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Towards Transformative Global Citizenship Through Interdisciplinary Arts Education

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Abstract

This practitioner research study examined the potential of arts education to support students' growth towards global citizenship including awareness, care, and understanding of—as well as active and responsible engagement in—current global challenges and social issues. We utilized research material generated during an interdisciplinary arts pedagogy course offered in subject teacher education at the University of the Arts Helsinki and Aalto University (Finland). During the course, students created teaching sessions in peer groups in which they explored pedagogical methods to enhance global citizenship through interdisciplinary arts education participation. In the study, we identified themes addressed in the teaching sessions:

Renegotiating (cultural) identity, Facing otherness, Experiencing empathy, Coping with power and inequality, Awakening to ecological responsibility, and Engaging in critical and reflective thinking. Furthermore, we examined how arts education resonated with the aims of global education and discussed the many ways that arts education could support the cultivation of responsiveness and ethical awareness to advance transformative global citizenship.

Introduction

What does it take to live and work together in our constantly globalizing world? How are we to understand and respond to one another in complex societies marked by diversity and continual change? What role could the arts and arts education play in the processes of addressing social and ecological injustices? It is now widely reported that living in today's rapidly changing, diverse, and deeply interconnected society challenges us on multiple levels. Facing complex economic, environmental, cultural, and demographic phenomena such as societal polarization, political instabilities, and ecological crises requires interdependence and the ability to learn to work together as individuals, communities, institutions, and even across countries. It requires a constant commitment to "engage with and respond to what and who is other" (Biesta, 2017a, p. 3; see also Deardoff, 2009; Mansilla & Jackson, 2011; Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014). If we are to transcend past knowledge and skill boundaries, we simply cannot afford to think and act in isolation. Instead, a critical reflectivity towards one's own culture and openness and sensitivity to otherness must evolve (Hansen, 2011). Developing this kind of intercultural outlook and transformative global citizenship (e.g. Banks, 2015) is a lifelong endeavor, and invites us to take action to make our "local communities, the nation, and the world more just and caring places" (Banks, 2016, p. 33).

In this article, we explore the potential of arts education to contribute to living in ethical and sustainable ways—in dialogue with global challenges and current societal and environmental issues. The study utilized research material generated during a collaborative teaching experiment, organized by the University of the Arts Helsinki and Aalto University in Finland. In the experiment, the university students of arts education designed interdisciplinary teaching sessions and conducted them with their peers. The teaching experiment was initially inspired by the concept of *global competence* (OECD, 2018), which has recently been used to describe and assess the abilities needed to encounter diversity. Global competence refers to a multidimensional entity that incorporates abilities related to various interconnected and partially overlapping elements, such as the understanding of issues of local and global significance, as well as intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes. A person with global competence can understand and value different perspectives and views of the world, interact successfully and respectfully with others, and take responsible action toward sustainable

development and shared well-being (OECD, 2018, p. 4). However, we consider the term “competence” somewhat limited, with its association to skills and knowledge rather than to the need for a continuous reconsideration of one’s own biases, behavior, ethics, attitudes, values, and philosophical positions. We therefore regard “transformative global citizenship” as a more appropriate notion for the purposes of this study. Thus, our study examined how interdisciplinary arts pedagogy could advance transformative global citizenship and aimed to identify the core areas of global citizenship in the teaching sessions. Furthermore, it aimed to aggregate the prominent pedagogical methods used by the student-teachers in their teaching sessions, as well as the central dimensions of global competence as addressed in the students’ reflections.

Research Methods

The study is based on practitioner research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) conducted in our own higher education context. As is typical for practitioner research in education, our overarching aim was to engage in ongoing critical reflection on action and transformative learning to advance positive change in higher education in the arts and wider society. We employed an instrumental case study approach (Stake, 1995) and aimed to provide practical insights into the examined issue and by furthering broader theoretical aspects (p. 237).

The teaching experiment organized collaboratively by the University of the Arts Helsinki and Aalto University in Finland aimed to explore a new way of conducting an interdisciplinary course which was a mandatory part of pedagogical studies of subject teacher education programs at both universities. By interdisciplinarity, we refer both to the integration and intertwining of different art forms. The course had previously focused solely on the questions of interdisciplinary arts pedagogy. This time, the aim was to connect the course with a timely and global topic, a change that also reflected student feedback. As *global competence* was one of the target areas of PISA assessment in 2018 (OECD, 2018), the concept was chosen as a topic for the course, while realizing that the concept is itself contested (see e.g. Sklad, Friedman, Park & Oomen, 2016).

In the experiment, a group of 89 university students from music, visual arts, dance, and theatre education were divided into 12 groups and tasked to explore pedagogical ways to enhance global competence through interdisciplinary arts education participation in their chosen pedagogical context (e.g. upper secondary school). Although the concept of global competence was offered as a starting point, the students were invited to investigate their own meanings. Students were instructed to define topics and learning objectives for their teaching processes, and to prepare and facilitate them to achieve set objectives. Each teaching session lasted for 45 minutes and was carried out twice in peer groups. Between the two sessions, the processes were further developed and reflected on by the peer groups. After the teaching

sessions, each group wrote descriptions of the pedagogical objectives and methods of the teaching session and reflected on their own learning and deliberations on the potential of arts education to enhance global competence.

As a course assignment, the students wrote lesson plans, including learning objectives and detailed procedures of activities, as well as personal reflections on their learning during the course. Informed consent was given by all students of the Autumn semesters of 2018 and 2019. Data included these documents as well as classroom observations conducted by the first author who was one of the course instructors. The student cohort was very diverse in terms of their experience as arts educators—some had multiple years of experience and others had only started their studies a year prior. Identity and demographic data were not gathered as that information was not deemed relevant.

Data-based inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013) was applied to the data which was accessed and analyzed by the first author. The theoretical framework of transformative global citizenship was rather reflected against the findings than used in the thematic analysis. The first author carefully read and made notes on the material to organize it by topic. Teaching methods related to global competence were systematically coded across the entire data set using the ATLAS.ti program. After collating data by code, themes were identified. Data for the topics and contents of teaching sessions were reorganized according to the themes that illuminated the dimensions and goals of global education that emerged. Data related to the pedagogical possibilities of arts education were thematized by the type of activities identified. The data were then condensed by selecting and abstracting to identify the core elements and meanings of the teaching sessions.

The following six themes were identified: *Renegotiating (cultural) identity*, *Facing otherness*, *Experiencing empathy*, *Coping with power and inequality*, *Awakening to ecological responsibility*, and *Engaging in critical and reflective thinking*.

Developing Global Citizenship within Interdisciplinary Arts Education Teaching Sessions

In this article, global citizenship refers to an awareness of and responsible action towards the advancement of care, justice, and sustainability of the whole ecosystem, including human and non-human beings and their physical environments (Banks, 2001, 2014; Keto & Foster, 2021; Smith 2022). Issues related to global citizenship are addressed in the global citizen education framework—a growing field of educational research and practice. It has built on the foundation of global education, related to questions pertaining to human rights, equity, equality, and sustainable development, as well as the interrelations between global and local phenomena (Rajala & Lehtomäki, 2019; Schugurensky & Wolhuter, 2020), but implies a

more active role that moves beyond an awareness of the issues (Davies, 2006, p. 6). An important aim of global education is to help students to understand the interconnectivity between global dimensions and local phenomena, and thus equip students to participate in efforts to shape the futures of mankind and the planet (see Rajala & Lehtomäki, 2019; Jelinek & Fomerand, 2014).

Among the different aspects of global education, the ecological questions have played a central role in recent visual art education studies (see e.g. Illeris, 2012; Inwood, 2010; Ylirisku, 2021), whereas questions related to anti-racism have recently been the focus of drama education research (see Hladki, 2018; Tanner, Miller & Montgomery, 2018). The questions connected to intercultural and multicultural skills and attitudes have been addressed recently by various music education scholars. They have pointed out the importance of facilitating intercultural communication and cultivating cultural self-awareness to better support the development of societal responsibility and shared futures in rapidly diversifying societies (see e.g. Karlsen & Westerlund, 2015; Zapata-Barrero, 2016; Westerlund, Karlsen & Partti, 2020; Miettinen, 2020). The focus on human relationships within music education has recently been expanded by studies on ecology and music education (see e.g. Younker & Bracken, 2015; Adams & Beauchamp, 2018; Shevock, 2018, 2020), which is an important addition to the literature. While the focus of the concept of intercultural competence (e.g. Deardoff, 2009) is on the ability to interact and communicate with people of different cultures, the concept of global citizenship reaches beyond the questions of cultural diversity to issues such as human rights, security and peace, and environmental, social, and economic sustainability. By equipping and enabling students to acquire awareness, values, and commitment to actively promote sustainable futures for the planet and people, global education ultimately supports transformative global citizenship (Banks, 2016; UNESCO, 2020).

Below we provide practical examples of the identified themes of global education to help the reader to better understand the teaching sessions. The interdisciplinary sessions allowed students to employ a variety of artistic working methods and engage in creative explorations. These included spontaneous expressions inspired by texts, stories, emotions, and experiences, in what could be understood as a *play space* (Nussbaum, 2010)—a space wherein it was possible to engage in the exploration of different roles through the mind as well as the *bodymind*. Students (co-)constructed interdisciplinary artwork that combined drama, movement, cartoons, poetry, soundscapes, rapping, singing, drawing, and so forth. The work was often collaborative, taking place through painting, object crafting, or group acting, as well as applied non-verbal communication through voice, gesture, and movement. We hope that the practical examples will inspire educators to develop and apply the work to different contexts. Since the identified themes cannot be reduced to detached competencies—but are

instead understood as closely connected to values, attitudes, and interactions—we apply the notion of (transformative) global citizenship instead of global competence in presenting and discussing the findings.

Renegotiating (Cultural) Identity

One of the central themes addressed in the teaching sessions was identity. Questions such as how identity is constructed, communicated, and (re)negotiated through various actions and interactions and within different (conflicting) situations were identified throughout the data. Students used creative artwork in their teaching sessions to construct individual and/or collective identities within the community. Consequently, identities were often renegotiated within interactive processes because of experienced identity “threats” upon facing alterity or when reorganizing the roles or resources of an imagined community. Oftentimes, the task of the participants was to explore to what extent and in which parts of their identities could be renegotiated without a sense of discomfort, and to reflect on their emotions and experiences of renegotiating identity.

In the additional material, we present examples of the teaching sessions. In the teaching session *From isolation to integration* (see [Appendix, Example 1](#)), cultural identity was constructed and confirmed through artistic expression (see Figure 1 and 2). In this learning process, students explored the interface between migration, globalization, identity formation, and the negotiations of cultural identities. While migration contributes to the richness in diversity of cultures, individuals who migrate can find it difficult to adjust to a new culture and negotiate changes in their identity and self-concept (Bhugra, 2004; Bhugra & Becker, 2005). On the other hand, due to cultural globalization, adolescents are especially and increasingly exposed to different cultures and a global world that engages them to re-explore their cultural and musical identities (Karlsen, 2013). Thus, cultural identity formation becomes a more complex process, and may follow a variety of pathways including both risks, such as cultural identity confusion, and opportunities, such as youth civic involvement (Jensen, Arnett & McKenzie, 2011). Globalization can also diminish cultural diversity, for example in the case of indigenous peoples (Bates, Shevock & Prest, 2021). The story that was created and realized in the teaching session brought forth a wider global challenge, namely the phenomenon of climate-induced migration. As a result of the devastating effects of climate change, such as extreme weather events and the shortage of drinking water and food safety, a continuously increasing amount of people are forced to move to other areas both in and outside of their countries (e.g. UNHCR, 2021). Moreover, persons displaced in the context of disasters and climate change often face resistance and hostility in the receiving countries of the Global North, although these countries have significantly contributed to climate change and thus caused entire populations to be harmed by its effects (Holtug, 2021). Consequently,

the negotiations and definitions of individual, human, and legal rights pertaining to climate displacement are becoming ever more current and crucial (ibid.; Atapattu, 2020).



Figure 1. Crafting a cultural symbol. Photo by Marja-Leena Juntunen.

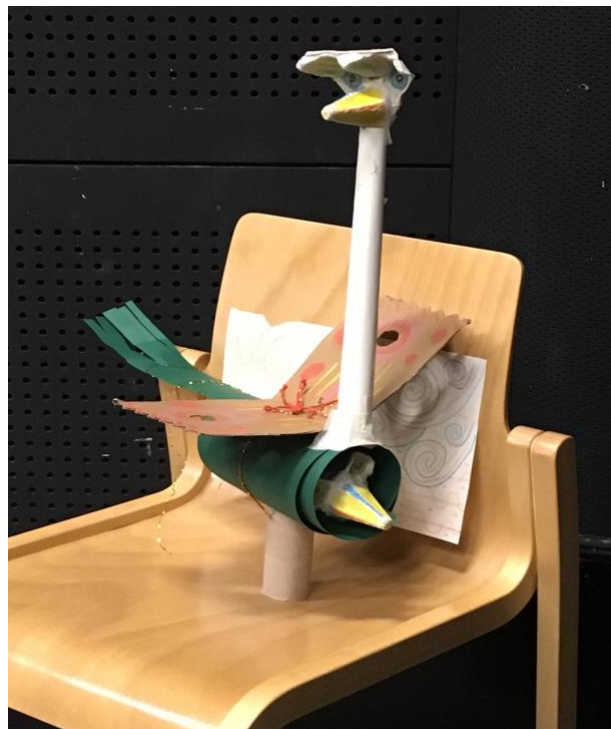


Figure 2. A cultural symbol crafted by students. Photo by Marja-Leena Juntunen.

Facing Otherness

Many of the teaching sessions designed by the participants focused on encountering otherness. In encountering otherness, issues such as respect, (embodied) listening, openness, solidarity, and empathy became essential. In this encounter, the interaction took place mostly through (artistic) non-verbal communication, as it was often assumed that the people in these imagined contexts would not have a shared language. The arts offered many tangible tools for non-verbal interaction, although it also caused misunderstandings and confusion among students (see also Westerlund, Partti & Karlsen, 2015). On the other hand, non-verbal expressions revealed nuances of emotions and attitudes difficult to communicate with words (see Hall, Horgan & Murphy, 2019). Participating in these activities provided students with possible ways to respond to differences, to sense otherness, to reflect upon the consequences of their chosen actions, and to question their familiar patterns of thought and action in culturally sensitive and ethically responsible ways.

One of the sessions, *Adapting to the rules and rituals of an unfamiliar community* (see [Appendix, Example 2](#)), offered the participants a concrete experience of trying to integrate into a new community and attempting to understand and join in with the unfamiliar—including cultural practices that seemed absurd or irrational to a newcomer. During the entire process, the participants did not necessarily have a shared understanding of “what was going on” in the ritual, and the rituals often became increasingly (although unintentionally) bizarre, as new members entered the ritual. In this session, as in the previous one (see [Appendix, Example 1](#)), encountering “the unknown” caused confusion, hesitation, and not-knowing. The exercise, therefore, contributed to the understanding of the mental distress experienced by migrating people as they leave behind their cultural norms and religious customs and adjust to a new culture (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). The teaching session offered a metaphorically constructed life-world situation in which participants could practice integration as well as experience and reflect upon the different feelings and emotions it caused. The students themselves reflected on this session in the following way:

[The exercise] reminds us of how it may feel to give something up and, on the other hand, it makes us consider how one might want to be received in a new situation, like in a new country.

Experiencing Empathy

Central to understanding the Other requires empathy—the ability to position oneself in the place of another being, to recognize what the Other is thinking and feeling and to engage in a social and constructive manner (Stueber, 2013). Empathy advances a deep and holistic understanding of the perspectives and life situations of the Other. This session, *Improvising*

and synchronizing movement expression (see [Appendix, Example 3](#)), as almost all teaching sessions in the course, offered opportunities to practice emotional empathy and/or cognitive empathy (see e.g. Smith, 2006). The ability to move, feel, and act in a shared rhythm in synchrony requires sensitive listening, awareness, and adaptation to the movement and rhythm of others. It is an activity that takes place in the whole body. It invites one to be sensitive to kinesthetic sense—a sense of motion that helps us sense and recognize different movement qualities (Parviainen, 2002). It also calls for kinesthetic empathy (Reynolds & Reason, 2012), which does not consist of mere sensory perceptions, such as hearing and seeing, but is a special kind of autonomous act. Kinesthetic empathy assists in understanding the movements of others and is a cultural and embodied phenomenon that refers to the ability to experience empathy merely by observing and sensing the movements of others. It can be viewed as a key interdisciplinary concept in the understanding of social interactions across creative and cultural practices. Therefore, adjusting to the movement qualities of the Other also assists in understanding the experience of the Other. In another teaching session, *Empathizing with life stories* (see [Appendix, Example 4](#)), empathy was approached by empathizing with and expressing the emotions evoked by the tragic life events of refugees told in a story.

In the written reflections, the members of that group wrote:

Understanding others and arousing thinking is part of building global competence. The theme of refugees is a very broad and multifaceted global problem at the moment. We didn't try to portray refugees, or we really didn't imagine we could understand what it means to be a refugee. The pedagogical starting point was thus to arouse thinking and experience empathy. The global competence of all of us grows as we begin to perceive the world and its various phenomena more broadly.

This reflection demonstrates an understanding of the pedagogical possibilities of the task and reveals the essence of global citizenship as awareness and a sense of responsibility, justice, and care (Reysen, & Katzarska-Miller, 2013). The printed photos used in the exercise enabled an encounter with the life situation of the Other, evoking empathy and opening pathways to non-egocentric or self-transcendent modes of interconnectedness (Thompson, 2001). It is in this sense that the artistic activities created a play space (Nussbaum, 2010) for students to engage in imaginary situations that emulated aspects of real-life conditions and current global challenges, such as inequality, polarization, and consumption. In these created situations, students could put themselves in the shoes of someone else. The exercises allowed them to meet with each other through imagined characters and roles, and thus to understand “the unfamiliar through imaginative participation” (ibid., p. 104).

Coping with Power and Inequality

One of the aims of the teaching sessions was to help the participants experience what inequality, deprivation, or oppression feels like. The experiences were evoked by limiting participants' capacities in imagined situations. This was achieved by randomly distributing tools of completely varying quality to be used for their artistic expression or creating imagined situations. Some of the participants were intentionally ignored or treated as less powerful, as was guided by the roles given to them and acted out in artistic processes. These games were metaphors for inequalities in society, and it was assumed that the participants would gain concrete experiences of inequality to further their understanding of the experiences of people in similar situations. The exercises also offered opportunities to express the emotions evoked by means of words and/or the arts (see Figure 3 and Appendix, [Example 5: Responding to polarized opinions published in a public forum](#)).



Figure 3. Painting an artwork inspired by a newspaper article. Photo by Marja-Leena Juntunen.

Awakening to Ecological Responsibility

Ecological responsibility and the understanding of nature as a whole—of which humans are inherently and interdependently a part—were among the issues addressed. The understanding of the togetherness of nature and humans is central to *deep ecology* (Naess, 1973, 1989) and has had a significant impact on many artists and scholars in arts education (Anderson & Suominen Guyas, 2012; van Boeckel, 2007; Shevock, 2018, 2019, 2020; Shevock & Bates,

2019; Suominen, 2016; Ylirisku, 2021). Our daily decisions regarding what we eat, wear, and consume form a major part of global citizenship. One way to connect our daily life with broader global issues is to consider the material conditions of the planet in everyday decision making (Gaudelli, 2016). Within education, this implies considering our entanglement with nature and the necessity to include this relationship and the responsibility it imposes in educational thinking and pedagogical practices (Värri, 2018). One of the teaching sessions therefore focused on developing awareness and understanding of the production chain of daily products and goods, and called for reflecting on the issues of ethics, ecology, respect for nature, and sustainability in relation to consumption (see Figure 4 and [Appendix, Example 6: *Creating an artistic work inspired by the production chain of an object*](#)).

Students stated that a willingness to be active in accordance with the principles of sustainable development was probably the most important aspect of global citizenship. For them, this sense of ecological responsibility was primarily a matter of being aware of climate change and understanding the importance of protecting cultural heritage and the environment. This implies a paradigm shift from *anthropocentrism* towards *ecocentrism*, that is, from viewing the natural habitat as a resource for human beings to be exploited towards an understanding that highlights the intrinsic and inherent value of nature and treats all forms of life with similar respect (Bowers, 2006, p. 33; Kopnina et al., 2018; Rae, 2014). Importantly, however, ecologically aware and responsible worldviews and policies concern not only the excessive use and depletion of resources, but also delve deeper into the issues of diversity, complexity, autonomy, and egalitarianism, to name a few (Naess, 1973, 1989, 2009).



Figure 4. Creating an artwork inspired by the production chain of an umbrella. Photo by Marja-Leena Juntunen.

Engaging in Critical and Reflective Thinking

All the teaching processes ended with reflective discussions that offered the participants a chance to become aware of their thoughts, emotions, and experiences during the process, to share them, and to build a deeper understanding of the explored phenomena. Reflection also offered an opportunity to become aware of one's unconscious bias. Thus, reflexivity relates to thinking about the mind itself and refers to questioning "our own attitudes, thought processes, values, assumptions, prejudices and habitual actions, to strive to understand our complex roles in relation to others" (Bolton, 2010, p. 13).

Students considered the discussions and reflections as the most rewarding and meaningful pedagogical means of the course, and the most effective way to learn from experience and develop global citizenship. Combined with the practical exercises, questions such as "*Have you ever encountered discrimination or acted in a discriminatory manner?*", "*Have you ever had to be ashamed of your background or some of your qualities, or have you caused similar experiences in someone else?*" or "*How do you promote ecology in your own life?*" guided critical self-reflection and awareness in productive ways. Reflecting through shared discussions on such questions and situations promoted the understanding of the Other and our global interconnectedness and addressed and challenged one's ethical orientation towards one's own actions and the world generally. One of the students wrote: "By opening up discussions and talking about certain issues we can hopefully begin to blur the line between 'we' and 'the Others' and understand that we are all interconnected."

Kaitaro (2018) writes about the character of language in transforming our thinking. Through listening, speaking, and/or interpretation and understanding, one can make associations based on experienced sensations, and thus create another representation of one's impressions, which in turn enables conscious consideration and thinking about the experience, as well as awareness of one's intellectual functions and the formation of thought chains.

In their reflective writings, many of the participating students contemplated how working in an interdisciplinary group of different people and art forms had been an exercise of coping with diversity—an essential element of global citizenship (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013). Despite (or because of) the students having different backgrounds, each student brought with them their own world of experiences and perspectives to the group collaboration and discussions. Regardless of the challenges related to the collaboration, the students highlighted the ways in which this kind of interdisciplinary work had considerably expanded their thinking.

Discussion

In this article, we examined how arts education can relate to the aims of transformative global citizenship education. The teaching experiment provided both the teacher-researchers and student-teachers an understanding of the pedagogical possibilities of interdisciplinary arts education practices designed to support the cultivation of responsiveness and ethical responsibility to advance global citizenship. According to the students, working with a global theme increased their motivation to study and to delve deeper into the significance of relationships that humans have with one other, with other beings, and the planet.

Developing a global ethical responsibility for the conditions of life on the one and only planet we have is the prerequisite for ecological and social change (Värri, 2018). In the artistic activities of the teaching sessions, the questions of ethical responsibility, values, and attitudes were encountered and explored in ways that surpassed knowledge and rational thinking; that is, primarily by means of play and imagination rather than through merely learning facts about economic, political, or ecological systems. Artistic activities inherently include opportunities for embodied encounters and “performing difference” and different interpretations of the world (Anttila, Martin & Svendler Nielsen, 2019) and can significantly expand our horizons to recognize the diversity of the world. By facing difference and positioning oneself in an empathic relationship with the life situation of another, students had the opportunity to face and reflect on their own attitudes and values in an experiential and embodied manner.

Most learning objectives set by the students for their teaching sessions were closely connected to the existential questions and pertinent viewpoints required for one to be a citizen of the world (Bickmore, 2008). Our existence today is highly relational and interconnected (Biesta, 2017a; van der Schyff, 2015). It is essentially about the encounter with the world as the subject of one’s own actions, intentions, and responsibilities (Biesta, 2017a, p. 57). This encounter serves as a momentary and embodied interruption to ethical awareness and responsibility before any consideration of virtue or duty. This lived experience of uniqueness—as someone whose existence and actions matter to what and who the Other is—arouses a desire to engage and stay in dialogue with the world (Biesta, 2017a.). One of the students wrote the following:

While global competence refers to meeting with other people, it is also, above all, meeting with oneself and looking in the mirror. What am I like? Am I the kind of person I wish to be? Why do I behave the way I do in certain situations? Do I unload my own uncertainty and ill-humor in my encounters with others?

Responsiveness to others often develops in tandem with the ability to understand oneself, “since one can hardly cherish in another what one has not explored in oneself” (Nussbaum,

2010, p. 104). The arts, Nussbaum continues, promote the cultivation of both types of responsiveness. Importantly, the cultivation of responsiveness and ethical responsibility are crucial not only for human-to-human interaction, but also in terms of the interactions with other beings and the planet, as environmental problems are ultimately “problems of relationships” (Keto & Foster, 2021, p. 35). Artistic processes open up possibilities to engage different sensibilities, and can play a vital role to transcend “our limited interpretation of reality” (Keto & Foster, 2021, p. 46) — to encounter people and non-human inhabitants of our planet not as resources to be exploited in the pursuit of our desires, but rather as the (natural and social) world, which is speaking to us, addressing us, calling us, and calling us forth (Biesta, 2017b, p. 8).

Among the educational opportunities provided by positioning arts education as a part of global citizenship education is that arts education can offer powerful ways to cultivate the narrative imagination to enable us to step outside our immediate situation and examine it from alternative viewpoints. Importantly, becoming a global citizen calls forth an “*existential (re)definition* of understanding” (Biesta, 2017a, p. 98), a lifelong effort to try to engage in dialogue with the world. Global citizenship cannot be obtained merely by means of cognition or sense-making, but by means of emotions, sensory, and bodily experiences. In the arts education context, this kind of understanding can be viewed in terms of an “encounter” with the arts. As suggested by Biesta (2017a), this kind of existential encounter enables us to take a leap into the unknown, and to let ourselves be addressed, touched, and stay in the encounter even when we cannot make sense of the world.

In this study, artistic activities enabled students to explore questions through non-verbal and holistic interaction. A student stated that through such embodied interaction and dialogue, “one can experience the humanity that unites us in its ultimate form.” Different phenomena and values were explored with fully embodied participation by “taking up unfamiliar stances and gestures” (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 104). In artistic activities, embodied communication was a central, and sometimes the only, tool for collaboration and shared action. This was clearly exemplified in a recent study by Thomson (2021) who investigated interaction in an open-access music ensemble in which refugees from different parts of the Middle East and Europe, students from the Sibelius Academy (Finland), and the researcher composed and arranged music collaboratively without a shared language. With the help of preparing embodied exercises with rhythms and sounds that aimed at “setting up a sense of an interactive group” (Thomson, 2021, p. 112), the ensemble overcame the challenging task and succeeded to co-create pieces collaboratively which they performed publicly. Collaborative musicking was found to foster the interactional and relational aspects of the refugees’ resettlement processes and enhance a sense of being protected by others (Thomson, 2021). Thus, it is conceivable that the (temporal) arts and arts education - as embodied practices - form a primary and

profound access for understanding others (Gallagher & Hutto, 2008; O'Grady 2019). This is important for human relationships, and for cultivating ecological literacy (Shevock, 2015), including the ability to empathize with nature and gaining an understanding of the interconnectedness of life.

The artistic activities offered ways and possibilities for students to interact with each other and to create shared experiences non-verbally. Furthermore, the artistic and embodied engagement offered a space to listen and understand the emotions, wishes, and desires of oneself and those different from oneself (Levin, 1989). Moreover, the artistic activities used by the students offered practical and flexible tools to express and reflect on distress in a concrete and non-verbal way (Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007; Saarikallio, 2011). Many global issues, especially those related to ecological crises and human oppression, can arouse strong negative emotions, including fear, frustration, anxiety, and a sense of powerlessness. For instance, according to a recent survey conducted in Finland (Sitra, 2019), approximately a quarter of Finns—and as many as 38% of the respondents under the age of 30—estimate that the word “anxiety” describes *very* or *fairly well* their feelings about climate change. Embodied interaction and play may thus offer an important way to face and address the emotions and concerns without a requirement for verbal analyses or fear of being exposed.

Through role-playing games, the students could explore, test, and critically reflect on their own emotions, prejudices, bias, attitudes, values, privileges, and ethical responsibility. In this way, the games could be understood as contributing to the development of the *narrative imagination*, or the ability to step back from one's immediate surroundings and personal experiences to contemplate the experience of a person different from oneself, “to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have” (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 96). Artistic activities and role-playing can offer indispensable pedagogical opportunities for the cultivation of students' *inner eyes* and global citizenship by bringing them “in contact with issues of gender, race, ethnicity, and cross-cultural experience and understanding” (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 108), as well as with matters of wider ecology and the relationships that humans have with each other and with other beings.

In educational institutions, the arts are commonly taught separately, a practice reflecting the tradition of rigid borderlines between artistic disciplines (Bresler, 2002). Although this division can be well justified from a variety of perspectives, this study suggests that interdisciplinary arts practices can be particularly powerful in providing opportunities to perceive and engage with the world. The integration of the arts can afford collaboration between teachers and artistic practitioners that can expand “us intellectually, emotionally, and institutionally” (Bresler, 2002, p. 19). Furthermore, interdisciplinary arts pedagogy highlights the value and unavoidable imperative of interconnectedness and interdependence in/of our

current world/lives. Interdisciplinarity or multidisciplinary (Max-Neef, 2005, 6), as well as recognizing the ‘intersectionality’ of issues (Gallager, 2006; Shevock, 2018) are, in general, considered a key to addressing current problems.

Conclusion

Throughout, we examined questions concerned with one’s interactions in a constantly globalizing world, with complex societies, and we focused particularly on the role of arts education to inform living together in ethical and sustainable ways through taking an active role in advancing social and ecological justice. Global citizenship is not only a set of knowledge and skills that can be achieved and applied in different contexts. Rather, awakening and committing oneself to the activities of ensuring sustainable life conditions for future generations requires an ongoing state of dialogue with the world and a critical interrogation of the consequences of one’s own desires on the planetary community. It is primarily a question of values and ethics, a question of *how* we are in the world (Biesta, 2017a, 2017b) in relation to other human and non-human beings, and about our willingness to face and act on the current local and global issues at different levels and situations. It is about our ability and a willingness to learn from and with each other.

Biesta (2017a) suggests that arousing students’ desire to want to exist *in dialogue* with the world—that is, as subjects—should be the core task of (arts) education. This is also considered to be urgent by the students of today. At the time of this article, large groups of students were gathering around key buildings and main roads in the Helsinki city center to demonstrate and practice non-violent civil disobedience to persuade political and societal leaders to act more decisively to avoid ecological and social collapse. As pointed out by Eskelinen (2021) in a blog post about the *Elokapina* [Extinction Rebellion] movement, the demonstration also challenges universities to consider their role in advancing ecological responsibility and nurturing critical citizenship and societal participation. In several discussions the student participants highlighted their desire to find social and even global meanings for their artistic and pedagogical endeavors (Juntunen, Tuovinen & Sirén, 2021).

It is therefore the task of educational institutions to respond to the needs of young people to cope with the global and interconnected world. On the brink of the collapse of global ecosystems and the subsequent societal turbulence this would engender, it is ever more crucial that arts education programs at the university level supports students’ growth towards global citizenship and offer them tools to build sustainable futures (Smith, 2021). As the teaching experiment discussed in this paper exemplifies, arts education, as research and practice, can contribute to the shaping and supporting of the processes of transformative global citizenship by engaging students with multiple different and competing perspectives, values, and identities. Indeed, it is a necessity for arts education to systematically open opportunities for

students to critically question the social status quo and participate in collaborative efforts to advance ethical responsibility.

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Appendix

Example 1: From isolation to integration

In this teaching session, cultural identity was constructed and confirmed through artistic expression.

In this session, the student-facilitator N.N. guided the activities through storytelling and the participants acted out the story phase-by-phase, as narrated by N.N.

The session began with N.N. reading out loud a story of people living in isolation on two distant islands, without any contact with the rest of the world. The people of both islands had a distinctive and strong sense of cultural identity. Next, the participants were asked to form two groups, to represent the people of the story, and work in their groups in separate spaces from each other. Both groups were tasked to craft and create expressions of their cultural identity. These expressions might include the typical bodily morning greeting, a national epic (including understandings related to religion, values, and the origin of the world), and a cultural symbol (produced using cardboard, pen, paper, glue, etc.; see Pictures 1 and 2). The groups had an option to deepen the experience of their cultural identity by inventing a song/dance, playing different imagined roles of the people in their routine tasks (drama), or compiling a news report and drawing a cartoon about life on the island.

N.N. then continued the story with both groups, but in different ways.

For group A, the story continued: “One day, due to a natural disaster, the people of the island were forced to leave their homeland.” N.N. asked the participants to concentrate on how that information made them feel, and to express that emotion through body position.

For group B, the story continued: “One day, the people of the island woke up with a daunting feeling caused by a large ship, full of strangers, approaching their island.” N.N. asked the participants to imagine how this piece of news—strangers approaching your home and possibly threatening everything you have and are familiar with—made them feel, and then to express that emotion through body position.

The participants of group B were then asked to line up facing the door, each in their chosen position. Members of group A were sent into the room, one by one, to place themselves in their chosen position in front of the members of group B. After everyone had arrived, the members of both groups stood in silence and gazed at each other.

After a while, to break the ice, those who had arrived on the ship (group A) presented their own morning greeting and taught it to the members of the other tribe (group B), who, in response, taught their greeting to the newcomers. Both groups of people also presented their other cultural expressions. While watching and learning the expressions of the other culture, the participants were asked to pay attention to and become aware of their own thoughts and emotions. Finally, the participants were asked to act out a joint meeting to decide how to proceed. They were to negotiate about questions such as whether they would begin to live on the island together, what that scenario would imply, who would make the rules, and so on. The meeting was to be conducted with (2–6) negotiators, elected by both tribes, with the focus on working collaboratively, in dialogue, and with the aim of searching for the best situation for both.

The session closed with a group reflection on the experience. The reflection was guided by such questions as: Are you happy with the result? What were your thoughts when you had to leave your home? How did the meeting with the other culture feel? If you had understood the situation of the other people, would that have changed your own attitude? Have you encountered or witnessed such situations in your own life?

Example 2: Adapting to the rules and rituals of an unfamiliar community

In this session the participants gained a concrete experience of trying to integrate into a new community and attempting to understand and join in with the unfamiliar—including cultural practices that seemed absurd or irrational to a newcomer.

We began by inventing and designing a bodily ritual of an imagined community. The ritual could consist of facial and bodily gestures, body movement, body positions, and the use of found objects. The participants were instructed to develop the ritual in four separate groups (3–5 students in each group) in a non-verbal and gradual manner. The ritual was to be repeated for as long as it took to reach its established form.

Although the beginning of the exercise was replete with confusion amongst the participants, all of the groups succeeded in establishing their ritual. Then, one or two members of each group moved to another group and joined in to practice their ritual, often having no clue about what the ritual entailed. This process was continued until everyone had learnt at least one new ritual. In some cases, none of the original members were left in the new group.

Example 3: Improvising and synchronizing movement expression

In this teaching session, the ability to understand the Other was approached through kinesthetic listening and sensitivity which was practiced through creating an improvisational artistic performance with the objective to establish and move together in rhythm (see e.g., Benedetto, Morrone & Tomassini, 2020).

In pairs, the students improvised the movement of an animal indicated on a card given to them. Students then worked in groups of four to form either the shape of a square while moving and holding on to a common string, or the shape of an animal on the floor by using a piece of twine.

Example 4: Empathizing with life stories

In this teaching session, empathy was approached by empathizing with and expressing the emotions evoked by the tragic life events of refugees told in a story.

The classroom was equipped with artificial fire (created with lights) and printed photos with a refugee theme, placed on the floor around the room. The session started by sitting “around the fire” and listening to the words of the storyteller: *“Welcome. Throughout the ages, people have gathered around campfires to share stories. You will now hear a couple of true stories of refugees.”* The participants were then divided into two groups. The task of the first group was to make a statue, inspired by one of the stories. The task of the other group was to articulate the emotions and thoughts that the still picture evoked in them. After this, the roles were changed.

Example 5: Responding to polarized opinions published in a public forum

This teaching session offered opportunities to express the emotions evoked by words through arts.

The task of this teaching session was to use the arts in responding to a text (newspaper article) that included polarized opinions and was written with discriminatory language. The students were divided into two separate groups. The student facilitator of the session read out loud a text published in a public forum (newspaper). After listening to the text, both groups painted an artwork. Group 1 was instructed to express the message of the text by taking the position of the author, while Group 2 was to express their own thoughts and emotions as evoked by the text. The painting was done on a large paper placed on the floor and was created using a wide range of tools (see Pictures 3 and 4). After finishing their painting, both groups created a soundscape for the painting of the other group by using voice and (body) percussion instruments. Students discussed the art works; the emotions, observations, and thoughts evoked by the text; and how to deal with polarization in daily life.

Example 6: Creating an artistic work inspired by the production chain of an object

This teaching sessions aimed to develop awareness and understanding of the production chain of daily products and goods, and called for reflecting on the issues of ethics, ecology, respect for nature, and sustainability in relation to consumption.

First, the student-instructor chose an object, and explained how and where it was made and how it had ended up in the classroom (considering materials, manufacturing, and transportation). This was followed by a joint discussion and reflection. Students were then divided into small groups and were instructed to choose one simple object whose production chain could be traced by using the internet. Students then created an artistic work that reflected what had been discovered about the production chain—a play, dance, rap, song, drawing, object composition (see Picture 5), poem, soundscape, or a cartoon, depending on the available materials and students' preferences. Finally, the groups presented and reflected upon their work.

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