drawn significant attention from scholars (Davies and Pike 2010). Many countries view GCE as a means of creating international education, which is acceptable and available to all, and of bringing social and political justice to different societies (Rathburn and Lexier 2016; Tsegay and Mcjerry 2020). The process of globalization through technological, economic, and political developments has significantly changed the way that people see the world and their lives (Goren and Yemini 2017). This has also affected the way that education is framed and how GCE scholars deal with contemporary national and global challenges.

There is no widely accepted definition of GCE that incorporates its diverse content, pedagogy, and theoretical and philosophical positions. From one point of view, GCE is labeled as a means of ensuring sustainable peace and development through critical learning and students' active engagement (Popkewitz 1980; Tsegay and Mcjerry 2020). In another aspect, it is expected to provide unity and rationality through important subjects, such as democratic education, developmental education, education for cosmopolitan

citizenship, human rights, environmental education, and peace education (Oxley and Morris 2013; Tye 1999). Overall, GCE could be defined as a wide set of rationales for going beyond individual and national perceptions in order to have a deep local and international understanding. As such, GCE has offered a potential instrument for bringing peace and conspicuousness to divided societies by creating a collective notion of citizenship (Tsegay and Mcjerry 2020).

Despite its positive role in society, GCE has been perceived as a threat to nationalism and the national ideologies of countries (Davies and Pike 2010). In many cases, this has been used by populist governments and tabloid media, which label migrants and other minority groups as threats to homogeneity and national security. Brexit in the UK and the discourses of “America First” in the USA are evident examples of opposition to global migration, including taking in refugees (Cummings 2018; Moreau 2016). However, some countries, such as Canada, which have diverse societies and large numbers of immigrants, used GCE to create sociocultural awareness and, thus, a society based on respect, tolerance, and mutual cooperation (Goren et al. 2018; Rathburn and Lexier 2016). The European Union (EU) and UNESCO have played a major role in promoting and facilitating the development and implementation of GCE. Fostering universal human rights and a sense of community beyond one’s border is viewed as a major component of GCE.

In order to realize the current situation and implement its founding principles, UNESCO declared GCE as one of its strategic areas of work for its 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (Global Education Monitoring Report 2018). The efforts of UNESCO and the European Union have encouraged many educational institutions around the globe to adopt GCE as a foundation for organizing their curricular activities (Jorgenson and Shultz 2012). Countries with diverse populations that could face intractable conflicts have also included GCE in their curriculum with the intention of creating a collective stage of belonging for students. In this regard, students can evaluate their personal positions in complex structures through the assessments of their associated assumptions, identities, attitudes, and power relations (Kadiwal and Durrani 2018; Myers 2010). Thus, GCE is offered through different subjects, such as peace education, democratic education, education for sustainable development, and help students to create a sense of community beyond borders.

This article uses Pakistan as a case study because it is a Muslim-majority country that may represent an important example when investigating the challenges of teaching GCE and teachers’ perspectives on GCE. In addition to the increasing religious–secular divide (Akhtar 2016), Pakistan has religious minorities that makeup about 4% of the total population (Fuchs and Fuchs 2020; Mehfooz 2021). Over recent decades, Pakistanis have also experienced social and identity transformations due to political developments and religion-based conflicts (Lall 2012; Kadiwal and Durrani 2018). In addition to the broader political, ethnic, and religious conflicts (Ahmed and Brasted 2020; Dean 2008), Pakistan is facing increasing internal religious clashes among Muslims, such as between secular and practicing Muslims, as well as among followers of different schools of Islamic thought (see Akhtar 2016). Accordingly, the education system in Pakistan is segregated into three multifaceted sectors to cater to society’s values and attitudes: public schools, private schools, and religious schools. The curriculum in these sectors is also divided into religious, national, and international categories. The main aim of this study is to investigate the provision of global citizenship education in Muslim-majority countries by using the case of Pakistan. The study focuses on the following research question: How do teachers from the religious, national, and international education sectors in Pakistan perceive the concept of GCE and its incorporation into the Pakistani education system?

Through this research question, the study raises two important points. First, in line with Banks’s (2014) statement, this study posits the role of identity in influencing teachers’ perception of GCE. We argue that when teachers’ identities are closely linked to Islam, GCE is rejected. Second, the study recognizes teachers as the primary medium to convey GCE to students in Pakistan. Teachers hold a vital position in transferring the concept of

GCE to students, which influences students' behaviors and practices (Tsegay and Mcjerry 2020). In doing so, the study notes that teaching GCE could be challenging in Pakistan, where most citizen identities are closely tied to Islam. It also asserts that students should be taught with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be responsible global citizens (Tsegay 2016). It helps students from different backgrounds to be aware of their similarities and differences and develop the ability to live in peace and harmony, and work together (Torres 2002; Tsegay 2016; Tsegay and Mcjerry 2020). Therefore, this comparative study contributes to a better understanding of teachers' perspectives on the concept of GCE. It also provides a more robust explanation of the connections between teachers' perspectives and their Islamic identity. Moreover, the study helps in covering or uncovering the opportunities and challenges that students face in shaping their identities.

## **2. Framing Global Citizenship Education: Global and National Dynamics**

### *2.1. The Concept of GCE*

The concept of GCE is not new, but the acceleration of socioeconomic and technological changes has generated an academic interest in the term and caused the theorization of its applications (Torres 2002). Global citizenship education (which is sometimes referred to as citizenship education) has not only become a common subject in the Western academic world, but it is also growing in other parts of the world. Researchers have created scholarly conceptualizations that classify particular phenomena that connect to or represent GCE (Oxley and Morris 2013). Previous research on citizenship education has shown that many countries have integrated features of GCE into national citizenship education curricula (Ramirez and Meyer 2012). This was meant to help in identity development, where young individuals can develop skills and attitudes in order to be responsible global citizens and participate in everyday situations of their society and beyond. Through democratic practices, young individuals can shape and reshape their understandings of identity and improve the quality of their contributions to society.

Dill (2015) identified two major elements of GCE: the global competency approach and global consciousness. The global competencies provide the necessary skills for students to compete in national and international arenas. Global consciousness focuses on the knowledge of global alignment, understanding, and cultural sensitivity. As a result, GCE enables individuals to participate in local, national, and global communities and to show fundamental capacities for engaging in rational and enlightened thinking. However, not everyone is intrigued about GCE. Many support it, whereas others critique GCE for different reasons. The major critique of GCE revolves around the effect of GCE on nations and nation-states. These ideas refer to the uncertainty and assumptions that are rooted in the principles or applications of GCE (De Andreotti 2014).

Banks (2014) argued that, as a feature of GCE, the concept of universalism can promote solidarity. It was used in developing sustainable peace and security in many post-conflict countries, such as South Africa and Liberia (Tsegay and Mcjerry 2020). This shows the value of social solidarity by proclaiming that all humans are equal. The argument, nonetheless, has attracted two major critiques, which Davies and Pike (2010) stated as ideological and pragmatic. Ideological notions comprise the view that teaching GCE threatens the development of patriotism. For example, President Donald Trump criticized the concept of GCE for its global perspective, rather than focusing only on national goals (Cummings 2018). The ideological notions claim the importance of warranting that future generations have a complete understanding of their individual nation's history and culture. The pragmatic notions point out that global citizenship does not have legal enforceability like other forms of citizenships, which are maintained by a complex and sophisticated group of policies, laws, and institutions.

Although these criticisms challenged the development of GCE, they also helped in the reconceptualization and articulation of the concept of GCE. It is important to note that nation-states have a significant impact on individuals' identities. However, people also

need to develop multiple identities or citizenships to be competent global citizens (Davies and Pike 2010). Thus, GCE does not undermine patriotism, but it rejects the deprivation of the basic human rights of people as a result of the empowerment of a nationalistic view of citizens (Tsegay and Mcjerry 2020).

## 2.2. GCE in Pakistan

The Pakistani education system is multifaceted, and it is mainly categorized into three types of schools and three types of curricula (Dean 2008; National Education Policy 2017; Rahman 2004). There are public schools that are administered by the government, private schools administered by private individuals or private organizations, and religious schools (Madrassa education) administered by religious individuals or religious organizations (Ashraf 2018). The public and private schools are also divided into elite and non-elite schools based on their resources and the socioeconomic level of their students. Concerning the curriculum types, there is a government-structured curriculum implemented by all public and some private schools; an international curriculum, such as that of the Cambridge system, is used by private schools; the religious curriculum, which consists of teachings of the Quran and Islamic ideologies, is delivered by religious schools. All of these systems follow different ideologies and practices of education, including different matriculation systems.

The concept of GCE was mostly nonexistent in the Pakistani education system, as well as in policy documents issued by the government, until 2009 when it was included in the national education policy in order to develop students as responsible members of society and global citizens (see National Education Policy 2009). The term “global citizen” was used only one time in the whole 71-page document. Similarly, the National Education Policy (2017) also stipulated the development of balanced individuals with national (state) and global responsibilities. However, to the best of our knowledge, there were no initiatives made by the government or policy-making institutions to incorporate GCE into the curriculum or implement it in educational settings in Pakistan. Yet, it is important to note that the ministry of education in Pakistan strives to engage with national and international partners through different initiatives. Some examples include the signing and adoption of international development goals, the creation of higher educational collaborations, making curriculum reforms, the adoption of English as a medium of instruction, and collaboration with the UN and other international organizations on different educational projects. However, the impact of these projects and collaborations is rarely assessed, particularly concerning the changes that they make in teachers’ perceptions of global identity or GCE. The context of GCE and, thus, stakeholders’ perceptions of global identities are not fully understood. In Pakistan, for example, citizenship education is discussed mainly in policy documents and scholarly research, but it is rarely included in the curriculum, especially in religious schools.

Pakistan, officially known as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, is an Islamic country. In policy documents, citizenship is linked to character building, which requires knowledge of the Quran and Sunna (National Education Policy 2017; Ashraf 2019). In Pakistan, the chief concepts in the creation of citizenship education are claimed to be Islamic ideologies and religious instructions, which many argue should be compulsory for Muslim students (Qazi and Shah 2018). National cohesion and diversity are other elements that are essential to citizenship education. However, Islam remains the central point within national cohesion and diversity. Citizenship education is mainly taught with social studies (Pakistani studies) and civics (Dean 2007). However, some elements of citizenship are also included in Urdu, English, and Islamiyat (Islamic Studies). The main aim of social studies is to teach the history, economy, geography, and culture of Pakistan. However, it articulates the history of Pakistan within the framework of Islamic ideology (Malik 1997), making Islam the primary space for citizenship education.

In the academic literature, citizenship education has mainly been discussed with the assessment of curriculum and administration mechanisms. Dean (2008) divided the

concept of citizenship education in Pakistan into three phases. Phase one covers the indigenous democracy from Pakistan's birth until 1977; phase two focuses on the Islamization process from 1977 to 1999; phase three, which began in 1999, looks at the struggle for democracy in the country. Military autocrats dominated most of the three phases, which outlines the fact that the ideology and nature of the national cohesion of the nation favored dictatorial regimes. This all led to the formation of Pakistan as an Islamic state (Nayyar and Salim 2004), where patriotism is associated with Islamic zeal (Ahmad 2007). The contents of social studies are filled with selective, biased, and distorted norms to present a particular view of Pakistan as an Islamic nation (see Ahmad 2004; Nayyar and Salim 2004; Dean 2007).

In addition, the development of different types of schools and curriculum shaped different ideologies among young students. Rahman's (2004) survey on the issue of war and peace among students and teachers from different school systems uncovered dissimilar portraits of learners and instructors. Most teachers and students from religious schools (madrassas) marked "yes" on the issue of open war in Kashmir compared to those in non-religious schools. On providing equal rights to non-Muslims and women in the country, most teachers and students from English-medium schools selected "yes" compared to Urdu-medium schools and religious schools. Lall's (2012) research on citizenship education in Pakistan found that the type of school attended caused the greatest variation among students' responses and attitudes regarding the state, rights, responsibilities, and citizenship.

Similarly, Dean (2005, 2007, 2008) evaluated the citizenship practices inside schools and showed that citizenship is linked to Islamic and national values inside school parameters, while it is controlled by teachers through the textbooks. Recently, Kadiwal and Durani (2018) explored young students' negotiations of citizenship identities, which displayed specific issues concerning diversity and justice in the divided Pakistani society. These studies mainly focused on students; research on teachers' perspectives of GCE would be of great value because teachers hold the authority in the transfer of knowledge to students. They play an important role in shaping the concepts of citizenship and students' characters.

### 3. Methodology

This study aimed to explore the concepts of GCE as understood by teachers from different education systems in Pakistan (national curriculum, international curriculum, and religious curriculum). The case of Pakistan is relatively fascinating in the context of GCE because Pakistan has a complex society with a mix of highly international, liberal, and religious ideologies. At the same time, most Pakistanis are nationalistic and conservative, which is linked to the constant love for Islam and continuous conflict with India. This complex situation and the absence of studies about aspects of GCE in Pakistan, especially in relation to the perception of educators, indicate the importance of this study and justify the need for qualitative methods in order to collect comprehensive perspectives. This study took place in Sahiwal, an agricultural city in the Punjab province. Sahiwal, similar to other parts of Pakistan, consists of different education systems that use different curricula. In order to provide validity to this study, schools were approached and purposely selected based on the type of curriculum (i.e., public, international, or religious). A total of 24 teachers (eight teachers from each of the three curriculum systems) participated in this study. The participants were from 26 to 51 years of age and had teaching experience of 2 to 30 years. A mixture of the snowball and purposive sampling methods was used to contact and recruit teachers for this study. Teachers with teaching experience of subjects connected to citizenship education in the Pakistani context were selected for this study. For international and public curricula, the subject areas of social studies, Pakistani studies, English, Urdu, Arabic, and Islamic education were selected. For religious curricula, the teachings of the Quran, Islamic ideologies, Muslim Nation, Islamic and Western cultures, educational institutions, and character-building were included.

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Questions related to the participants' understanding and perception of GCE and the pros and cons of GCE for Pakistan were asked. To address ethical considerations of this research, a permission letter was sent to the heads of the schools to explain the voluntary nature of the study, obtain approval from representative authorities, and confirm the anonymity of the participating teachers. Moreover, all teachers were informed about the scope of this study before the interview and signed a letter of consent to assure their voluntary participation in this study. Additional information was also given to the participants at the time of the interviews regarding the recording of the interviews, their right to withdraw, and the anonymity of their information. They were informed that the recordings of the interviews would be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. All interviews were conducted in the Urdu language, with some presence of the English language in the form of code-mixing and code-switching, which was later transcribed and translated into the English language.

Despite following significant methodological and ethical considerations, this study is not without any limitations. All participants of this study were selected from one city. They also belonged to the Pakistani–Punjabi ethnic group and followed Islam. This suggests that their reflections may vary from those of other ethnic or religious groups in Pakistan. Although Islam is the main religion (about 96%), Pakistan has many ethnic groups. The small sample size from each of the three curriculum categories adds another limitation. However, this is the first study concerning teachers and GCE in the Pakistani context. Additionally, detailed discussions during the interviews and the importance of the research to other similar contexts make it a valuable study.

This study used a thematic approach to analyze the data collected using interviews. The thematic analysis of this study was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of conducting thematic analysis and was supported by Palmberger and Gingrich's (2014) comparative practices. The rationale for using these methods was to achieve abstraction by doing justice to the context in which the different cases were embedded and to conduct a rigorous comparative study focusing on GCE in divided societies (Palmberger and Gingrich 2014). A hybrid of inductive and deductive approaches was used to code the data. Then, the data were organized into different categories based on the participants' affiliations, and findings were assembled by sorting and comparing the data by considering the links between these categories (Braun and Clarke 2006). This comparative approach aimed to distinguish meanings, intentions, and interpretations of the reflections of participants from different education systems. The comparative approach enhanced the awareness of the categories that emerged from the data in each group. Therefore, the perceptions and understandings of GCE in each group are presented separately for a clear and unbiased outcome of this study.

#### **4. Global Citizenship: Distinct Ideologies and the Divided State**

The analysis of this study, as described in the previous section, is directed toward the development of a framework for understanding teachers' perceptions of GCE in three different curriculum categories in Pakistan. The findings exposed the fact that global citizenship is perceived, accumulated, and delivered differently within the different education groups. This section presents the differences in perceptions and observations of GCE between the three groups.

##### *4.1. National Curriculum Sector: Positioning in the Middle of National Coherence and Religious Beliefs*

In the national curriculum group, most teacher interviewees agreed that religion is integrated into their citizenship appearances, which involve the Muslim Ummah but mix to some extent with global citizenship. The teachers mostly viewed themselves in the context of national values, which are constructed on Islamic principles. Instead of direct reflection on global citizenship, all teachers in this category first described national

citizenship by placing it within the parameters of Islam and Pakistan. In the global citizenship context, discrimination, intolerance, threats to Islamic ideologies, Indian nuisance to Pakistan, and Pakistan as a major pillar for Muslim states were the major features described by the six teachers. Bilal (Pakistan Studies teacher) stated:

*In the debates of citizenship, I believe [most Pakistanis also believe] that Pakistan was created for Muslims of the Pak-India subcontinent because they were not getting their rights in Hindu-majority India. Leaders at that time thought of a separate nation because that was the only solution to save Muslims in India. That was a great decision. Look at the current situation in India: Muslims are still fighting for their rights, and killing Muslims is part of every day's news. India has been trying to dismantle Pakistan since the first day of independence, but Pakistan is created in the name of Allah, so no force in the world can destroy it.*

This quote shows what most teachers from the national curriculum group believe with regards to citizenship. Bilal mentioned the foundation of Islam-based citizenship in Pakistan, discrimination against Muslims in India before independence, and stories of Muslim citizens in India. This echoes previous research that noted the cultivation of gendered citizenship by integrating conservative ideologies into the curriculum (Naseem 2006). Pakistan's partitioning from India and its continuous conflict with India have constantly been used in the political and educational spheres to raise feelings of individual belongingness to the nation. Within this sphere, Islam takes the center stage in constructing and shaping national ideologies and the individual belief of belonging to the nation. However, such a dependence on only one religion excludes non-Muslims, especially Hindus, by labeling them as non-believers or others (Naseem 2006; Nayyar and Salim 2004). Media, particularly the state and right-wing media, also play a significant role in the exclusion of non-Muslims by showing news of the others' society, which contradicts the values of Islam. This influenced Bilal to favor national belonging and perceive that Pakistan is constructed for people with similar beliefs to his.

A teacher, Nasir (Urdu teacher), articulated the global citizenship concept through threats and opportunities. Nasir thought of global citizenship as a threat to local cultures through the development of different principles for future generations, but also as an opportunity to find better career opportunities in the global market. During the discussions, Nasir found himself in complex situations on the question of integrating the global citizenship concept within national boundaries, where he divided the concept of global citizenship into two: Muslim and non-Muslim.

*I consider the global citizenship concept a threat to local culture ... even if it creates more opportunities ... if global means Muslim and Islamic beliefs, then I accept it completely, if it is from other [Western] religions, then I reject it .... I teach my students to connect to Islam and Muslims.*

Five teachers agreed with Nasir's ideas about global citizenship. In their views, Islam remains the central point in the debates on citizenship. Global citizenship threatens the beliefs of Pakistani societies by imposing Western ideologies. This suggests that GCE has been viewed as a concept of Western societies, which are dissimilar to Pakistani society in terms of religion. These judgments are consistent with previous research on the concepts of citizenship among students, wherein the majority of participants linked citizenship education to Islam and teachings of Islam (Lall 2012). Like the students in Lall's study, all teachers from the national curriculum group emphasized that Islam and Muslim identity are central points in their discussions on GCE. This scenario in Pakistani education draws attention to what Dean (2005) found: that young people learn knowledge to develop skills and values in order to precipitate social change. However, in most cases, young people learn and follow the thoughts that have been presented to them through teaching and curricular materials.

Another teacher, Fahmida (English teacher), described the changes in the language and curriculum in recent years as a part of a global contribution that influences citizenship

beliefs. The fact that English is an international and significant language, together with Pakistani society's love for English, has affected the previous perception of the language. In her view:

*...when I was a child, I learned from many religious people that English is a language of non-Muslims.... [they suggested] I should learn Arabic instead of English because learning Arabic is sawab [the reward of good deeds] ... I personally feel that learning about foreign [Western] countries through English literature has changed my perception that I had in my early years of schooling.*

Fahmida's opinions and self-observations reveal the dominant ideologies that she confronted during different parts of her life, which are partly similar to Bilal's and Nasir's interpretations of citizenship. The schooling that she received during the early 1990s was important in Fahmida's situation because Pakistani culture and education were greatly transformed by Islamic thought during the 1980s, which also increased in the 1990s (Rahman 2004). However, her later experience of learning about foreign cultures through English literature displays a change in her view and perception of English and GCE.

Despite discussing the potential danger of GCE to society, three teachers argued that there should be a balance between national belonging and an individual's commitment to the global world. These teachers claimed that the connection of Islamic beliefs to one's nation and many other ideologies that students receive from different sources are incorrect and personal interpretations. As Aslam (social studies teacher) put it:

*We need to distinguish a few things: school, students, teachers, community, country, and world... I guess you know about curriculum and ideologies in curriculum... if we teach students one [Islamic] perspective of knowledge, and [we] do not teach them other perspectives, students will form a concept of their belonging to one [Islamic] perspective. It will exclude them from the global world by limiting them to national or Muslim boundaries. Some may accept it, but some may take it in an uncertain direction, such as hate, dislike, and it may lead to extremism.*

Aslam feels that GCE is beneficial for regulating and mediating the students' understanding of the world. Aslam and two other teachers believed that teaching different perspectives and the knowledge of different societies will help students identify similarities and differences in each society, which can shape their understanding of global citizenship. These teachers' perspectives correspond with the UNESCO goals for sustainable development, which suggest building students' resilience and fostering a positive sense of identity. Teachers are mediators among different concepts of citizenship that influence and shape identities in young students. Bilal and Nasir fostered the Islamic perception of citizenship and identity, which constructs students' ideologies in one dimension, and this was displayed by students in earlier research (see Lall 2012; Rahman 2004). In addition, Fahmida and Aslam displayed the concept of GCE by teaching modern concepts through the same curricula as other teachers, which supported students in obtaining an understanding of different perspectives and in forming personal identities linked to the global world. These teachers took an active role in supporting students in mediating their exposure to unbiased knowledge.

Standards in the curriculum for writing social studies books require that the content should help students understand the world in which they live, prepare for life, and raise their standards, and it must be unbiased (National Curriculum Framework Pakistan 2017). However, the education policy in Pakistan and most teachers are biased towards Islamic morals and values, which could hinder adjustment to modern global changes (National Education Policy 2017). Here, the role of education in developing citizenship ought to fundamentally go beyond building a national and religious identity and thus possibly provide students with an opportunity to learn respect towards each other, the state, and the world by including all perspectives rather than only Islamic perspectives. This contributes to the existing condition of citizenship education in Pakistani schools that use the national curriculum, as the learning and teaching methodologies foster passive citizens



who lack critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills (Dean 2005). However, teachers like Aslam and Fahmida are emergent and novel educators that provide hope for GCE in national curriculum schools. As Fahmida suggested, the implementation of GCE in the national curriculum could be of extreme significance for students and teachers.

#### 4.2. Islamic Religious Sector: Islamic Solidarity, Islamic Nationalism, and Sectarian Fear

Teachers from the Islamic (Madrassa) sector perceived GCE as a Western concept aimed towards changing the fundamental ideologies of Islam in Islamic countries through education and other ways. Five teachers from this sector criticized the idea of GCE due to its Western origin and support from UN agencies and described it as a means of American (USA) domination over the world. Some universal values were acceptable to some teachers if the GCE accepted and recognize Islam as a major element. Universal values, such as peace and brotherhood (however, mainly Muslim brotherhood), were highly accepted by all participants. However, the teachers argued that some notions of GCE, such as freedom of speech, changes in linguistic and cultural practices, and certain individual rights (women's rights, gay/lesbian marriage, romantic relationships before marriage), challenge Islamic customs and national loyalties.

A major description that came up in all interviews in this sector referred to the belief that everything in this universe belongs to Allah, and nothing happens in the universe without the will of Allah. Teachers often quote this belief from the Quran (Surah 43; Verse 84–85, Quran). Abid (Teachings of Quran teacher) put it as follows:

*My belief in Islam and the teachings of Islam makes me a citizen ... Pakistan was created in the name of Allah and I live in this country with my belief [Islamic]; thus, I am a Pakistani citizen ... My belief [in Islam] comes first ... I feel proud when I help Muslims because it is sawab ... Everything in the world belongs to Allah ... it is said in the Quran many times...*

Abid's acceptance of Islamic citizenship over any other concept of citizenship shows the underlying view of religious priority over national and global identities. This perception provides the concept of religious supremacy and belonging to people with similar religious beliefs, rather than people of other beliefs. All six other teachers from this section concurred with Abid's opinion. They all believed that Islam and Islamic values are far superior to other things in this universe.

Democracy and democratic citizenship were also discussed by teachers from religious schools, wherein five teachers rebuffed the concept of democratic citizenship by stating that it is against many Islamic values. Conversely, a Caliphate is the only acceptable form of government in Islam. This supports the specific and exclusivist interpretations of the Quran and the Hadith, which reject democracy by arguing that Allah is the sovereign, not the people (Ali and Leaman 2007; Saeed 2006). Thus, this view characterizes the dissimilarity among students' perceptions of their identity of being Muslim and living in a democratic Islamic country.

The current education system and its effects on society were the other narratives that came up during the interviews. Six teachers considered that the current national and international education systems are based on Western ideologies, wherein English plays an important role. Governments' continuous support for the implementation of Western ideas in education has caused great difficulties for young students in learning and practicing Islam. Meanwhile, they appreciated the efforts of the religious scholars who successfully passed the resolution of the "Quran Bill" in the Pakistani constitution in the national assembly in order to implement Islamic education from grade one until higher education. Atif (Muslim Nation teacher) stated:

*Pakistan was created in the name of Allah, but our governments failed to fulfill the promise... our government failed to stop the Western ideologies in education ... the national curriculum is somehow controlled, but private schools are teaching content that is not*

*acceptable to our religion and society ... English language helps students to learn Western literature and ideology ... young boys and girls feel proud to wear jeans, rather than national or Islamic clothes. Arabic language is our basic need, so it needs to be promoted.*

Atif and four other teachers displayed similar views about the role of English and the possibility of Western traditions in Pakistani society. In their views, the English language is very important for achieving an international audience, but it challenges students' Islamic knowledge, attitudes, and practices. To curb this, the Arabic language should be promoted and used because it is the language of Islam. This shows the dilemma that teachers face with respect to the need for globalization and maintaining Islamic values. All religious Islamic teachers accepted the value of globalization in today's world but stated that students must also learn to prepare for the future within and beyond their borders. In such a way, they can find a way to disseminate their values and traditions. One major support for GCE was the fact that students can go abroad and promote Islamic values and principles. Environmental science, medicine, engineering, and other sciences are some other subject areas that require global awareness among students. However, their overall understanding of globalization is similar to that of GCE, as mentioned by Abid and Atif—that it is risky for Islamic beliefs and traditions. This connects to the idea of soft citizenship education, wherein individuals try to learn about the world without engaging with issues that challenge their construction of identity (De Andreotti 2014). However, Islam and interpretations of Islamic principles remained as the chief beliefs.

#### 4.3. International Curriculum Sector: International Values and Further Opportunities

Teachers in the international curriculum sector mainly linked GCE to modernization, freedom of movement, and future career opportunities. Teachers' perspectives from this sector were opposite to the views of the teachers from the national and religious sectors. Teachers in the international sector described GCE as an effective and powerful tool that is required to improve social relations and develop mutual respect in countries with divided societies. Five of the teachers in this sector were concerned about the use of religion to construct a national identity (religious nationalism) among Pakistani citizens, which is often not inclusive of people from other religious groups. In their views, the universal set of values does not change Pakistan's national identity, but it could provide vital information to students for finding and establishing their personal identities. Ahmad (English teacher), a teacher in the international sector, expressed:

*GCE is helpful in preparing students to stand in the international arena ... education in Pakistan mainly links nationalism with Islam, mainly due to the history of Pakistan's birth, but we need to focus on followers of other religions ... on one side, it promotes nationalism linked to Islam, but on the other side, it promotes science and technology, which are must-haves for the development of Pakistan ... I could not say Islam and science cannot stay together, but I mean the stereotype in our society restricts science from being included in Islam.*

Ahmad's excerpt reveals that Pakistanis have varying views, with a major focus on Islam in education in order to create a national identity, but the importance of science and technology has challenged the idea of creating a national identity through Islam while implementing science education. Ahmad's views on this contradiction were directed by his personal discussions with friends and teachers from other schools. From his experiences, many of his teachers and friends think that science is limited and that many theories in science should not be taught to students due to their contradiction with Islamic values. Darwin's theory was one example that Ahmad revealed in his interview. Four other teachers also considered science and technology as sources of conflict with Islam in their debates on global citizenships. This assertion labels science and technology both as a form of GCE and as a skill-based approach (see Engel and Siczek 2018). All teachers in this sector considered science and technology as a major force that is necessary for the development of a country. In addition, international relations and international cooperation

were other terms that teachers in this sector mentioned in their interviews. Like other teachers, Wajid (Urdu and Pakistani Studies teacher) mentioned that Pakistan, as a developing country needs, to build international relations and international cooperations for the development of its economy.

*As a developing country, Pakistan (and its nationals) requires international relationships and [international] cooperation to develop its economy ... and needs to create jobs to advance its economic development ... Pakistan requires talent equipped with science and technology to serve and develop [the country] ... many of my students aim to work in higher positions in Pakistan and abroad ... working abroad has some disadvantages, like serving other countries instead of Pakistan, but wherever they work, they represent Pakistan and its values.*

Wajid's thought was echoed by other teachers in the international sector. They disclosed three important points. First, teachers in the international sector do not limit their students to thinking in national parameters. Instead, they view the modern world as an opportunity to find a better career within and beyond their borders. Second, they prefer science and technology rather than religious content in their education, which could be more essential for today's world, particularly in competing for jobs. Third, they are more conscious about the image of Pakistan at the international level. Hence, they strive to show the positive image of Pakistan by sending talented individuals into the world, rather than people who are more concerned about religion and, perhaps, tend to hold extreme religious views. The international sector teachers perceived GCE as a tool for the economic development of countries and their citizens, as well as their involvement in the global world through work, studies, and other opportunities. This approach to GCE is noticeable, particularly in nations where identity is closely linked to Islam.

Modern society was another term emphasized by three teachers during their interviews. Their main argument was the eradication of traditional actions and behaviors because they have been an obstacle to equal rights, particularly in multicultural societies. They thought that modern society can provide equal rights for all citizens and should guarantee justice, peace, and respect among societies with different beliefs and traditions. In their view, education in Pakistan cultivates national ideologies that are contradictory to the country's policy because policies regarding GCE are not properly initiated in schools and, hence, integrating students into local and international communities. Three teachers in this sector suggested that peace studies are very essential for Pakistani society to navigate and understand the struggle against extremists. From their perspective, education in Pakistan needs to focus on mutual respect and sustainable peace, which are missing in educational practices. For instance, Asma (Islamic Education teacher) stated:

*Pakistan is in the middle of a political and administrative crisis, as we saw a few years ago when bomb blasts and killings of people were headlines of every day's news. Even schools and students have witnessed the cruel faces of extremism. I don't know what they [leaders and policymakers] are thinking right now. They must emphasize peace studies in schools so we can generate peaceful generations. If we [our schools] teach peace [with India] to our students, many people criticize us and question our loyalty to Pakistan. If students learn to hate in class, then creating a peaceful society will only be a dream, but will not be achieved.*

Asma's concern about the nationalistic inclinations of the Pakistani education system has been raised in many studies, mainly through the analysis of textbooks (Nayyar and Salim 2004) and concentration on the specific aspects of citizenship in Pakistani schools (Lall 2012; Rahman 2004). Her reflection on instability and insecurity was linked to the Pakistani curriculum and education practices, as some of them promote hate and radical views, instead of teaching the values of peace and friendship. This reveals the fact that textbooks, which are the main teaching materials for teachers in Pakistan, promote the country as one with a single religion, language, and culture (Nayyar and Salim 2004). This means that the content of a textbook provides a single perspective and perhaps incorrect

information to students regarding language, religion, and culture, including dress. In this line, Ahmad noted that there is a stereotype about Pakistan's image in society, which is also copied in educational settings without any critical analyses or modifications. Sometimes, incorrect information is given about the country and society, as the minorities and their ways of life are overlooked. To sum up, teachers in the international curriculum sector view citizenship beyond religion and place GCE as a part of a modern society that focuses on science and technology, providing an opportunity for work, social mobility, sustainable peace, and inclusion of all societies (particularly religions) in Pakistan.

## 5. Conclusions and Implications

This comparative study explored the concepts of GCE perceived by teachers from different schools located in different sectors of the Pakistani education system. It argues that religion and its affiliations are placed at the center of citizenship concepts in the majority of the educational systems. However, the findings from the different educational systems show that religious affiliation yields to different understandings of the concept of GCE. Some consider it as a threat, while others see it as an opportunity for Pakistan and its society. Overall, there are four disputes or categories at the center of this study: the link between religion and nationalism, the definition of a good citizen in national and global circles, GCE as a threat to national and religious practices, and GCE as an opportunity for a better future. Teachers from the national and religious curriculum sectors connected religion to nationalism. They also considered GCE, which has been enforced by the West, as a threat to national values. Teachers from the international curriculum sector viewed GCE as an opportunity to seek more opportunities. Through these discussions, this study shows the opportunities and challenges of teaching GCE in a Muslim-majority country, such as that of Pakistan.

Overall, this study found that religion in general and Islam, in particular, affect teachers' perspectives on the concept of GCE in Pakistan. However, the study further indicated that teachers from each curriculum sector had different views on the construction of GCE. In the national curriculum sector, nationalism and religion were considered as major components of citizenship education, while GCE was perceived as a threat and an opportunity for students. Teachers from the religious sector regarded Islam as a central point for cultivating citizenship, and they rejected the concept of GCE completely by considering it as a threat to their values, customs, and beliefs. Teachers in this sector disapproved of the current Pakistani education system because they believed that it promotes more Western values than Islamic values. Conversely, teachers from the international curriculum sector favored the concept of GCE, arguing that the global image of Pakistani society is very important. In addition, they linked GCE with work opportunities that can help with the economic development of the country and its citizens.

The findings of this research agree with those of studies that showed that citizenship education is perceived differently within the Pakistani education system, wherein Islam remains the central point of discussion (Ahmad 2004; Ashraf 2019; Lall 2012). This study adds to the knowledge that religious education settings can lead to sectarianism and intolerance towards other religious groups, and teachers in this sector consider Islam as the only form of GCE. Accordingly, they reject many values associated with human rights (women's rights, freedom of speech, gay marriage), which they feel contradict the principles of Islam. These findings are similar to the outcome of a survey conducted by Rahman (2004), in which a high number of students and teachers from religious schools were not in favor of equal rights for women and minority religious groups (Hindus, Christians, and Ahmadis). However, teachers in this study accepted some forms of GCE if they fostered Islamic values and accepted Islam as a platform for GCE. They felt that such citizenship can help Muslims from all over the world to engage in the dissemination of their traditions and values. This view of religion for Muslim connections refers to the nexus between religion and GCE, as discussed by Oxley and Morris (2013).

Moreover, the outcome of this study indicated that teachers struggle with the concepts of CE and GCE. In the Pakistani educational context, textbooks are the main teaching materials for students and teachers; the Ministry of Education and the curriculum departments at the national and provincial levels are responsible for the development and approval of textbooks for schools (Qazi and Shah 2018). Schools and teachers in the public sector are not motivated to develop their personal interpretations of citizenship education and formulate their own goals for preparing students' minds. In view of this fact, governments and education policymakers ought to make teachers aware of their roles as moral agents (Myers 2010). They also need to think about the effects of current knowledge about CE and GCE in different educational settings. This is an interesting point for future research, which can aim to understand teachers' professionalism and effectiveness when teaching citizenship concepts and how they create a conducive space for their students to develop a better understanding of their own society, as well as the world.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Identity is a socially constructed phenomenon, mostly formed or developed through daily interactions (Hall 1996).
- <sup>2</sup> Sunna is the traditional portion of Muslim law that is based on the traditions and practices of Prophet Muhammad.

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