



# The global citizenship education gap: Teacher perceptions of the relationship between global citizenship education and students' socio-economic status



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## HIGHLIGHTS

- We investigate how students' socio-economic background shapes teacher perceptions of global citizenship education.
- Interview analysis shows a gap in GCE which manifests in the extent to which teachers find it relevant for their students.
- Implications for policy and practice are discussed, as is the possibility of minimizing the gap through teacher education.

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## ABSTRACT

The present study examined Israeli secondary school teachers' perceptions of global citizenship education (GCE), concentrating on the socio-economic makeup of the schools' population. The study illuminates how teachers' perceptions of their students' mobility and the imagined futures that teachers attribute to their students may shape teaching. The study involves in-depth, semi-structured interviews with fifteen Israeli teachers at schools catering to student populations of various socio-economic backgrounds within the public, secular Jewish school sector. The study provides evidence of a GCE gap involving students, schools, and teachers, shedding light on this gap's possible consequences. Policy implications of the GCE gap and future research trajectories are introduced and discussed.

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## 1. Introduction

Globalization and technological advances of the 21st century have caused a blurring of national lines, which in the past comprised the basis of a nearly indisputable model for civic identity (Beck, 2002). These societal changes yielded an unprecedented rise in the popularity of alternative, cosmopolitan identity models; namely, global citizenship (Oxley & Morris, 2013). Although global citizenship as an abstract, philosophical idea emerged centuries earlier, the changes brought on by globalization have led to the development of more tangible models and definitions of global citizenship and fostered a vast scholarly interest in the possible applications of the term in modern, globalized society.

In recent years, several countries have begun adding curricular

contents aimed at encouraging a global orientation among students (see Moon & Koo, 2011 for South Korea; O'Connor & Faas, 2012 for England, France, and Ireland; Rapoport, 2010 for the US; Schweisfurth, 2006 for Canada). These globally oriented contents are often grouped under the title of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) (Davies, 2006), which can manifest itself in many ways and can be enacted through formal, state-wide policy (Bamber, Bullivant, Glover, King, & McCann, 2016; Myers, 2016), introduced by various local programs (Gaudelli, 2016), or initiated by individual teachers (Goren & Yemini, 2017; Rapoport, 2010). Scholars (i.e., Brown, 2003; Pashby, 2008; Resnik, 2009) often describe the inclusion of contents associated with GCE as a direct response by education systems to characteristics of the modern, globalized workforce or other global imperatives; others place greater emphasis on GCE's transformative potential and consider the goals behind its curricular development (at least ideally) to include raising awareness for issues such as human rights and environmental problems so as to encourage advocacy and promote critical

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thinking (Andreotti, 2006; Gaudelli, 2016; Gaudelli & Fernekes, 2004; Monaghan & Spreen, 2016; Myers, 2016).

While GCE is more developed in some countries than in others, scholars (Rapoport, 2010; Reilly & Niens, 2014) found that teachers play a major role in GCE's actual classroom application, regardless of the way it is articulated in official curricular goals. However, teachers' agency is most relevant in cases where policy is completely absent or when the goals of GCE are vague (Gill & Niens, 2014; Goren & Yemini, 2016; Goren & Yemini, 2017b). Teachers' inclination to teach GCE-related contents can be heavily influenced by their own experiences, dispositions, and resistance, even when policy is enacted (Lai, Shum, & Zhang, 2014; Reilly & Niens, 2014). The role of teacher agency in GCE and the greatly varied ways in which teachers may incorporate such notions could cause discrepancies in the extent to which different students are taught about global citizenship.

GCE is yet to be examined with regards to social inequality within countries and in schools catering to different populations. However, research concerning citizenship education, (Cohen, 2016; Ichilov, 2002), found that in many countries (including Israel), schools are perpetuating a civic education gap. This gap is created through a process whereby students of higher socio-economic status (SES) are taught and encouraged to become active and involved citizens, while students of lower SES are directed towards passivity and a vague understanding of their civil rights. Hypothetically, in the case of GCE, a similar gap may be perpetuated through the education of students based on their assumed future physical mobility and their perceived opportunities for future global engagement (i.e., their 'imagined futures').

In Israel, the Ministry of Education has barely provided any formal recognition to GCE, despite the unique advantages such education may offer in conflict-ridden and multicultural states (Davies, 2006). Yet the absence of global citizenship education in the formal, state-issued curriculum is not surprising, as the term itself could be perceived as threatening in conflict-ridden states, which often develop more nationalistic education systems (Banks, 2008). Studies of Israeli civics and history curricula and textbooks have often criticized them for being one-sided, nationalistic, and concentrating on the Jewish narrative and the definition of Israel as the Jewish State, rather than a Jewish and democratic state (Al-Haj, 2005; Goren & Yemini, 2016; Pinson, 2007; Yemini, Bar-Nissan, & Shavit, 2014). The absence of policy or curricular goals regarding GCE enables examination of the way teachers perceive the concept and bring it into the classroom organically, allowing observation of disparities that may evolve under these circumstances.

Through 15 semi-structured interviews, this study examines the perceptions of global citizenship and GCE among teachers at secondary secular-public schools in Israel's Jewish education stream that cater to students of high, middle, and low SES. The study investigates how teachers' perceptions of students' identities and life trajectories ('imagined futures' [Ball, Macrae, & Maguire, 1999]) affect teachers' propensity to address GCE and the relevance teachers attribute to global citizenship in relation to their students. Given the evolving society and enhanced probability for mobility introduced by globalization, as well as the new practical skills required of participants in a global society (Dill, 2013; Pashby, 2008), it is important to explore the extent to which different schools prepare their students for such participation and to develop clear policy to promote equality in this field.

## 2. Literature review and theoretical framework

### 2.1. Global citizenship in the age of globalization

Beck (2002) notes that one of the main social consequences of

globalization is the liquefaction of boundaries. This liquefaction manifests itself not only in concrete terms such as increased mobility, facilitated trade, and extensive immigration, but also in the way boundaries between nations and people are imagined. While the term 'globalization' implicates the changing relationships between states and the rise of supra-natural organizations (Sassen, 2015), it does not, in itself, address the changes in the way individuals perceive themselves, their allegiances, and their civic responsibilities as a result of these global processes; these issues can be addressed through the concept of global citizenship (Gaudelli, 2016).

Global citizenship is not a new concept, although the acceleration of globalization in the last few decades has caused a peak in scholarly interest in the term and led to a large amount of theorizing regarding its applications in this new era (Gaudelli, 2016; Torres, 2015). Global citizenship and related terms such as cosmopolitanism, global-mindedness, global consciousness, and world citizenship have been in use for centuries, as part of both religious and secular discourses (Oxley & Morris, 2013). However, while the earliest manifestations of these ideas were abstract and generally addressed individuals' global orientation and (usually elite) citizens' perceptions of themselves as part of a world culture, today scholars and educators worldwide use them to define or mediate identities in the age of globalization (Myers, 2016; Oxley & Morris, 2013).

Appiah (2006) claims that particularly after the events of 9/11 in the US, cosmopolitanism involves an obligation to others beyond the boundaries of citizenship and the need for intercultural understanding and sensitivity. Appiah's notion of cosmopolitanism is similar to many conceptualizations of global citizenship in that it bestows responsibilities onto individuals who see themselves as 'cosmopolitans' and involves a component of empathy and intercultural knowledge. However, Appiah's conception of cosmopolitanism differs from global citizenship in its focus on the ethical aspects of one's experience in global society absent reference to other constructs, such as the practical skills necessary to navigate and compete in such a society. Appiah's cosmopolitanism relates to humanistic models of global citizenship, which focus on global environmental problems, sustainable development, human rights, and shared values (Gaudelli, 2016; Gaudelli & Fernekes, 2004; Monaghan & Spreen, 2016).

There is not one, single, agreed-upon definition for global citizenship, partly due to the term's broad range of application. It is generally addressed as a response to new global imperatives (as per Pashby, 2008), but these imperatives are uniform neither worldwide nor within nations (Gaudelli, 2016; O'Connor & Faas, 2012; Wang & Hoffman, 2016). Given the lack of clear definitions of GCE and its operational goals, many researchers prefer to create scholarly conceptualizations that categorize specific phenomena relating to or embodying global citizenship (Oxley & Morris, 2013; Schattle, 2008), while definitions pertaining to the concept as a whole are scarce and usually more operational (i.e., Davies's (2008) use of OXFAM's [2007] guidelines detailing particular characteristics of global citizens).

The concept of global citizenship is not free of political and academic criticism (Bowden, 2003). One of the risks associated with global citizenship is the possibility that, like globalization, it would benefit mostly members of elite groups, therefore deepening societal inequality and gaps (Gardner-McTaggart, 2016; Roman, 2003; Sassen, 2015). Moreover, some critics argue that as an identity model, the concept could weaken nation-states by providing citizens with an alternative identity (Bowden, 2003); or rather that the notion itself is moot since no global governmental body exists to assume responsibility for the global society we aim to foster (Bates, 2012).

The critiques surrounding the idea of global citizenship are not limited to its potential effect on the standing of the nation-state; they extend to some of the underlying assumptions supposedly rooted in the concept, which can be associated with attempts to extend western values and ideas and apply them to the global population. As Banks (2008) argues, ideas of universalism that are sometimes associated with global citizenship can overshadow attempts to promote diversity and appreciate differences by asserting that everyone is essentially the same.

## 2.2. Global citizenship education and teacher agency

Many studies support the claim that while national citizenship education remains an important tenant of nearly all formal education frameworks, many countries have already begun incorporating aspects of GCE into their curricula (see Chong, 2015 for China; Hahn, 2015 for the UK and Canada; Moon & Koo, 2011 for South Korea; Ramirez & Meyer, 2012 for an overall review; Schweisfurth, 2006 for Canada). Dill (2013) suggests that there are two main approaches to GCE from which clearly different goals can be inferred: the global competencies approach, which aims to provide students with the necessary skills to compete in global society; and the global consciousness approach, which aims to provide students with a global orientation, empathy, and cultural sensitivity, stemming from humanistic values and assumptions (Dill, 2013). Dill shows that different teachers use these approaches differently, as influenced by their perceptions of their students' futures.

Although it constitutes a global phenomenon, GCE has different meanings (Alviar-Martin & Baidon, 2016; Rapoport, 2015) and is usually framed in the curriculum in terms of national rather than supranational needs (see Engel, 2014; O'Connor & Faas, 2012; Rapoport, 2010). In general, in countries with high concentrations of immigrants or refugees, GCE is presented as a potential framework for dialogue and creation of a common identity (O'Connor & Faas, 2012). Research conducted in post-conflict Northern Ireland found GCE to be framed as an imperative brought on by the divided nature of Northern Irish society, despite teachers' skepticism regarding its actual contributions (Niens, O'Connor, & Smith, 2013). In developing countries, in contrast, GCE is considered to be a tool for student empowerment and the creation of opportunities; sometimes, however, its meaning is reduced to knowledge of the English language that would enable students to exercise the opportunities for mobility that globalization offers (see Quaynor, 2015). Lastly, in countries that value nationalism highly and are seen as central forces in the globalized world—particularly the US (Rapoport, 2010) and China (Law, 2007)—GCE is strongly geared towards serving national interests, as opposed to its more cultural and moral foci elsewhere. The form GCE takes on in different contexts could also be related to different discourses of citizenship that are prevalent in those settings (Alviar-Martin & Baidon, 2016; Wang & Hoffman, 2016).

GCE, like global citizenship itself, comprises the focus of much academic criticism. Critiques of the term often refer to its ambiguity and to both latent and explicit western assumptions that are often considered embedded in its core (Andreotti, 2006). These critiques have led to the development of various typologies, which enable scholars and policy-developers to identify and articulate the goals of GCE and evaluate it. Veugelers (2011), for example, distinguished between three categories of global citizenship: open global citizenship, which recognizes the interdependence between nation-states in the global age and opportunities for cultural diversification; moral global citizenship based on equality and human rights, which emphasizes global responsibility; and socio-political global citizenship, which is meant to shift the balance of political power to

promote equality and cultural diversity. These categories are hierarchical, with open global citizenship representing a shallow form of GCE and socio-political global citizenship representing a profound form. Andreotti (2006) suggested a broad conception of GCE, breaking down into 'soft' and 'critical' GCE. While soft GCE could be equated to education about global citizenship (as per Dobson, 2003; Marshall, 2011) that provides students with an understanding of the world and cultural tolerance, critical global citizenship requires a deeper engagement. Critical GCE, which Andreotti later developed into post-critical and post-colonial GCE (Andreotti, 2006), provides students with the skills to reflect upon and engage with global issues involving conflict, power, and opposing views; to understand the nature of assumptions; and to strive for change.

The categorization systems presented here all attempt to differentiate the forms of GCE so as to recognize which embody outdated notions of universalism and western values, valorize western culture and knowledge, and promote the preservation of the global hierarchy under the guise of global citizenship education. The 'preferred' type of GCE according to the models presented above promotes not only an understanding of economic relationships between countries or an ambivalent notion of human rights, but much deeper forms of identification, will to act, and appreciation for diversity; as opposed to ideals of universalism, which erase cultural differences.

Studies exploring the implementation of GCE in schools often highlight the important role of teacher agency in this field. The studies dealing with teacher perceptions and practices regarding GCE can be best summarized by the title of Rapoport's (2010) study of teachers in Indiana: "*We cannot teach what we do not know.*" In his study, social studies teachers teaching a curriculum supposedly aimed at fostering global citizenship reported a lack of understanding of the concept of global citizenship that resulted in an aversion to teaching it. Seemingly, regardless of the approach policy-makers select in framing GCE within the curriculum, teachers' perceptions and stances profoundly impact GCE's outcomes even if the school or national education policy explicitly marks GCE as a priority—but especially in contexts that lack such clarity (Reilly & Niens, 2014). Studies regarding teachers in Canada (Schweisfurth, 2006) and Northern Ireland (Reilly & Niens, 2014) reveal similar struggles to those Rapoport (2010) describes in the US context.

Moreover, Orloff's (2011) study of German social studies teachers' views and perception of global, European, and national citizenship education reveals their positions to be highly influenced by factors such as immigration and German history. Teachers in schools with a high percentage of immigrants were found more likely to favor GC models of identity, claiming that their students are less likely to relate to national and European models. From a different perspective, moreover, some teachers also preferred to discuss European rather than German citizenship regardless of the student population, so as to avoid discussions regarding the nation's controversial past. However, while these studies all acknowledge the importance of teacher agency and dispositions with regards to the reception and enactment of GCE, none have acknowledged or investigated how student characteristics may shape teachers' propensity to be agents of GCE and the relevance teachers ascribe to GCE in relation to their students' SES specifically.

## 2.3. Global citizenship and inequality

The role of teacher agency in GCE, as presented above, raises the question of how student background may shape the type of GCE that teachers present in their classrooms and their perceptions of the concept's relevance for their students. One field of research that may shed some light on this issue is the civic education gap, which

has been explored in various contexts including the US, New Zealand, and Israel (Cohen, 2016; Levinson, 2010; Wood, 2014). The civic education gap refers to differences in the opportunities provided to students of different backgrounds to learn about and practice their civil rights and become citizens who are politically aware and involved. This gap is perpetuated through education policies, usually developed without proper input from oppressed and underprivileged groups, as well as through teachers' own perceptions of their students (Cohen, 2016; Levinson, 2010). Several studies have provided evidence of the various ways the civic education gap manifests and is perpetuated within schools (Ichilov, 2003). Ichilov (2002) compared teachers' and students' conceptions of citizenship and the purpose of civic education at one vocational and one academic school in Israel and found discrepancies pointing to a bleak situation. Her study reveals that while students in academic tracks (usually those from stronger socio-economic backgrounds) were being taught an active and complex model of citizenship, students in vocational programs were imparted with practical knowledge of the welfare system and basic rights and were not encouraged to critically reflect upon any conception of citizenship. These results were also echoed in Levinson's (2010) examination of the gap in the United States and Ho, Alviar-Martin, Sim, and San Yap's (2011) study performed in Singapore.

Although some studies concerning civic education gaps in diverse settings reference global dimensions of citizenship (e.g., Wood, 2014), few have explicitly addressed global citizenship education as an independent concept. Wood (2014) studied the ways in which different forms of capital manifest themselves through social studies education in four diverse school communities in New Zealand and found that teachers of high SES students place greater emphasis on the global dimensions of the curriculum. She explained her findings using Bourdieu's (1986) concept of symbolic capital and provided a model for participatory capital referring to how various forms of social capital affect students' citizenship practices. In particular, Wood's study demonstrated that students' social, cultural, and global capital relate to the way they and their teachers perceive citizenship. Similarly to the previous studies mentioned here, Wood (2014) examined a spectrum between the active, participatory citizenship prevalent among the high-SES participants and the passive, non-participatory citizenship characteristic of lower-SES groups.

The similar goals underlying both civic education and GCE of preparing students to function as citizens within society (regardless of how their society is defined) could indicate that teachers' perceptions of GCE and its particular relevance to their student population could be explained within the same theoretical framework as the research on the civic education gap. Among the most interesting constructs that studies exploring the relationship between school choice and social class in the global age address are students' own imagined futures (Ball et al., 1999) or the futures their parents imagine for them. Ball et al. (1999) found that students of different backgrounds imagine their futures differently and use their imagined futures to frame their choices with regards to their educational trajectory. In their study of the motivations behind Australian students' choice of International Diploma (IB) versus local curricula, Doherty, Mu, and Shield (2009) found that students' social class and imagined futures played significant roles in the students' choices; specifically, they found students of higher SES more likely to imagine a mobile future and thus to select the IB curriculum so as to enable themselves to fulfill this imagined future. Similarly, Weenink (2008) and others have often attributed parental aspirations for their children as bearers of cosmopolitan capital as a major component in parental school choice (Igarashi & Saito, 2014; Weenink, 2008). While Weenink (2008) considers

upward mobility (rather than social reproduction) to be the main driver of this process, his focus on parental perspectives and supposed autonomy of choice prevents him from analyzing the structural components and the mechanisms that facilitate social reproduction through the education systems.

In addition to school choice by students or parents, choices that schools make actively may also contribute to the social reproduction of inequality through education. Brooks and Waters (2015) and Yemini (2014) reviewed the internationalization strategies of schools catering to different populations and showed that both the extent of internationalization at these schools and the means by which the schools pursue and develop internationalization relate substantially to student socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Indeed, the evidence regarding schools' different internationalization strategies and studies addressing the importance parents and students of different backgrounds attribute to cosmopolitan capital as part of their school choices could point to typically different GCE strategies at schools catering to different populations.

#### 2.4. Citizenship education and GCE in Israel

Israeli citizenship education is a highly researched topic, due to the delicate balance and perhaps the inherent paradox between the country's self-definition as a Jewish and Democratic state (Agbaria, 2016; Pedahzur, 2001). The tension between these constructs often arises in the public discourse and comprises a particularly potent issue. The citizenship curriculum is also contested, since Palestinian Arab students with Israeli citizenship study in separate Arabic-language public schools supervised by the Israeli Ministry of Education (MOE), which are required to teach the Ministry's curriculum (Al-Haj, 2005). Until 1994, Arab students studied a different citizenship curriculum than the one used for the Jewish population (Ichilov, 2003); but in 1994, the curricular distinction was canceled (Pinson, 2007). One problem that arose after the introduction of the new, shared, curriculum was the emphasis it placed on the Jewish narrative and identity, while delegitimizing the Palestinian perspective (Al-Haj, 2005; Alexander, Pinson, & Yonah, 2012; Pinson, 2007). The present study focuses solely on public, secular schools in the Jewish sector; however, acknowledging the existence of Arabic-language schools for Palestinian Arab students within the Israeli system is important because in conflict-ridden societies, citizenship education plays an important part in the creation of a national identity (Banks, 2008), which may overshadow any attempts to foster global citizenship (Goren & Yemini, 2017b; Gill & Niens, 2014).

Although the challenges GCE could face in the Israeli context are insufficiently explored, several studies dealing with related approaches to citizenship education highlighted similar obstacles to those noted here. Yonah (2005) maintained that education and the curriculum comprise the main ways through which the Zionist narrative is disseminated in Israeli society. Additionally, as Firer (1998) explained, this narrative and the attempt to harmonize the ideas of the Zionist nation with students' perceptions of themselves as individuals make it nearly impossible to include any progressive forms of civic education or human rights education in the curriculum.

Generally, the Israeli curriculum appears to be moving in the global direction slower than curricula in other developed countries (Bromley, 2009; Buckner & Russell, 2013; Ramirez & Meyer, 2012). Yemini, Bar-Nissan, and Shavit (2014) observed that the ratio between local and global content referred to in questions on the final history matriculation exam in Israel over the last few decades has been steadily shifting in favor of more local content. This shift is particularly interesting considering another study by Yemini, Yerdani-Kuperberg, and Natur (2015) showing that history



teachers rated world history topics as much higher in importance than local history topics in comparison to their respective ratio in the actual formal curriculum. Given such views held by teachers, the actual representation of global contents within the taught curriculum could differ from such topics' minimal presence in official curricular materials. Since GCE is not articulated clearly within the curricular goals, teachers have the opportunity to make an active choice regarding its inclusion or exclusion in their own classrooms.

### 2.5. Research objectives

Our study addresses the following questions relating to the perceptions and opinions of GCE among teachers in schools catering to different socio-economic strata:

- How do teachers at secular public Jewish schools in Israel catering to students of different SES perceive of global citizenship and of global citizenship education and its purposes?
- How do teachers at secular public Jewish schools in Israel catering to students of different SES imagine their students' futures?

## 3. Methods

### 3.1. Choice of setting

The case of Israel is quite interesting in the context of GCE. Israel is modernized society, with a thriving high-tech sector (Doron, 2011); but simultaneously, it is highly nationalistic and conservative in many areas, partly relating to its continuous conflict with the Arab world (Waxman, 2006). This complex situation and the lack of studies regarding perceptions and aspects of global citizenship in Israel highlight the importance of applying qualitative methods to gain a full range of perspectives from the field. Tel Aviv, one of the largest cities in Israel, is the most cosmopolitan city in the country (Kipnis, 2004). This status could affect the inclination of teachers working in the city to incorporate more GCE components into their curriculum, regardless of their students' SES. Tel Aviv's schools cater to different socio-economic groups including Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants, children of refugees, and students of varying religious backgrounds (Oplatka, 2002). In Tel Aviv, as in other cosmopolitan cities, immigrants often reside in clusters (Pamuk, 2004) and attend schools that cater to lower- and middle-class populations, while schools catering to students of high SES remain largely homogenous.

### 3.2. Study population

Fifteen teachers participated in the study, ranging in age from 28 to 55 years and in teaching experience from two to 35 years; most teachers had between five and 20 years' teaching experience. The sample is comprised of four teachers from two high schools categorized by the MOE as low SES, five teachers from two high schools categorized as mid SES, and six teachers from three high schools categorized as high SES (seven schools total). Notably, however, although teachers at high and low SES schools agreed with the MOE's categorization of the schools' populations, teachers at both participating schools in the MOE's mid-SES category defined their student population as low or lower-middle class. In a qualitative study that is highly focused on teachers' perceptions of their students, this fact is important. Table 1 provides more information on the study participants, including their subject areas and pseudonyms.

All schools participating in this study belong to the secular public Jewish education sector, the largest sector in the Israeli

**Table 1**  
Participant details.

Pseudonym	School SES	Years of experience	Main teaching areas
Shirley	Low	5	Civics
Yoav	Low	3	Civics
Meir	Low	5	History
Daniela	Low	2	English
Omer	Medium	22	Civics
Rotem	Medium	35	Literature
Naama	Medium	15	Literature
Adam	Medium	2	History
Karen	Medium	7	History
Ron	High	9	Civics
Dan	High	16	Civics
Hadas	High	7	Civics
Yael	High	20	English
Shir	High	15	Literature
Anat	High	11	History

education system. Notably, the education sectors comprising the Israeli system are not completely exclusive, and some Arab-Israeli students (particularly in large cities) opt to attend schools within the secular Jewish sector. Two of the schools in our study catered to a mixed population: one located near a predominantly Arab-Israeli neighborhood characterized as low SES and the other in the center of Tel Aviv serving middle-class students. Teachers characterized the latter school as having a large concentration of immigrant students from both Jewish and non-Jewish backgrounds.

The choice of schools for this study was performed through theoretical sampling. This article describes a study we performed as part of a wider research endeavor examining perceptions of GCE by teachers in different contexts. In the first stages of this endeavor, we gathered data through purposeful sampling of two schools catering to high SES populations—one belonging to the secular public Jewish stream and one international school (Goren & Yemini, 2016). Additionally, in a comprehensive review of empirical studies concerning GCE (Goren & Yemini, 2017), we found that the issue of social class was generally not taken into account or discussed, further contributing to our rationale for exploring the topic in this study. The findings in this first stage suggested that students' socio-economic background could play a significant role in the shaping teachers' perceptions of the concept. This led us to focus the study described here on different socio-economic backgrounds, as per grounded theory methodology—whereby the sample evolves and develops throughout the study as the findings suggest comparisons of different contexts could be beneficial, and upon review of existing theory (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967). We requested and received the MOE's SES rankings of the high schools in Tel-Aviv in order to approach schools catering to high, middle, and low SES students.

We initially chose to begin with two schools from each SES rank, as well as two additional schools to follow up with in case we encountered a lack of cooperation; however, as the study progressed and in accordance with the principles of theoretical sampling, we eventually included three high-SES schools in this study, as this group seemed to provide many relevant insights, and due to the fact that mid-SES school teachers perceived their students as low SES. This is not to say that mid-SES teachers did not provide relevant insights pertaining to their own unique perceptions of GCE; however, in terms of data collection and reaching saturation, we found that these teachers' interview responses were closely related to those gleaned from the teachers at low-SES schools. As a result, although quotes from teachers at mid-SES schools are presented and identified throughout the paper, Table 2, which details the main differences between the groups with regards to each category from the analysis, presents the findings from low- and mid-SES schools in unison.

**Table 2**  
Summary of findings regarding teachers' perceptions of student-related factors.

	Travel experience, cultural exposure, and social capital as prerequisites for global citizenship	The struggle for survival versus privileged indifference	The imagined futures teachers attribute to students and the perceived relevance of GCE
<b>Low and Middle SES</b>	Teachers saw students from non-privileged backgrounds as lacking the proper habitus to benefit from travel experiences even when the opportunity for travel was available. The students' lack of cultural exposure supposedly made them less open to GCE-related contents.	Teachers felt that students experiencing daily social or economic struggles would be too focused on these survival challenges to open themselves up to global issues and GCE.	Teachers did not imagine students' futures in global terms, and as a result the main aspects of GCE that teachers reportedly felt were relevant were those that are humanistic in nature and could help students engage in their own increasingly multicultural environment.
<b>High SES</b>	Teachers perceived their students' travel experience and exposure to other cultures, as well as their social or cosmopolitan capital, to make them appropriate candidates for GCE; they considered such students better able to grasp global contents than their low-SES counterparts are.	Although these students potentially may have the mental resources and capacity to study GCE-related contents, they were said to "lack hunger" for learning about global issues. Teachers implied that their students' privilege has made these students incapable of developing empathy or even showing interest in world problems.	Teachers reported a strong focus on the development of concrete skills as part of their perceptions of GCE in practice. They considered these skills necessary for their students' futures, which teachers imagined as mobile and transnational—in terms of studying abroad or participating in the global work force.

Upon receiving the principal's approval in each school, we were provided with a list of teachers who had agreed to participate. The teachers participated in the study on a voluntary basis, and as a result some self-selection bias may have occurred. The study was presented to teachers as one dealing with "global aspects of the curriculum"; this could have caused teachers with certain orientations to be more likely to volunteer.

### 3.3. Ethics

The research described here was approved by the Chief Scientist at the Ministry of Education, granting approval to approach school principals and teachers in secondary schools in the Tel-Aviv District (Permit number 8842). In addition, approval was provided by the university's ethics committee. Clear boundaries and obligations were set upon initial contact by explaining the voluntary nature of the study and the strategies through which anonymity will be maintained and established. During the meetings, the interviewers further explained that only the researchers themselves could access the interview recordings and that the interview would be transcribed without identifying details of the school or the individual teachers. In the data analysis phase, the data were triangulated and reviewed by both authors, and interpretations were debated until we reached consensus, in order to ensure a proper representation and understanding of the participants' own views without imposing unreliable personal interpretations. When writing the final product of the research, pseudonyms were provided to all participants, and they were not allocated according to specific school but rather SES of the schools.

Quotes are used throughout the analysis section in order to provide a more accurate account and representation of teachers' own perceptions and voice. The quotes, originally transcribed in Hebrew, were translated to English and back to Hebrew to ensure that the intended and accurate meaning was maintained in the translation process. Thus, we aim to maintain the teachers' authentic voice throughout the article to the best of our ability, mindful of the potential danger of speaking for others or asserting our own opinions and perceptions over those expressed directly by the teachers—a danger [Elbaz \(1991\)](#) highlighted in depth with regards to teachers in particular and [Josselson \(2007\)](#) discussed more broadly.

### 3.4. Data collection and mode of analysis

Due to the exploratory nature of the study, we performed data collection through semi-structured interviews, with the intention of granting participants an opportunity to elaborate as much as

possible while maintaining a loose structure surrounding the study's areas of focus. Teachers were asked to describe what the GCE meant to them, what skills, dispositions, and topics they associated it with, how it may manifest in different contexts, and what they felt GCE should entail. Some questions also addressed issues related to socio-economic and geographic context. The full interview protocol can be found in [Appendix 1](#). Notably, because this study was not based on one definition of global citizenship or a single concept of GCE, teachers presented their own conceptions of the concept and these conceptions guided the interviews. Examples of the differences in the teachers' conceptions of GCE are detailed in the findings section.

The first author conducted the interviews at the teachers' schools—mostly in private offices, although three interviews were held in teachers' lounges. Interviews lasted between 25 and 90 min. All interviews were conducted in Hebrew, with the exception of one interview with an English teacher, conducted in English. The interviews were transcribed in full, omitting personal details and censoring school names.

The analysis was conducted according to the stages of grounded theory analysis, as outlined by [Thornberg and Charmaz \(2014\)](#): initial (open) coding, followed by focused coding and theoretical coding. We also employed the constant comparative approach often associated with grounded theory analysis, so as to supplement our theoretical sampling procedure through constant awareness of the categories emerging from the data in groupings by SES and overall. This approach enabled us to identify when theoretical saturation occurred; namely, once interview statements in each SES began to coincide with the existing data and ceased to provide new categories ([Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014](#)). Ultimately, six categories emerged from the data. These categories were combined into three overarching themes: factors related to teacher perception of student background, school characteristics and environments, and teacher agency. We discuss these themes and their subcategories in the analysis below.

## 4. Results

Our analysis, as described in the previous section, led to the development of a framework suitable for understanding the three main dimensions of the GCE gap, which include factors related to the teachers' perceptions of student background, school contextual factors, and teacher agency. The majority of participants in our study described these factors at length as playing a major role in shaping teachers' perceptions of the meaning and relevance of GCE for their students. Each of these factors, presented here as themes, is broken down into subcategories that reflect different

mechanisms and manifestations of the gap that teachers at schools catering to students of all three SES categories demonstrated.

#### 4.1. Factors related to teacher perceptions of student background

Theoretical and empirical studies have long associated teacher perceptions of student life trajectories, educational needs, and motivations with student SES (Lareau & Conley, 2008; Reay, 2006). In this study, we concentrated on the ways in which students' socio-economic backgrounds shape teachers' perceptions of the relevance of GCE in particular. We found that teachers at all participating schools considered students who have had opportunities to travel and experience different cultures (such as students whose parents worked for international corporations or traveled as part of their jobs) to be more open to and prepared for GCE. Teachers also indicated that the way they perceived students' imagined futures played a role in their inclination and ability to learn and understand contents associated with GCE. The findings from this section are summarized and presented in Table 2, which shows teachers' most common concerns and views regarding each category of perceived student characteristics, in relation to their students' backgrounds.

**Travel experience, cultural exposure, and social capital as prerequisites for global citizenship.** The first mechanism of the GCE gap involves the students' 'basket of experiences from home,' as the interviewees often referred to it. Our analysis shows that teachers' perceptions of students' experiences and exposure (which teachers tend to attribute to parental motivation and ability to socialize and prepare their children to participate in global society) broadly affect the teachers' perceptions of the relevance or the ease of introducing GCE to the classroom.

Teachers noted that some of the activities whereby parents socialize students for global citizenship can be performed locally and include conversing about world affairs, exposing children to the international nature of their parents' jobs, and taking children to international cultural events that take place locally. Teachers felt that students who received this sort of information and exposure at home would be more open to GCE, making it easier to teach related contents to them. Shir, who teaches at a high-SES school, noted: "I think [my students] are exposed to a lot of knowledge and global information at home in many ways, and so they're generally more open [than students who have had less exposure] to learn about and accept global values."

Although teachers consider various home-based activities to pave the ground for GCE, they generally referred to the experiences of global travel as the most prominent way in which some parents prepare their children for global citizenship and GCE. The extent to which teachers at schools in different neighborhoods perceived global travel to contribute to global citizenship varied substantially, perhaps due to the teachers' perceptions of different travel habits employed by families of different SES while traveling abroad. High-SES students were perceived by their teachers as more likely to acquire cultural exposure and historical knowledge on trips abroad, as opposed to low- and mid-SES students, who were said to mostly focus on hotel amenities and consumerism during their travels.

Moreover, teachers perceived students who had never traveled abroad to be underprepared for global citizenship compared to their traveling, mobile counterparts, regardless of any particular travel habits. Adam noted:

I think it [GCE] is important for all students, but there are differences between the students in their level of globalism. The fact that a student has traveled abroad and tasted what it's like to be somewhere else changes his perception of the world; a

tiger who has roamed free in the savannah his entire life knows more and is better prepared than one who has lived in a cage.

This is not to say that teachers perceived GCE to be less important to students who have not received a wide array of global experiences through their families; in fact, while teachers at schools serving a high SES population noted the need to supplement the cosmopolitan capital children brought from home, their peers at low SES schools felt that GCE might be redundant for high SES students and would be most valuable to their own under-exposed students. They felt that providing GCE to students of low SES is more difficult and requires some convincing (as is further discussed in the next category) but did not consider these challenges to negate or undermine its importance, particularly given GCE's potential to minimize social gaps. In Shirley's words:

I think the backgrounds they come from affect how they feel about [GCE]. Like if their dad's a lawyer who knows English and flies abroad to conduct business, then they understand the concept of like a wider thing going on. But when you're from [south Tel-Aviv] ... and no one in your family ever took you abroad, then it's very hard to see past it ... I do think it [GCE] would be more beneficial for kids like these [at her low-SES school].

This part of the analysis strongly connects to Bourdieu's (1986) study of cultural capital and even more so to Weenink's (2008) conceptualization and study of cosmopolitan capital. However, while our findings echo the former, showing that teachers assume lower-SES parents to possess a different habitus than high SES parents and therefore provide lower-SES children with substantially different forms of cultural capital, our findings somewhat contradict the latter's findings. In Weenink's (2008) study of parents' motives in sending their children to international schools in the Netherlands, he found that lower-class parents were likely to rate cosmopolitan capital higher and appreciate its potential in terms of social mobility more so than upper-class parents. In our study, teachers perceived lower-class parents as far less likely to expose their children to sources of cosmopolitan capital and less likely to care if they received it through their school. Of course, this is not a direct contradiction of Weenink's (2008) findings, as his study involved lower-class parents who had sent their children to an international school, while ours concentrates on a public-school population. Likely, moreover, the way teachers perceive parents' affinity to cosmopolitan capital may differ from how the parents themselves perceive it.

**The struggle for survival versus privileged indifference.** Alongside the association between cosmopolitan, social, and cultural capital and the perceived propensity or inclination towards global citizenship, teachers across the sample referred to another factor that could affect students' GCE inclination; namely, a struggle to survive. Teachers at all types of schools mentioned that students experiencing daily social or economic struggles would be too focused on these survival struggles to open themselves up to global issues and GCE. For example, Yoav noted: "most of my students don't have very promising futures, and some of them are very preoccupied with everyday survival and then there's less of an interest [in global contents]." These findings echo those of an earlier study we conducted (Goren & Yemini, 2016), in which teachers from one local school and one international school catering to high-SES students all agreed that GCE is more appropriate and easier to introduce to high-SES students because survival struggles and lack of exposure would hinder low-SES students' ability to comprehend and relate to it. Our results elaborate upon that study by showing

that low-SES students' own teachers also perceive these struggles as hindering the students' ability to comprehend and benefit from GCE.

Paradoxically, teachers of high-SES students in our study referred to their own students as being so privileged that often they were uninterested in anything occurring outside of their immediate environment or unable to comprehend issues such as poverty, world hunger, and even the struggles of different populations within the country. The teachers at high-SES schools who addressed these issues assumed that students living in less affluent areas outside of Tel Aviv but also within the city may be more 'hungry' for information, which could increase their interest in and aptitude for GCE. As Ron put it:

[ .... ] my students don't encounter most of Israel's problems in the education system .... they're in a place where they don't deal with or think about the peripheral areas, they're not busy surviving; but then they lack that hunger [to learn]—and this lack of hunger is very difficult to cope with. There's this saying among history teachers, "can a well-fed child learn about the ghetto ... or would it be better if the child didn't eat for three days and then learned about the ghetto?" ... it's hard to talk about the perils and problems of the world with well-fed, satisfied kids.

Relatedly, Karen, who teaches at a mid-SES school, suggested that privileged students in Tel Aviv especially may lack the necessary 'hunger' for GCE and global contents due to the cosmopolitan nature of Tel Aviv:

Living in this city in their socio-economic status should open them up, because they have no survival struggles, but that makes them too comfortable in their environment, and they have this illusion that they're at the center and they don't need to go far to feel like they're a part of the world. Maybe in other places, students would feel like they need to go searching for the world.

These findings suggest that teachers perceive of a sort of spectrum along which each student can be placed—with a constant survival struggle at one extreme and a privileged lifestyle that is accompanied by a complete indifference to one's extended environment at the other. The 'sweet-spot' for GCE along this spectrum, according to teachers in our study, would be somewhere in the middle: students must have their basic needs fulfilled before they are able to comprehend GCE, but they cannot be so fulfilled that they reach a point of indifference, feeling that they are naturally at the center of all that happens. Lee and Leung (2006) also referred to this phenomenon in finding that teachers in Shanghai were less interested in global events due to their sense of centrality.

**The imagined futures teachers attribute to students and the perceived relevance of GCE.** At high-SES schools, teachers reported a strong focus on the development of concrete skills as part of their perceptions of GCE in practice. These skills included presentations, research projects, debates, marketing techniques, and other initiatives. Teachers at such schools considered these involvements to be concrete ways in which their schools prepare students to compete in global society. At low-SES schools, in contrast, teachers' definitions and perceptions of GCE and its applications were far more focused on empathy and exposure to ideas such as universal values. These differences can be attributed to discrepancies in teachers' understanding of the skills their students will need and utilize in the future, with high-SES students participating in a global job market and low-SES students requiring mostly the skills

necessary to function in the increasingly multicultural Israeli landscape.

Teachers at high-SES schools described their students' futures in terms of global mobility, often following in their parents' footsteps but sometimes also taking advantage of opportunities that might arise. These teachers referred to the globally recognized skills required for work at international corporations as relevant even if the students remain in Israel. In Hadas' words:

It's very important for my students [to be prepared for global society] ... some of my students will definitely study at universities abroad, simply because they can afford it. [...] a lot of them will not work in Israel or will not work for Israeli corporations even if they stay here.

Teachers at low-SES schools expressed their students' wishes to participate in global society as vague at most, and often referred to the need to first 'convince' students that GCE is important and relevant for their futures before any contents associated with the world could be introduced. As Yoav attested: "I often feel if I want to teach something global—even within the [formal] curriculum—I have to first convince them [of its value] and show them how it is relevant to their own lives."

Several teachers at low-SES schools echoed this need to 'prove' to their students that knowledge of global issues and contents are relevant to them and will benefit them in the future, as opposed to teachers at high-SES schools, who reported their students were eager to study global issues and were often the ones to bring them up in the classroom. These findings relate to Ball, Macrae, and Maguire's (1999) study of the trajectories and imagined futures of high school students from the perspective of the students themselves and their parents. The authors explain that the notion of the future and what was necessary for realization of the students' imagined futures was far more calculated and clear for students of privileged backgrounds than it was for less fortunate students. Similarly, our findings show that teachers at high-SES schools perceive their students (some of whose parents worked abroad or in Israel for international organizations and function as part of a global society to some extent) to have formed a better infrastructure for GCE and understood its importance naturally. In contrast, teachers consider lower-class students, particularly those whose parents do not work or participate in the global arena, to have vague notions of what global citizenship could mean in relation to their own present and future lives.

The issue of the teachers' projections for their students' imagined futures also relates to the difference between global citizenship as an *identity model* (as embodied in GCE concentrating on global consciousness in Dill's [2013] terms), as opposed to GCE aimed at providing students with global skills and competencies. Teachers of high-SES students seemed to emphasize global competencies, which they perceived to be relevant for their students' futures. Conversely, teachers at mid- and low-SES schools assumed that their students must first establish a remote understanding of global consciousness before the skills and competencies would become relevant.

#### 4.2. Factors related to school context

The second dimension of the GCE gap we uncovered involves school characteristics, in terms of both diversity and location. We found that teachers at schools with diverse populations could benefit from GCE as a common ground for identity building, as some scholars have suggested (i.e., Banks, 2008); however, such teachers were sometimes displeased with the GCE approach when they felt it may overshadow national identity (Rapoport, 2010).



**Table 3**

Summary of findings regarding school-related characteristics.

	School diversity as a breeding ground for GCE	The illusion of multicultural exposure in a cosmopolitan city
<b>Low and middle SES</b>	Low and Middle SES schools were far more heterogeneous and diverse, leading some teachers to perceive of GCE as beneficial in some situations as a potential common identity model.	Teachers reported that their students are rarely exposed to the global cultural events held in the city, as their parents do not take advantage of the opportunities and the students do not feel connected to the city. The global phenomena that students from low SES schools were exposed to were not cultural but rather related to immigrants and refugees.
<b>High SES</b>	Teachers felt that the lack of diversity at the high SES schools contributed to the students' indifference towards other groups and cultures.	Teachers felt that while their students were exposed to global cultural events in the city, this created an illusion that they did not need to learn about things happening outside of their "bubble."

Additionally, we found that GCE in a cosmopolitan city is not uniform, and that students residing in different areas could be exposed to radically different phenomena related to globalization.

The findings from this theme are summarized and presented in Table 3.

#### 4.2.1. School diversity as a breeding ground for GCE

Teachers at high-SES schools mentioned their students' lack of exposure to other cultures at school as a deficit, but one that is largely evened-out through international travel. Teachers at mid- and low-SES schools, which tend to be more culturally diverse, seemed to feel that the heterogeneous population either created a fertile ground for GCE and encouraged openness or made GCE a necessity (treated somewhat reluctantly).

We found an interesting phenomenon among teachers at one low-SES school comprised of both Arab and Jewish students. Teachers there said that ideally, they would be able to show their students that Israeli citizenship is a suitable identity model for all students, sometimes by stressing the universal aspects of Israeli citizenship rather than the religious ones; however, they conceded the challenges inherent in this approach, given the Jewish nature of national Israeli symbols such as the anthem and flag. Teachers at this school recognized GCE as a potential way to bridge the gaps between students and create a common ground for a shared identity. Shirley, for example, framed the main question as follows: "are we challenging the very conception of Israeli citizenship, or are we saying, 'ok, there's Israeli citizenship that is mostly centered around Judaism, and there's this global citizenship which we can all relate to in the same way?'"

As a civics teacher, Shirley explained the struggles she often experienced in trying to enable her Arab-Israeli students to relate to the concept of Israeli citizenship, despite its exclusionary nature and the significantly Jewish symbols associated with it. In discussing the potential benefits of GCE for her students, Shirley stated that first and foremost it would help the diverse students within her class to relate to one another, and furthermore, it would enable her to stop emphasizing only some aspects of national citizenship that are relevant only to the Jewish students, because there would be another, more inclusive platform for identity creation suitable for all of her students. Likewise, Banks (2008) emphasized the value of multicultural citizenship education in multicultural, diverse contexts and the potential it bears for creating a common ground for dialogue and a shared identity model of the sort Shirley addressed.

At a school with a mid-SES student population, diversity affects the classroom differently. The school population is composed of Jewish Israeli-born students, Arab-Israeli students, and foreign-born students—Jewish and part-Jewish immigrants and children of refugees. Some teachers at this school considered the diversity in their classrooms to hinder the development of an Israeli identity, so they often resorted to the common ground of universalism (sometimes reluctantly, as Rotem admitted): "I feel the diversity in

the classroom hinders my ability to impart an Israeli identity onto my students ... I find myself avoiding a lot of topics to avoid offending anyone." This reluctant form of GCE entering the classroom could reflect some teachers' understanding of their role in the construction of a national identity among students. However, it also points to a similar experience noted by teachers at the mixed Jewish-Arab low-SES school and confirms Banks's (2008) description of the potential alternative citizenship models could hold for the construction of common identities among different groups that maintain respect for group differences. Additionally, Rotem's statements relate to the previously explored phenomenon of teacher resistance to multicultural and peace education and to addressing diversity in the classroom, which has been shown to negatively affect the implementation of curricular and policy changes (Harber & Sakade, 2009; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2008; Puchner & Markowitz, 2014).

Notably, at both schools discussed in this section (the only ones in our sample with substantial diversity or multicultural aspects), most teachers expressed the view that merely attending their school and interacting with students of various backgrounds increased students' tolerance and openness—traits that these teachers associated with global citizenship. However, this notion of 'global citizenship by default' has been found to foster a somewhat hollowed-out understanding of the term (Goren & Yemini, 2016).

#### 4.2.2. The illusion of multicultural exposure in a cosmopolitan city

When asked about the cosmopolitan characteristics of Tel Aviv in relation to GCE and global citizenship, teachers of high-SES students in our sample spoke of the opportunities Tel Aviv offers for exposure to global culture through museum exhibitions and musical concerts. However, they noted that most of those who take advantage of these opportunities are high-SES parents and their children. Teachers at low-SES schools confirmed these views but also tended to refer to other aspects of cosmopolitanism in Tel Aviv (such as the presence of immigrants and African refugees) as factors that expose children to global phenomena. These teachers said that while their students often do not feel connected to the city of Tel Aviv as a whole and are largely defined by their neighborhoods, meeting refugees and immigrants within their schools and neighborhoods does provide them with some exposure to processes related to globalization.

Indeed, teachers at schools serving different populations paint strikingly different pictures, revealing how different socio-economic groups are exposed to widely diverging global phenomena. However, while teachers at low-SES schools confirmed that their students' exposure to immigrants and refugees made them more open to learning about such phenomena and more accepting, as discussed above, teachers at high-SES schools found the cosmopolitan exposure provided by the city to create an illusion among students that they do not need to cultivate an interest in what goes on outside their city. In Anat's words: "Often, someone living in Tel Aviv could feel that they're in the center of the world,

and often they won't be interested in looking any further than their own city." This statement relates to Ron's observation quoted earlier regarding the privilege of his students leading to disinterest in classroom-based GCE—a notion reflected by teachers other at high-SES schools. This approach also echoes [Lee and Leung's \(2006\)](#) findings, discussed above.

Notably, the illusion of exposure does not negate the opportunities offered to students and inhabitants of cosmopolitan cities in general, but rather calls into question the extent to which the environment could passively prepare or predispose students for global citizenship. Teachers at high-SES schools pointed to the fact that their students often saw themselves as living at the 'center of the world' because Tel Aviv is Israel's capital of contemporary culture; teachers considered this attitude to be disadvantageous, preventing students from taking an interest in national or international events taking place outside their city. In contrast, teachers at low-SES schools felt their students were rarely exposed to the global nature of the city itself, since their parents would not take them to museum exhibitions or to other global cultural events in the city.

### 4.3. Teacher agency and its limits

The third and final dimension of the GCE gap concentrates on teachers and their role as agents in the introduction of GCE to their classrooms absent any national GCE policy.

#### 4.3.1. Teacher agency in a policy vacuum

None of the teachers in our study could point to any mention of the term global citizenship or GCE in formal curricula or MOE guidelines, although they did refer to terms such as economic globalization and the 'global village' (a vague term, often left for the teachers to interpret themselves). As such, their own motivation and perceptions of their roles played a key part in the extent to which they introduced GCE-related contents in their classrooms and in the interpretations of GCE presented to students. All interviewed teachers saw themselves as the main agents of GCE in the school system, and all of them believed that all students should be prepared to function in a global society (although some demonstrated aversion to the particular term 'global citizenship,' a phenomenon [Rapoport \(2010\)](#) observed regarding teachers in the US). Notably, this seeming consensus across the sample regarding teachers as agents of GCE could be attributed to the voluntary nature of the study, through which self-selection may have caused only teachers with a certain ideology to choose to participate in a study concerning 'global dimensions of the curriculum,' as it was first presented to them. The teachers in our study all conceded that while they themselves understand the importance of GCE, they are highly skeptical that all teachers would be as inclined to incorporate it, particularly those in districts with fewer resources, both within and beyond Tel Aviv.

The teachers in our study all stated that they had a certain extent of freedom in their classroom to incorporate matters they deemed important, despite the pressure to teach materials for the final exams in years 10–12; homeroom teachers and teachers who taught middle school classes (grades 7–9) perceived themselves to have a greater extent of freedom within the curriculum than other teachers did—a finding common to other studies of Israeli teachers at middle and high schools (e.g., [Yemini & Bronshtein, 2016](#)). Subject teachers in particular felt that the curriculum did not sufficiently make global connections, address global issues, or provide students with the skills to function in global society. As Hadas put it: "Ultimately, it all depends on the teacher. I think global citizenship is important, so I bring it into my classroom. A teacher who is older and perhaps more set in her ways may not feel the same

way." This statement hints at the potentially problematic nature of teacher agency in GCE, absent any policy promoting it; as long as the curriculum does not actively include global citizenship and its themes, the extent of GCE introduced into the classroom depends on the teachers themselves.

Moreover, teachers often defined global citizenship only within the framework of their own discipline (at least initially, before being prompted in the interview to elaborate further). Civics teachers often referred to human rights in their definitions, history teachers referred to knowledge of world events across time and their impact on our lives, literature teachers referred to foreign literature and stories about different cultures, and English teachers referred to the English language as the universal language and a most valued skill for a global citizen. Supposedly, if each teacher at every school were inclined and motivated to include GCE within his or her own classroom, students would be provided with a very holistic and extensive platform for GCE; however, as long as GCE is left solely to the teachers' discretion, its fragmented incorporation could remain insufficient.

These findings point at a need to address global citizenship and GCE in teacher education and training across different subjects, in addition to the need to create policy. Most teachers we interviewed had not encountered the terms 'global citizenship' and 'GCE' in their training process, and those who had encountered them did so in elective courses. Many teachers felt that teachers' colleges would be more likely than the MOE to embrace and promote the idea of GCE. Scholars worldwide ([Lee & Leung, 2006](#); [Schweisfurth, 2006](#); [Yamashita, 2006](#)) have repeated the call to incorporate GCE into teacher training and develop it further, even in countries that implemented a clear policy in this regard; indeed, some deemed GCE a new imperative for teacher training ([Zhao, 2010](#)). In addition, integrating GCE into teacher training may be particularly important due to the difficulties teachers face when they are required to address controversial issues ([Gill & Niens, 2014](#); [Reilly & Niens, 2014](#); [Stornaiuolo, 2016](#)). Studies of programs providing pre-service teachers with motivation and skills to promote GCE found that these programs increased teachers' eagerness and self-efficacy for GCE and offered them some practical tools, although teachers reportedly felt that these tools were insufficient and expected a lack of resources to interfere with their individual attempts at implementation ([Appleyard & McLean, 2011](#)). Notably, our findings regarding teacher agency do not differ clearly according to socio-economic composition of the teachers' schools, suggesting that teacher agency could transcend beyond class boundaries. In fact, this dimension of the GCE gap suggests that the gap can manifest itself not only because of socio-economic differences between students, but also due to teachers' differing approaches, understandings, and experiences.

#### 4.3.2. Boundaries of teacher agency

As discussed above, while nearly all the teachers in this study felt that GCE is important in any contemporary society and especially in Israel as a small and conflict-ridden state, most conceded that it was their own decision to bring global contents into their classrooms and were unsure if other teachers (particularly conservative, older teachers) would be as inclined to do so. Moreover, beyond limitations regarding teachers' own inclinations, teachers noted several factors as limiting their ability to integrate GCE in the classroom. One such factor was parents and students, who often expressed dissatisfaction when teachers introduced global contents. Anat, for example, stated: "I got calls from parents sometimes when I teach about the Armenian genocide; they're upset that their children are learning about another people's holocaust rather than our own." Yoav also noted, "I have to be careful about [introducing global contents] because it can be perceived as anti-patriotic or

anti-religious and they'll say things like 'why are you trying to get us to live in the Netherlands? This is our country.'"

Teachers at schools throughout the SES spectrum made similar observations. However, teachers of low-SES students referred to more occurrences of student objections to what students perceived as left-wing ideas or anything contradicting their world-view, whereas teachers of high-SES students mentioned more parental intervention to ensure that what is taught remains loyal to the official curriculum studied in preparation for the final exam.

When asked if policy could help bridge the gaps, teachers across the study groups were skeptical but agreed that ideally, the MOE would embrace GCE (perhaps under a less controversial name) so as at least to make students and teachers realize that the system aims to prepare students to function in global society. Some teachers perceived elements of what could be described as education for 21st century skills being integrated into the curriculum as a latent form of GCE. These teachers often referred to a duality in the discourse of the MOE, which on one hand wants students to attain the skills necessary for Israel to maintain its title as a 'start-up nation,' but on the other does not seek to expose them to the idea of global society so that they remain loyal, serve in the military, and be less inclined to emigrate. Ron stated eloquently:

"There's a dual language ... because the [education] system knows that the best people it brings up are the ones who will ultimately leave .... but the State of Israel, the start-up nation, wants the international connection; the military expertise wants the international connection; and then when you connect to the international arena, what do you see? That you can also live there .... So we connect to the international arena in economic terms, but socially and culturally we're closing them in [...] we give the kids all these recreational school trips to historical and biblical landmarks and bible studies and heritage studies and we drill these nationalistic values so hard that at the end all they can do is recite the words 'it's good to die for our country' .... this is how they [the MOE] balance it to try and prevent brain-drain."

Teachers' perception of the MOE's potential aversion to GCE is exemplary of the nationalistic curricula often developed in countries experiencing conflict or preoccupied with post-conflict nation building (Al-Haj, 2005; Pinson, 2007). These findings are similar to those Bromley (2009) found in her exploration of cross-national trends in cosmopolitanism in civic education. Bromley (2009) explained the decrease in GCE themes in Eastern European textbooks during the period of 1995–2008 as resulting from a growing need for nation building, which contrasted with the more global communist vision prevalent in that area from 1970 through 1995.

## 5. Discussion

This study has shown the factors and mechanisms contributing to the creation of the GCE gap—a phenomenon we can assume is not unique to the Jewish Israeli context in which we have observed it. The framework developed in this study could prove useful to other scholars in observing and analyzing the gap in their own environments and attempting to promote equality and to minimize social gaps through education.

### 5.1. The GCE gap: extending local inequalities to the global sphere

As noted in the Introduction, globalization's effects on education and society are often explored at the cross-national rather than national level; they are almost never analyzed within the same city. Our findings should encourage scholars to take into account the

differential effects of globalization on education and further explore these issues, particularly when examining GCE. The GCE gap explored and mapped in this paper is one manifestation of these differential effects of globalization. If this gap is perpetuated, students of high SES will be given the tools to become members of a mobile, global elite class, able to fully participate in global society and economy, while students of low SES will remain static, uncritical citizens of the nation (and the nation alone). Sassen (2015) analyzed the formation of transnational classes of citizens in various areas; however, while her extensive research covers not only transnational elites but also migrating blue-collar workers, teachers of low-SES students in our study could imagine no sort of transnational futures for their students. Our analysis reveals that at least in the teachers' perceptions, students are not equally 'globalized'; students from weaker backgrounds do not naturally imagine themselves participating in globalized society in the future. This finding suggests that the liquefaction of national boundaries does not trickle equally down the social ladder. Moreover, while greater attention is being paid to the global middle class (Ball & Nikita, 2014), the decidedly non-global lower class could be marginalized or excluded from the contemporary global discourse. This risk becomes greater over time as even local markets are becoming more globalized, and some students may be left ill-equipped to participate.

The socio-economic aspects of the GCE gap are not limited to the competencies and skills teachers encourage students to develop and the extent to which the teachers find these skills relevant for their students' futures. Students' differing exposure to global phenomena (determined by parental SES and even type of neighborhood in which they reside) seemed to play a major role in shaping their teachers' basic understanding of global citizenship and its interpretation in the classroom. Low SES students, who mainly reside in southern Tel-Aviv, live in diverse neighborhoods and encounter diversity at school. The presence of immigrant classmates from different countries, Arab-Israeli students, and refugees was reflected in teachers' descriptions of GCE and its goals in their opinion. Thus, teachers at low- and mid-SES schools placed a larger emphasis on the humanistic models of GCE—on shared values and human rights—often referring to these aspects as helping to create a platform for dialogue based on a shared identity model, allowing students to better navigate their own globalizing environment. On the other hand, at high-SES schools, teachers considered student exposure to global phenomena as related mostly to their travel experience, their cosmopolitan capital, and the cultures and global issues their parents chose to expose them to. At these schools, teachers seemed to highlight neoliberal aspects of GCE, focusing on global competencies and skills to supplement the sort of exposure and base their students received at home.

In terms of Schattle's (2008) typology of global citizenship, the findings imply that neoliberal definitions of GCE are more common among teachers at schools catering to high-SES schools, while moral cosmopolitanism and some aspects of liberal multiculturalism were more relevant to teachers catering to low-SES students. Notably, no teacher included environmental issues in defining global citizenship. This absence suggests that teachers interpreted the concept itself in utilitarian terms, in reference to what they thought students need in their daily lives and imagined futures, rather than in terms of commitment to global environmental problems and other global concerns (as per Gaudelli, 2016; Myers, 2016).

### 5.2. Differentiating the GCE gap from the civic education and opportunities gap

Although the theoretical framework and rationale in this study partially relied on scholarship surrounding the civic

education and opportunities gap broadly explored by Levinson (2010), Ichilov (2002), and others, we must outline some distinctions between these two concepts, as their manifestations in the classroom are quite different. While as previously mentioned, the civic education gap manifests itself through the extent to which students of different SES are taught and encouraged to be active and knowledgeable citizens, the GCE gap is more of a zero-sum game; students are either deemed suitable and prepared for global citizenship, often seen as global citizens by default (Goren & Yemini, 2016), or the education system denies them access to the global arena by failing to prepare them to participate in it. Yet, teachers of students from high-SES backgrounds perceived them to be somewhat indifferent to global contents given students' confidence that they receive such exposure at home, while teachers perceive low-SES students to be either preoccupied with daily struggles or unexposed to and unappreciative of GCE and its relation to their own lives. These perceptions seem to affect teachers' actual interpretation of GCE and motivation to teach it.

These differences between the civic education gap and the GCE gap could be attributed to the lack of policy regarding GCE, whose fate rests entirely in the hands of individual schools and teachers and their judgment regarding student needs—as opposed to civic education, which is usually regulated and integrated into the formal curriculum. Teachers in our study certainly perceived GCE to be voluntary, in contrast with what they consider mandatory and inflexible curricula in their respective disciplines. Perhaps in education systems that officially integrated GCE into the curriculum, the GCE gap takes on different, more nuanced forms and more closely parallels the civic education and opportunities gap (Wood, 2014).

### 5.3. Minimizing the gap: implications for scholarship and practice

As globalization progresses, global citizenship (and any of its derivatives) will become more of a necessity for education systems worldwide (Myers, 2016; Ramirez & Meyer, 2012). If some education systems continue to ignore these needs and avoid the construction of relevant policies, some students will continue to be taught to navigate and compete in global societies (mostly by their families and schools) while students from weaker backgrounds will be left behind (Goren & Yemini, 2016). Yet as teachers in our study noted repeatedly, policy alone may not be sufficient in minimizing the GCE gap. Teacher agency plays a major role in the enactment of policy in the classroom; therefore, teacher education must undergo reform to include GCE-related contents, and teachers should be encouraged to view students as potential global citizens regardless of their SES or imagined futures (Appleyard & McLean, 2011; Rapoport, 2015).

Although the scope of this study is not very broad, and despite its exclusive concentration on schools belonging to the Israeli public secular Jewish sector, our findings indicate the existence of a GCE gap based on student SES, which may be attributed somewhat to teacher perceptions of their own students. We encourage scholars to be sensitive to class differences, not only when investigating GCE in schools but also when researching policy, as policy is not always 'one-size-fits-all' and could function to broaden social gaps (Reynolds, 2015). In addition, future research endeavors in this field should address teachers' own backgrounds in seeking to understand their conceptions and implementation of GCE.

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### Appendix 1. Teacher Questionnaire & Interview Protocol

#### Personal information

- o What is your professional area of expertise? Please elaborate on your current and former experience, education, and background.
- o Have you lived or worked abroad as an adult or did you as a child?
- o What is your native tongue?
- o Do you speak any languages other than Hebrew? If so, please elaborate.
- o How many years of teaching experience do you have?

Following the collection of personal information, interviewees were informed that **global citizenship education** is a concept that is permeating curricula in schools all over the world, whether as a distinct course or a cross-curricular theme. Broadly stated, GCE can be described as curricular contents aimed at preparing students to function in global society by developing an understanding of global issues, empathy for people of different origins, multi-cultural appreciation, and global skill sets. Global citizenship education typically addresses three main concepts: social responsibility, global competence, and global civic engagement (activism). Each of these terms was explained shortly depending on the level of knowledge of each of the interviewed teachers. We specifically used the framework of Oxley and Morris (2013) to address the basic concepts of GCE, trying to minimize our role in guiding teachers' answers.

#### Main interview questions

- o What do you consider to be the importance of any one of these concepts (competencies for global learning and working environment, civic engagement, social responsibility, etc.) – please explain?
- o Please describe your opinion regarding global citizenship; what do you think its goals should be?
- o In what ways does the curriculum you teach address or not address global citizenship? To what extent do you think the MOE has introduced GCE into the official curriculum, if at all?
- o To what extent is global citizenship education important to your students?
- o Can you think of any risks deriving from global citizenship education? How are these risks addressed (or not) by you or by the school?
- o How would you improve your school's treatment of the issue of global citizenship?
- o What sort of skills do you think global citizenship education should foster in students? Do you feel your students possess these skills?
- o Do you consider global citizenship education to be something all students need, or is it more relevant for some than for others?
- o How do you think global citizenship education might differ in your school vs other schools in the country?
- o Global citizenship education may include controversial topics such as social injustice, war, and poverty; have you experienced any difficulties addressing certain issues in the context of global citizenship education (especially concerning diverse backgrounds of pupils)? How have you dealt with these difficulties?
- o Have you been provided with tools or training to facilitate dealing with controversial issues in class?



- o Can you think of any obstacles to GCE at your school? What can be done to overcome them?
- o What do you think of parents' attitudes towards GCE?
- o Do you think the Israeli reality requires special consideration regarding GCE? If so in what way?

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