GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION (GCE) IN ITALIAN TEXTBOOKS

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GCE in textbooks



Introduction

The work carried out within the third research[1] cluster of the Global Education Time (GET) project focused on analysing textbooks used in lower secondary schools in Italy for students aged 11 to 14. The analysis concentrated on the same subjects already examined in the analysis of GCE in school curricula: Geography, History and Civic Education. The aim was to understand how school textbooks represent the four major global challenges identified by the GET project (climate change, gender inequalities, global inequalities and migration) and to what extent they provide educational opportunities consistent with Global Citizenship Education (GCE). In the Italian school system, textbooks are not legally mandatory, but they are adopted in the vast majority of lower-secondary schools and are a central tool in everyday teaching practice. Their adoption is decided annually by the Teachers' Board within the framework defined by the National Guidelines, the School Educational Plan and ministerial constraints regarding costs, accessibility and curricular coherence. Textbooks are produced by private publishers and are not formally approved in advance by the Ministry of Education, although they are expected to remain consistent with national curricular documents.

State of the Art

In recent years, Italian educational publishing has increasingly integrated references to sustainability, the 2030 Agenda, rights, digital citizenship and civic participation into school textbooks. This trend has been encouraged by the 2018 National Guidelines and New Scenarios document and by the introduction of Civic Education through Law 92/2019. However, explicit references to Global Citizenship Education remain limited. GCE principles instead tend to emerge indirectly through content on sustainability, global interdependence, human rights, cultural diversity and inequalities. At the same time, more recent textbooks also show growing attention to pedagogical practices consistent with GCE, including multiperspectival approaches, inquiry-based activities, authentic tasks, critical use of sources and interdisciplinary pathways aimed at participation and active citizenship. For this study two textbooks broadly representative of the Italian educational publishing landscape were analysed: *GO! Geografia oggi 3. Il mondo e i continenti,* published by Mondadori Education, and *La Storia a Colori 2*, published by Fabbri Editori – Rizzoli Education. Civic Education was not analysed through a separate textbook, since in most Italian schools it is taught transversally through materials integrated into Geography and History textbooks, together with resources produced by teachers.

Analysis

The analysis was conducted through a qualitative content analysis methodology, taking into account both the printed textbooks and their related digital platforms. The structure of the textbooks, thematic organisation, learning activities, visual and digital resources, alignment with

[1] The first cluster focused on the challenges and opportunities for Global Citizenship Education (GCE) within the education policies of the eight partner countries (https://www.globaleducationtime.eu/studies-gce-in-policy/) , while the second cluster examined the presence of GCE in school curricula (https://www.globaleducationtime.eu/studies-gce-in-curricula/)

the national curriculum and the presence of the four objectives identified by the GET project were examined.

Geography: the textbook *GO! Geografia oggi 3* is strongly oriented towards the interpretation of contemporary global processes. The opening section, "The Issues of Today's World", introduces topics such as world population, migration, globalisation, resources, international organisations and environmental sustainability. Climate change is addressed through units dedicated to the planet's resources, the impact of human activities and the Earth as a shared home. Global inequalities are presented in several regional contexts, including Nigeria, South Africa, Brazil and China. Migration is explored extensively, both as a demographic phenomenon and as a consequence of conflicts, environmental crises and economic transformations. The gender dimension is less systematically addressed, but it is explicitly presented through the case study on India and the social conditions of women.

History: the textbook *La Storia a Colori 2* follows a chronological structure centred on the modern and contemporary periods, while also integrating numerous educational tools aimed at developing competences, citizenship and multiperspectivity. Climate change is not directly addressed, but it can be explored indirectly through topics such as the Industrial Revolution, coal use, urbanisation and the exploitation of resources. Gender inequalities are significantly present, for example through the case of Olympe de Gouges and reflections on women's rights. Global inequalities emerge through themes such as colonialism, the Atlantic slave trade, triangular trade, the social question and imperialism. Migration is addressed through European migration to the Americas, the forced deportation of enslaved peoples and population movements connected to economic transformations, wars and revolutions.

Civic Education: since a specific Civic Education textbook does not exist in most schools, the analysis focused on the civic education sections integrated within Geography and History textbooks. In Geography, Civic Education is mainly linked to the 2030 Agenda, sustainability, international organisations, intercultural dialogue and environmental citizenship. In History, Civic Education develops through themes such as rights, the Constitution, equality, minorities, stereotypes, democratic participation and social justice. Laboratory-based activities, authentic tasks, sources, maps, digital materials and inclusive resources provide concrete opportunities to develop critical thinking, global awareness and participatory competences.

Conclusions

Overall, the analysis of the Italian textbooks examined within this study provides a more dynamic and promising picture than the one that emerged from the analysis of school curricula carried out in the second research cluster. Although explicit and systematic references to Global Citizenship Education remain limited, the textbooks analysed offer numerous entry points to the four major global challenges addressed by the GET project. Geography confirms itself as the subject most directly oriented towards sustainability, migration, global interdependence and international inequalities. History, while maintaining a traditional chronological structure, makes it possible to critically address rights, colonialism, slavery, social inequalities, gender issues and migration within textbooks. This perspective differs in several respects from ministerial guidelines, particularly in their new 2025 version. Civic Education, integrated into both textbooks, represents the most suitable space for connecting these themes to competences related to citizenship, participation, inclusion and responsibility. The main limitation concerns the fragmented nature of interdisciplinary connections. The resources included in the textbooks are rich and up to date, but

the links between Geography, History and Civic Education could be made more explicit and systematic. For this reason, this study recommends that publishers strengthen references to the four GET Big Ideas[4], develop clearer interdisciplinary pathways and provide more specific guidance for teachers. The analysis also highlights the need to support integrated approaches across subjects and to promote specific training opportunities related to GCE. Schools and teachers are encouraged to build on the solid foundations already present in textbooks by developing project-based, critical, inclusive and participatory learning activities. Another particularly relevant element emerging from the analysis concerns the strong integration of digital tools, multimodal resources and inclusive strategies characterising the most recent textbooks, which broaden the possibilities for a participatory and interdisciplinary approach to global citizenship. Overall, the textbooks analysed show that global citizenship is already partially present within Italian educational publishing and teaching practices, although often in implicit forms. The main challenge lies in transforming these elements into more coherent, intentional and transformative educational pathways.

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