



GCE 7th WORLD ASSEMBLY

22 - 24th November 2022
Johannesburg-South Africa

The Future of Education Re-Imagined

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Discussion 14

Grow our collective ability to influence

a. Introduction

The GCE is a civil society movement founded by a diverse range of activist organizations defending the right to education for all, in all circumstances. In its 20 years of history, the GCE has increasingly grown all over the world through the expansion and consolidation of national and regional civil society coalitions – over 100 - providing a platform to unify and coordinate global society voices about the global education agenda.

After several years of focusing on educational programs management and delivery, the GCE is determined to return to its roots and become an influencing organization again through its research, policy, advocacy, campaigning and communication work. These fields of work are key to grow our collective ability to influence at national, regional and global levels, in order to achieve GCE's key mission of effectively influencing to promote education as a basic human right, putting pressure on governments and the international community to deliver the right of everyone to a free, quality, public education.

b. Context analysis and how this relates to GCE

The world has changed dramatically in the last five years. On one hand, conflict, climate change, disasters, public health emergencies and the forced displacement of people within and across borders are affecting a growing number of people all over the world; also, the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically deepened these increasingly complex, intertwined and multi-faceted emergency situations. We have also witnessed other major developments such as growing polarization, the shrinking space for civil society, the diversity of influencing spaces, the increasing role of new technologies and the emergence of new actors – some of them allies, others opposing our mission and goals. Last but not least, the role of education in the global political agenda is still limited, which is reflected in the chronic underfunding of public education, both in terms of national budgets and funds and international development aid. In this sense, the longstanding global policies against debt relief/cancellation and the new push for privatization of education are hindering governments capacity to fulfill their obligation to guarantee the right to education. All these elements have had a great impact on the progress



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achieved on education access in the last decades, and we are now starting to see a stagnation, if not a reversal, of that progress.

In terms of new actors, we have witnessed the rise of private education actors that are pushing to turn education into a commodity, challenging the rights-based approach to education. On the bright side, the new promising waves of political activism – LGTBIQ+, feminists, ecologist movements – are a light of hope for a renewed fight for the right to education. Young people have a crucial role in these movements, as they should have in the education movement. Young people are reclaiming their spaces and making their voices heard, but they should be given the space to demand accountability and influence policies for systematic change in education.

The increasingly complex environment where the GCE operates greatly influences the GCE ways of working in order to grow our collective ability to influence.

c. Key issues GCE members are to consider

In this context, the GCE should carefully analyse its strengths and weaknesses, as well as the challenges it faces and the opportunities ahead, in order for the movement to grow its collective ability to influence.

Diversity is one of the GCE's most important strengths. Our membership comprises a diverse range of national, regional and international organizations: civil society organizations, teachers' organizations, parents' associations, women's groups, disabled people's organizations, youth, and student groups, academic or research institutions, and child rights campaigners. Also, we have direct presence in over 100 countries in the world, which allows us to go from the local to the global and vice versa – thanks to the civic support of millions of people in all those countries.

However, if not properly managed, the **diversity** and complexity of the GCE movement can also become a weakness. Our membership encompasses many thousands of very different civil society organizations, and represents millions of individuals worldwide. We must not underestimate the difficulty of coordinating and unifying all these different stakeholders within our movement. However, this is key for us to be able to go from local to global and effectively influence the political agenda at all levels. Therefore, one of the key elements that the GCE members are to consider is **how to leverage the potential of this diversity in order to increase the movement's ability to influence**. In this sense, GCE members should also reflect on **how to best link up the local with the global**, both to strengthen the GCE role as an



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influencing movement at the global level, but also the engagement with national level processes.

Another key element to grow our collective ability to influence is the capacity to **establish strong and longstanding partnerships** with other stakeholders not only in the education sector, but also in other human rights areas, as the fulfillment of the right to education for everyone will not happen in isolation – health and nutrition, for example, are also key. In the current context, it is crucial that the civil society movements, organizations and activists promoting the right to education present themselves to the world with a single voice, fighting closely together for their common objective to guarantee the right to quality and free education for everyone. Only together we will be able to hold States and the international community to account for their commitments, namely the Sustainable Development Goal agenda and particularly SDG 4. The GCE needs to be strategic about its partnerships and proactively work to align and cooperate with the relevant stakeholders in the education and other sectors. So, another key issue GCE members need to consider is what partnerships we should promote and focus on, and how to develop those in an effective way – including partnerships with LGBTIQ+, feminists and youth movements.

Finally, **campaigns and communications** are absolutely key to increasing GCE's ability to influence. We not only have to do things, but make the world know we are doing them. We need to be visible in order to be heard and then gain influence. The civic support of the millions of people represented by our movement is on our side, but we need to do more, both at internal and external levels. At an internal level, communication work needs to be a two-way road, where information flows bidirectionally between the GCE Secretariat and GCE members. This is essential to create relevant content addressing important issues that affect GCE members. At an external level, the GCE needs to develop different contents that not only are aligned with relevant national and international issues, but also allow the GCE to place its topics of interest in the public agenda. Developing a solid relationship with key media outlets is essential to the success of the GCE communication work at external level. Finally, the communications strategies need to be adapted to the different objectives – whether these are related to mobilization, advocacy and/or campaigning.

d. Leading questions to support the discussion

- How to best leverage the diversity and worldwide presence and support of the GCE in order to increase the movement's ability to influence?



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- How best link up the local with the global and vice versa, both to strengthen the GCE role as an influencing movement at the global level, but also the engagement with national level processes?
- What type of partnerships should the GCE be proactively pursuing? What is the best way to develop those?
- How can GCE improve its communications in order to gain visibility? How can we strengthen and promote our brand? How can we improve internal and external communications?