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The Diversity Conflation and Action Ruse: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the OECD's Framework for Global Competence

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**The Diversity Conflation and Action Ruse:
A Critical Discourse Analysis of the OECD's Framework for Global Competence
La confusion de la diversité et la ruse de l'action :
une analyse critique du discours du cadre de l'OCDE pour la compétence mondiale**

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Abstract

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 includes a measure of global competence. In PISA, global competence is a cross-curricular domain that aims to measure a set of skills and attitudes that support respectful relationships with people from different cultural backgrounds and engage for peaceful and sustainable societies. This paper builds theoretically and empirically from previous research that investigates the framing and messaging of global education policy as well as the tendency to conflate local and global approaches to diversity and difference in research and practice. We critically explore the OECD's framework of global competence in PISA 2018 by reporting on two key findings from a critical discourse analysis. We examine language use and discursive practices to consider how global competence in the OECD 2018 framework document is structured, messaged, and mediated at an international level, and to what extent it reflects critiques around individualization and conflation of multiculturalism and global citizenship. We organized findings on two major themes, namely encountering the "other" and taking action.

Résumé

Le Programme international d'évaluation des élèves (PISA) 2018 de l'Organisation de coopération et de développement économiques (OCDE) comprend une mesure de la compétence mondiale. Dans le PISA, la compétence globale est un domaine transversal qui vise à mesurer un ensemble de compétences et d'attitudes qui soutiennent des relations respectueuses avec des personnes de différents milieux culturels et s'engagent pour des sociétés pacifiques et durables. Cet article s'appuie à la fois théoriquement et empiriquement sur des recherches antérieures sur le cadrage et la diffusion de la politique éducative mondiale à la fois au niveau national et transnational, ainsi que sur la tendance à fusionner les approches locales et mondiales de la diversité et la différence dans la recherche et la pratique. Nous explorons de manière critique le cadre de compétence mondiale de l'OCDE dans le PISA 2018 en faisant état de deux conclusions clés d'une analyse critique du discours. Nous examinons l'utilisation de la langue et les pratiques discursives pour examiner comment la compétence mondiale dans le document-cadre de l'OCDE 2018 est encadrée, transmise et médiatisée au niveau international, et dans quelle mesure reflète-t-elle des critiques concernant l'individualisation et la fusion du multiculturalisme et de la citoyenneté mondiale. Nous avons organisé les résultats sur deux thèmes majeurs, à savoir rencontrer «l'autre» et agir.

Keywords: global citizenship education; PISA 2018; global competence; CDA; multicultural education discourse

Mots clés : éducation à la citoyenneté mondiale; PISA 2018; compétence globale; analyse critique du discours; discours d'éducation multiculturelle

Global Competence at an International Level

In the past decade, there were mounting pressures for educational reforms that aimed at addressing the highly mobile, and technologically advanced and accelerated nature of the 21st-century world. Some of these reforms have emphasized the importance of “cultivating the global citizen” (Pashby, 2011) in order to increase educational and economic competitiveness on a global scale and meet the needs of the ever more linguistically and culturally diverse student population. These emphases on preparing the 21st-century citizen for the global age are present at the international level, with a growing enthusiasm for educating for global citizenship and global competence (OECD, 2018; UNESCO, 2015). One key example is the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 measure of global competence.

The OECD (2018, p. 7) defines global competence as “the capacity to examine local, global and intercultural issues, to understand and appreciate the perspectives and worldviews of others, to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with people from different cultures, and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development.” Through both a cognitive assessment taken by 15-year-old students and background questionnaires taken by students, teachers, and principals, the assessment aims to understand how well students are able to “critically examine global issues; recognize outside influences on perspectives and worldviews; understand how to communicate with others in intercultural contexts; and identify and compare different courses of action to address global and intercultural issues” (p. 6). This novel assessment is the first cross-national measure of global competence.

Building on related research on the framing of global education policy in national contexts (Engel & Siczek, 2017, 2018), on both the problems and implications of international measures of global competence (Auld & Morris, 2019; Engel, Rutkowski & Thompson, 2019; Grotlüschen, 2018), as well as on critical examination of the assumed relationships between multicultural and global education (Pashby, 2013), this paper further explores the OECD’s definition and framing of global competence in PISA 2018. We offer a critical understanding of how global competence is being framed, messaged, and mediated at an international level. We draw on techniques associated with critical discourse analysis to review the OECD’s (2018) framework document, sharing two primary themes associated with global competence: Encountering the other and taking action.

Global Competence, the Diversity Conflation, and Constrained Action

Although not a new concept, global competence has entered educational conversations with great frequency and urgency. It is a rallying call for the kinds of education reforms needed to better prepare young people for the highly mobile, intensely diversifying, and increasingly competitive global world. Global competence is often promoted as a primary avenue for developing students’ critical thinking and analytic skills about global problems and issues; attitudes of empathy, solidarity, and respect for difference and diversity; and a willingness to actively tackle global problems.

According to Boix Mansilla and Jackson (2011, p.xiii), global competence is “the capacity and disposition to understand and act upon issues of global significance.” Reimers (2009) defines global competency through three overlapping dimensions: the affective dimension (“a positive disposition toward cultural differences and a framework of global values to engage in difference”); the action dimension (“an ability to speak, understand, and think in languages in addition to the dominant language in the country in which people are born”); and the academic

dimension (“deep knowledge and understanding of world history, geography, [and] the global dimensions of topics”) (p. 185). And Boix Mansilla and Jackson (2011) contribute four main components, being able to (1) Investigate the world (students investigate their world beyond their immediate environment); (2) recognize perspectives (students recognize their own and others’ perspectives); (3) communicate ideas (students communicate their ideas effectively with diverse audiences); and (4) take action (students translate their ideas and findings into appropriate actions to improve conditions). Therefore, global competencies are defined around affective dimensions that include looking beyond the immediate context, taking others’ views seriously, and communicating with diverse groups; active dimensions that seek to respond positively to global issues; and academic dimensions that include investigating global issues through diverse perspectives.

Global competence education promotes and prioritizes the globally competent individual as one who flourishes in culturally diverse contexts. In this way, global competence emerges as a kind of necessary skills set to live and work in the interconnected and interdependent 21st-century world. Some scholars have raised concerns about these particular and predetermined activities associated with global competence, predicated on the idea that it is at all possible to identify “global thinking and global action” as a set of behaviours and achievements of the individual learner (Bamber et al., 2018, p. 224). Others have pointed out the focused attention to competencies prioritizes individual competitiveness and strategic upward social mobility over other more collective ideals, such as global solidarity, collective social justice, and planetary citizenship (Misiaszek, 2015; Torres, 2015). The heightened ties between individual competitiveness and global competence underscore a larger neoliberal turn in education, which emphasizes the human capital gains necessary for the *individual’s* upward social mobility. As global competence becomes more intensely identified as a set of skills gleaned by individuals in order to gain a competitive edge, internationalization of schooling spaces becomes primarily an elite making enterprise (Maxwell, 2018). From an equity standpoint both within and across education systems, by enhancing the individual, competitive, cosmopolitan self (Mitchell, 2003), certain rewards are provided to some individuals and communities over others, solidifying existing inequalities across social and geo-political divides (Balarin, 2011; Brooks & Waters, 2015; Grotlüschen, 2018; Marshall, 2011; Pashby, 2011; Weenink, 2007; Yemini, 2014). These critiques highlighting issues around the possibility of measuring global competency without falling into a reductive individualist approach raise important questions regarding the affective, action, and academic dimensions in terms of how the ideal globally competent student relates to diversity and difference, and what types of social actions are promoted.

We wish to focus on the framing of specific components of global competence, namely the dispositions, attitudes, and behaviours required by the globally competent individual. Specifically, there is a need to draw further attention to the tensions regarding the relationship between a broad notion of cultural diversity as positive and the continued and repeated inequalities based on race, language, ethnicity, citizenship status, among many others. Thus, it is important to highlight the interchangeable use of the terms global, intercultural, and multicultural education because these tend to be conflated and/or assumed to be mutually related in such a way as to reinforce rather than attend to such critical questions. In the U.S. and Canadian contexts, as well as in Australia and New Zealand, for example, multiculturalism generally relates to national diversity while global citizenship extends a notion of citizenship to those outside of the nation (Banks, 2009; Openshaw & White, 2005; Pashby, 2013). Scholarly literature on citizenship education in these contexts prioritizes an inclusive approach to cultural diversity and increasingly

promotes a notion of global responsibility; however, the links between multiculturalism and global citizenship education (GCE) are largely assumed. While there is a sense that multicultural understandings extend to global relations, some argue that multicultural and global interculturalism are not necessarily mutually reinforcing and that in some ways multicultural and global, or cosmopolitan, approaches to diversity can be conflicting (e.g., Kymlicka, 2003).

In the United States and Canada, for example, there is a strong tradition of linking multicultural and global education. The limited amount of literature speaking explicitly to this relationship suggests that these fields are held as positive and mutually reinforcing and that a combination of them leads to social transformation. Cortés (1983) argues that a transnational vision of citizenship can and should emerge from emphasizing positive relations between different ethnicities in the U.S. context, emphasizing learning about and avoiding stereotypes (see also Cole, 1984). Similarly, Ukpokodu (1999, p. 300) argues that multicultural and global approaches to education can together develop civic responsibility through “broader understanding of human commonalities and human diversity.” Her approach emphasizes learning about histories within U.S. society and how these histories relate to other cultures of the world (p. 300). Merryfield’s (1996) report on how teacher educators in Canada and the United States bridge multicultural and global education builds from the presumed mutual beneficial relationship between the fields. These examples of the few pieces of scholarship that explicitly treat the relationship between multicultural and global education are largely descriptive of a positively reinforcing relationship with little attention to any potential contradictions or tensions inherent to relating multicultural and global education (Pashby, 2013).

Merryfield’s (1996) study articulates some key related concepts: interconnections, diversity, equity (race and culture), and reflexivity and critical consciousness. Wells (2009) draws on Merryfield’s (1996, p. 145) report, highlighting race and ethnicity as “one of the most tension-inducing topics.” He suggests selecting specific examples of privilege (e.g., South Africa under apartheid) as a way to help American students to open up discussions “of a global form of white privilege that U.S.-based examples likely never will” (p. 145). However, this is challenged by Lucas’ (2010) study of how social studies teachers in predominantly white suburban schools in the United States conceptualize multicultural and global education. She found that teachers use the terms interchangeably and tend to assume that in talking about cultural groups in other parts of the world, they are addressing issues related to multiculturalism, but “in fact they are avoiding multiculturalism’s more volatile and ‘close-to-home’ questions such as racism, social inequality, and the marginalization of different groups in the shaping of the United States” (Lucas, 2011, p. 212). On the other hand, Myers’ (2006) research on conceptualizations of global citizenship education finds that students and teachers in the United States realize “the immediacy of multicultural education . . . a more powerful draw” (p. 387). A key implication of Lucas’ (2011) study is the issue of teachers in a white suburban context using a global focus as a means to overstep engaging with difficult issues of equity and diversity on the local level. Thus, both Lucas and Myers (2006) highlight a key tension in the conflation of multicultural and global education. There is a “fundamental dilemma in teaching about cultures, peoples, and topics that are distant from the students’ and teachers’ direct experiences. An understanding of global studies as fundamentally cultural is also problematic because it may avoid more controversial and political topics” (Myers, 2006, p. 387).

As the different findings from Lucas' (2011) and Myers' (2006) studies indicate, the ways in which multicultural and global education are assumed, related, stepped over, or prioritized relate strongly to the demographics of the particular population of students. This highlights how the relationship between multicultural and global education is highly connected to national discourses of inclusion and critical consciousness-raising (Pashby, 2012). Parker's (2011) study notes yet another conflation with "intercultural education" whereby school leaders claim to have an "international school" because it serves communities in the United States with minoritized students in terms of race, language, ethnicity, and class albeit serving students who are residents of the United States (i.e., not ex-patriots). This suggests that "global" or "international" labels have certain capital and can serve to step over and/or fail to be relevant to local multicultural issues (see also, Engel, Maxwell & Yemini, 2019; Maxwell et al., 2020; Weenink, 2007).

Some theorists writing about cosmopolitan and/or global citizenship education maintain that through considering universal ideas of human rights and diversity, students will identify themselves with an overarching national identity that represents and mirrors their own perspectives, hopes, struggles, and possibilities (Banks, 2004; Osler & Starkey, 2003). Drawing on Appiah (2006) and Nussbaum (2008), Banks (2009) argues that together with multicultural approaches, schools in Western democracies require "cosmopolitan perspectives and values needed to work for equality and social justice around the world" (p. 303). In this view, a global approach to citizenship education contributes new, broader, and more inclusive discourses of belonging to a national community. There is an underlying assumption in Banks' (2009) work that multiculturalism and global citizenship work hand-in-hand towards transformation. In his view, schools help "students understand how cultural, national, regional, and global identifications are interrelated, complex, and evolving" (Banks, 2009, p. 313). While he foregrounds a critical approach whereby students "develop positive racial and ethnic attitudes as well as the knowledge, skills, and perspectives to deliberate with students from diverse groups" (Banks, 2009, p. 314), Banks does not account for a key tension: a dynamic, interactive, and complex understandings of identity construction do not disallow for contradictory ideas of national and global citizenship identities (Pashby, 2013). Dower (2008) recognizes that a global acceptance of universal values or concept of global citizenship could be held in parallel with a national intolerance of other cultures within a society (see also Kymlicka, 2003).

Therefore, assuming multicultural and global approaches work together inherits critiques of both multiculturalism and global education. Based on his study of global imaginaries over time in Canadian curricula, Richardson (2008) warns that in practice, discourses of diversity are centered on a recognition of how 'we are all the same' that serves to erase differences and to privilege Western ways of knowing. Pike (2008, p. 43) adds that the very possibility of re-imagining community is itself a privilege: "post-nationalism is a luxury of the prosperous and secure." It is therefore significant to consider hidden and important tensions in the assumption that global competencies inherently promote equitable relations between diverse and differently positioned groups. It is also evident that national and local contexts shape how teachers and students' take-up of global issues in relation to local and national issues (Brooks & Waters, 2015). We argue that it is important to consider the extent to which the OECD's framework document on global competencies reflects the trend towards conflating multicultural and global education.

A related concern reflected in literature on global education is the emphasis on taking

action as a key competence. It is important to consider education for citizenship of any kind as embedded in wider political contexts in which students ought to be encouraged to be agents of change, rather than passive receivers of information. However, as with promoting diversity, active citizenship is a contested discourse (Ross, 2007). For example, Gough (2002, p. 1219) has long been arguing that “think globally and act locally” is a premise that fails to question “the privileged status of the Western knowledge systems.” Indeed, a key aim of global citizenship education has been to promote civic action to redress global injustices (Evans et al., 2009). Andreotti (2006) calls for critical literacy to be centered so “taking action” is linked to reflexivity. Because of the varied contexts in which learners are situated and in which systemic injustices occur around the world, she argues there can be no single, universal approach. Further, actions cannot be predetermined nor imposed:

Action is always a choice of the individual after a careful analysis of the context of intervention, of different views, of power relations (especially the position of who is intervening) and of short and long term (positive and negative) implications of goals and strategies. (p. 49)

Without critical reflexivity, it is possible that actions indicative of global competency will reinforce rather than transform existing relations and systems of power (see also Taylor, 2012). Recent work that investigate secondary teachers in northern Europe found that a drive towards action competency can feel at odds with critical reflexivity whereby the former seems overly intellectual and a hindrance to determination (Pashby & Sund, 2020).

Similar to the potential conflation between multicultural and global education, the idea of active citizenship as a competence must be carefully unpacked in relation to local inequalities. Mitchell (2003, p. 389) observes the significance of historical and geographical scales in the contemporary global context: “the being and becoming of a citizen as an active participant in a democratic community shifts.” Ultimately, rather than educating a “good citizen” to be a “well-rounded, nationally oriented, multicultural self,” in the current context, citizens are determined by a complex set of skills necessary for individual success in global economies (p. 399). In evoking active citizenship as a key global competency, it is important to consider whether and to what extent students share access to the means for action. As Kennelly and Llewellyn (2011) note, there remain unanswered questions in citizenship education curricula regarding who has the right and responsibility to act. As Faulks (2006) argues, an ethos of active citizenship inclusive to all groups cannot be achieved if issues of racism and social exclusion are not tackled. To overly concentrate on individual behaviour while neglecting structural constraints on active citizenship is “to teach a particular and one-dimensional version of citizenship at odds with the political realities” (Faulks, 2006). Therefore, it is important to carefully consider how the discourse of action is taken up in the OECD framework of global competencies.

International Frames of Global Competence and PISA’s Policy Implications

The OECD’s introduction of PISA in 2000 with its cross-national assessment data contributes to a new accountability paradigm which governments worldwide began to debate and assert an even stronger link between education systems, human capital, and economic prosperity (Morgan & Volante, 2016). Based on this narrative, a growing discourse around the importance of “human capital” for the 21st century (Keeley, 2007) has ushered in a comprehensive Skills Strategy (Lingard et al. 2016), purporting that skills are the largest determinant of a country’s economic growth. With the launch of the PISA 2018 measure of global competence, the OECD has developed an international definition and framework of what it means for a young person to be

globally competent, with a potential to shape this understanding in education systems worldwide (Auld & Morris, 2019). Building theoretically and empirically from related works on the framing and messaging of global education policy both nationally and cross-nationally (Engel & Siczek, 2017, 2018), the policy implications of PISA (Engel & Frizzell, 2015; Grek, 2009; Sellar & Lingard, 2014), and critiques of international measures of global competence (Auld & Morris, 2019; Engel, Rutkowski & Thompson, 2019; Grotlüschen, 2018), this paper directly analyzes the OECD's framework of global competence.

Although not a traditional policy text, the premise of this analysis is that OECD framework documents effectively act-like policy. First, these documents communicate particular normative values in an authoritative framework (Easton, 1953), with the power to guide national and sub-national discussions about education policy formation (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Second, rationales underpinning education policy formation are often driven by articulations of problems in need of solutions, and that defining the problem is "the most important decision" in how policies are formed (McLaughlin, 2006, p. 210). Therefore, understanding how an ambiguous concept like global competence is understood and how the problem statements are discursively framed by the OECD are both highly relevant to understanding the operationalization of an international measure of global competence across different settings. In particular, exploring the framing and messaging of global competence can be important for juxtaposing the OECD's policy framing with other conceptions and/or national-level policy documents. This point is especially important as literature has repeatedly pointed to the growing power of PISA's influence in shaping education policy formation dynamics (Bieber & Martens, 2011; Sellar & Lingard, 2014).

The "PISA effect" in education (Grek, 2009) is well-documented. It is illustrated in the growing numbers of education systems participating in PISA. It is also illustrated in PISA's particular influence within education policy making in different systems (see, e.g., Bieber & Martens, 2011; Bonal & Tarabini, 2013; Engel & Frizzell, 2015; Ertl, 2006; Takayama, 2009). In some cases, PISA serves as a "negative external evaluation" used to define a policy problem, motivate or legitimize particular reform efforts, and become part of the "preconditions of borrowing" (Phillips & Ochs, 2003, p. 452). PISA can form the basis for elevating some systems as "top-performing" and therefore worthy to borrow from (Phillips & Ochs, 2003; Takayama et al., 2013). In other cases, PISA creates legitimacy for the OECD's direct policy guidance to help solve educational problems, which scholars have referred to as "voluntary policy convergence" (Bieber & Martens, 2011). As such, PISA's policy implications represent a larger "social phenomenon" (Meyer & Benavot, 2013) effectively reshaping authority in educational governance.

Methods

The empirical study upon which this paper is based took up the following question: How is global competence in the OECD 2018 framework document being framed, messaged, and mediated at an international level, and to what extent does it reflect critiques around individualization and conflation of multiculturalism and global citizenship? We drew largely on critical discourse analysis (CDA), which employs the study of language in use to reveal patterns and hidden rules of how language is used and narratives are created (Gee, 2010; Gubrium & Holstein, 2008; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). CDA positions the study of language as a form of social practice and mode of action, which is both socially constructed and reproduced (Torfing, 2005; Wetherell et al., 2001). Our study relied on CDA, as developed by Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995, 2003) and others (Van Dijk, 2001) to explore the relationship between language and discourse as a form of

social practice. These social practices are detectable in language and thus methods are based on linguistic and rhetorical analyses.

CDA is an appropriate method to examine both power and ideology. Documents like the PISA 2018 framework for global competence are an assertion of authority through language, imposing this authority through textual representations that constitute a dominant vision of truth. In this sense, language creates social realities as an ‘instrument of power’ used by all members of society in their struggle to understand, develop, shape and change the world and how others envision it (Bourdieu, 1991). Consequently, the power of language is twofold. First, power can be found by determining what words are included or hidden and excluded within a text. Second, power is declared through who authors the words, as authority comes to language from outside. Thus, language is a key to understand the PISA 2018 document and the policy debate it represents about global competence. Through their language use, the diverse and dominant meanings from policymakers can be revealed, and interpreted.

Meaning is neither universal nor determinate; it depends on context and the perception and interpretation of participants. Context is “those aspects of the circumstance of actual language use, which are taken as relevant to meaning” (Widdowson, 2000, p. 126) and may influence the production, the structures, and the comprehension of discourse. Context is divided into linguistic (words, phrases, sentences), situational (register, field, tenor, mode) and cultural (value system, ideology) contexts. This cultural context is often not explicitly stated within a particular policy document, yet is taken-as-given through the language. The values underpinning the PISA 2018 document framework may be revealed using analytic tools as “contextualization cues” (Gumperz, 1982). Through contextualization, certain silences will be highlighted as such international organizations like PISA are driven by neoliberal ideologies of education and frame conceptions on global competence.

Specifically, we utilized Fairclough’s (1995) three-dimensional “dialectical approach” to CDA, which includes description, interpretation, and explanation. This tri-local approach commits the analysts to “analyze the relationship between texts, processes and their social conditions, both the immediate conditions of the situational context and the more remote conditions of institutional and social structure” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 21). First, we focused on identifying and describing the linguistic features in the text. In this stage, we read through the text for basic comprehension. We then used lexical tools driven by corpus technologies to examine the frequency of word use and what is known as “keyness” on a linguistic level, which relates to the extent to which words are particular to a text relative to a general reference corpus (Engel & Siczek, 2017, 2018). The analysis of keyness entails a statistical comparison of words in the submitted text, in this case the main text of the OECD’s framework of the global competence assessment with references and appendices omitted, against an open access corpus-based lexical tool called the Compleat Lexical Tutor (see <https://www.lextutor.ca>). This tool uses a 14-million mixed written-spoken word corpus. This analysis revealed the extent to which content words, with the exception of proper nouns, were mentioned with the most frequency. It is important to note that this analysis does not reveal the relative significance of word use, but merely provides a count of how many times a particular word is used in the text. Although frequency of use is a relatively basic measure, the repeated use of a word helps to quantify areas of emphasis within a given document. In this case, it contributes to the understanding of how global competency is being messaged at an international level by the OECD.

In the next phase of interpretation, the meanings and understandings of text were examined to better understand how they manifest in their linguistic choices in an interaction. In

the second phase, we adopted a critical form of discourse analysis from a rhetorical linguistic perspective to describe the discursive practices and build a complex characterization of the framework document. We posed questions about what language the author (i.e., the OECD) is using to frame the primary rationales for global competency? What is included and what is hidden in the grammatical and vocabulary arrangements? Rhetoric and Critical Discourse Analysis share a specific explanatory concern in that they are equally committed in tracing the connection between the way texts are constructed and their conditions of production and reception. The goal is to understand not simply what decision-makers say, but how they say to achieve purpose (persuasion). There are many different kinds of rhetorical devices or strategies that are used within the practice of policy documents production. Those that will be analyzed constitute only a small part of them. A core group of linguistic features ought to be examined in the search of the framing of the global competence in PISA 2018, including:

- *Lexical choice*: the use of nouns, verbs or adjectives; repetition of words; the use of technical, academic register.
- *Positive/Negative self, other presentations*: a semantic macro strategy used for the purpose of division between good and bad; superior and inferior; us and them.
- *Modality*: a semantic category primarily related to the expression of alternative thoughts and attitudes, and the means by which writers' attitudes towards what they are writing are conveyed.

Finally, the third level of analysis sought to explain the linguistic choices in terms of a particular theoretical orientation towards issues of ideology and power relations. Discursive choices in this case on the part of the writers of the OECD framework on global competencies are seen as responses to the social, cultural, and economic constraints, which they consider to be operating in the particular context and situation. In what follows, we organize findings according to two major themes: encountering the other and taking action.

Findings

Encountering the other

The PISA 2018 framework argues that global competence is needed “to live harmoniously in multicultural communities; to thrive in a changing labour market; to use media platforms effectively and responsibly; to support sustainable development goals” (OECD, 2018, p. 4). This expanding diversity of cultures, which is changeable, dynamic and transformative, requires the acquisition of cross-cultural competence. Competence is much more than a simple set of skills. Rather, it is regarded as

a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values successfully applied to face-to-face, virtual or mediated encounters with people who are perceived to be from a different cultural background, and to individuals' experiences of global issues (i.e., situations that require an individual to reflect upon and engage with global problems that have deep implications for current and future generations). (p. 7)

Race, ethnicity, gender, religious affiliations, and social strata are uncontrollable variables and thus affect the individual's treatment in various interactions either positively or negatively. To address this, implications for global competence in education have emphasized, among other things, the ability to understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others as well as to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions across cultures (p. 9–10).

Thriving in an interconnected world and managing the increasing prevalence of daily intercultural encounters is heavily stressed in the PISA framework. Linguistic analysis reveals

that among the key terms in the document are notions of relations, relationships, and encounters between cultures. The most important (key) word is “relation.” Appearing 48 times in the document, relation is framed as the connections between diverse cultures in which all participants demonstrate sensitivity and respect towards others. For example, the document mentions the importance of fostering “peaceful relationships between people,” improving “social relations” in schools, and developing “intercultural relationships” between diverse cultures. It stresses that “adaptable learners can more easily develop long-term interpersonal relationships with people from other cultures” (p. 15). This positive relationship building in a cross-cultural environment is first and foremost in establishing cross-cultural management and avoiding conflicts; it is grounded by the idea that our culture and way of behaving differs from the other but neither is it superior.

Moreover, words like “stereotype,” “misconception,” “conflict,” “prejudice,” “bias,” “breakdown,” “discrimination,” and “intolerance” are used extensively. These cognitive representations are often framed as the dangerous outcomes of encounters with the other when students are not prepared with the skills and dispositions required to possess global understanding; consequently, poisoning our social interactions in most cases. Human rights education is one emphasized approach in the framework document to reduce multicultural issues in a way that knowledge “is instrumental for young people to develop values such as peace, non-discrimination, equality, justice, non-violence, tolerance and respect” (p. 13). Further, the document argues that this may be particularly successful through the work of schools as “they are places where human dignity takes on a concrete meaning, because every student deserves equal justice, equal opportunity and equal dignity” (p. 19).

Moreover, the term “intercultural” is mentioned 74 times in the framework document. Problems like climate change, war and conflict, forced migration, and poverty have increasingly forced people to move across boundaries which often bring along new languages, cultures, and worldviews. This again brings out the need for a global and inclusive form of education as a response to the changing demographics of students. In the discourse of cultural difference, globalization and global citizenship are perceived as bringing cultural diversity into the daily lives of citizens. The framework argues that the development of intercultural competence should depart from peaceful dialogue in daily interaction to promote a sustainable living together and to provide opportunities for critical, ethical, and responsible action towards the different other.

Taking action

Connected to the idea of encountering the other is the kind of behaviour needed within such encounters. The PISA 2018 framework has integrated “taking action for collective well-being and sustainable development” among the four target dimensions that foster students’ global competence. In light of this dimension, it has been emphasized that global competence requires an active and responsible membership towards society and the world to improve the living conditions for students and others in a sustainable way, and to promote a culture of peace, human rights, and global citizenship. In this context, a specific action verbs that convey how to manage encounters with the global other are used, namely “situate, motivate, decode, affiliate, mediate, enquire, cultivate, articulate, collaborate, interact, minimize, communicate, comprehend, sustain, evaluate, facilitate, adapt, engage, and integrate.” This mediated discourse is committed to a project of moral imperative to advance positive social change, to take social action, and more importantly, to consider global problem and the behaviour of other people from multiple points of view.

In the framework document, the “other” is distinguished, valued, respected, and positively described, and taking action always depends on building and preserving an ethical relation with the culturally different individual or group. The other is created through a process of othering, in which through global competence students are constructed as a group inherently different from each other, but sameness in terms of human rights always emerges to the forefront. Examples include: “a desire to understand the other and efforts to include marginalized groups, emphasizing individual’s capacity to interact with others across differences in ways that are open, appropriate and effective, and willingness to engage with others and their perspectives”(p. 10); “taking action may imply standing up for a schoolmate whose human dignity is in jeopardy” (p. 11); “taking an active part in conflict management and resolution requires listening (to the other) and seeking common solutions” (p. 14); “encouraging students to take actions to safeguard both tangible and intangible cultural heritage around the world, as well as actions to promote the rights of all people to embrace their own perspectives, views, beliefs and opinions” (p. 20). From this perspective, conflict management is an integral part of democratic institution design, and promoting cultural neutrality is thought of as a way to achieve positive peace. The educational planning in the PISA 2018 framework focuses on conflict prevention and aims to ensure an understanding of human rights, developing constructive attitude of living together, and solving problems and preparing for active citizenship.

Decision-makers often use rhetorical strategies to persuade and enhance the context of communication. Capturing desire is one of the rhetorical challenges in policy document discourse. To understand how rhetoric captures desires, one should pay considerable attention to the three kinds of proofs that Aristotle defined, namely ethos, pathos, and logos (Fischer & Miller, 2017). The PISA 2018 framework document depends largely on pathos since it relied on the receiver’s emotions while addressing cultural issues, and also on logos since it conveyed arguments information in logical ways. As a way of illustration, the document stresses the important role of school as the space to transmit skills to understand the world and to take action through integrating global perspective into the existing curriculum.

A range of learning activities with specific pedagogical tools is given as examples for enhancing students’ engagement with the other to take action in the future. These include project-based learning such as initiating an environmental awareness campaign at school where everyone participates (p. 4); or learning from current events and taking a stand about a global issue such as becoming an advocate for the girls in Bangladesh who work in poor conditions in factories (p. 9); and engaging in open and effective interactions with different cultures such as appreciating Ramadan through fasting with the other regardless of religious differences (p. 10). Providing examples of successful practices on how to deal with cultural clashes inside and outside school, the framework aims to give a proper sense of integrity-based standard behaviour associated with an action and support a positive interaction with the other. By revealing drawbacks, gaps, and negative consequences of earlier practices, the document shows how beneficial an up-to-date change towards fostering students’ global competence would be.

Modality is a discursive device by which the speaker’s thoughts and attitudes are conveyed. As a matter of fact, the expressions are accompanied by rationales that explain why the subject must, can, should, needs to, or may act in a particular way. The analysis of modality features in the PISA 2018 framework shows that the modal auxiliary verb “can” is used 173 times and “should” 43 times, while the modal verb “must” is only used eight times and “may” 27 times. It was found that “should” and “can” are linked, to a great extent, with action verbs such as: can provide, can encourage, can promote, can learn, can teach, can boost, can help, can evaluate, can

develop, can assess, can shape, can result, can explore; should encourage, should assess, should adapt, should act, should promote, should learn, should be able to. The modal auxiliary verb “can” expresses ability or characteristics of the individual beyond the subject’s control. Generally speaking, it can be evoked as a strategy for maintaining a good image. When the subject, speaker or writer, is not sure if something happens or not, he/she describes it as possible only under certain circumstances, and thus make a detachment from the statements and minimize the sense of responsibility. The PISA 2018 framework document suggests that the OECD is highly aware of the need for students to become globally competent. It provides guidance and recommendations for schools and educators to promote the skills and knowledge necessary to solve global issues across cultural differences. However, cultural contexts differ; the PISA 2018 framework assessment can only offer insights on policy approaches to global competence and how to prepare teachers for it. It does not guarantee a change or full acquisition.

Throughout the framework document, a positive self-presentation strategy appears, with emphasis on PISA 2018 as the initial motivator for change, thereby generating and creating a likeable, positive, and trustworthy image of the OECD institution and its assessment. This is evident in the following highlights: “PISA aims to provide a comprehensive overview of education systems’ efforts to take action towards building sustainable and thriving communities” (p. 5–6); “PISA contributes to the existing (global education) models by proposing a new perspective on the definition and assessment of global competence” (p. 7); “PISA will assess at what stage 15-year-old students are situated in (the acquisition of global competence process) this process, and whether their schools effectively address the development of global competence” (p. 7); “the PISA proficiency scale is expected to yield results that can be interpreted in educational policy terms” (p. 22); “the PISA approach reflects the needs and the constraints of an international, large-scale assessment” (p. 38). These findings support Auld and Morris’s (2019) argument that through this international measure, the OECD takes up the role as “primary assessor” of the UN SDGs and their outcomes, enabling it to elicit policy advice to governments worldwide.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, we have asked the following questions: (1) How is global competence in the OECD 2018 framework document being framed, messaged, and mediated at an international level? (2) To what extent does it reflect critiques around individualization and conflation of multiculturalism and global citizenship? Our CDA of the document found two key findings: encountering the other and taking action. We find that global competencies inherit the conflated/mutually related assumption of multicultural and global education. Most prominently, this is illustrated in the powerful message that global competency requires encounters with “the other,” constructed as a culturally distinctive individual or group; and that multiculturalism is seen as a key characteristic of working environments. Therefore, there is a strong human capital rationale for these encounters. Interestingly, however, the language describing this competence focuses on an ethical notion of relationality to “the other,” and yet the competence is framed as an individual issue. For example, there is no attention given to the systems that structure difference and govern how one relates to a diverse “other.”

Similar to the literature on the relationship between multicultural and global education reviewed at the beginning of this paper, the OECD framework focuses on mutual positivity and not on navigating ethical tensions. Rather, global competence frames difference as something individuals manage, and conflict as something to be avoided. This is reflected in the use of

individualized adjectives like “bias” and “prejudice;” the framing suggests that they can presumably be unlearned. In fact, it may be the case that students require competencies to engage with difference and conflict, as well as to recognize that one is always positioned in a way not to fully understand another person’s experience and is profoundly socialized in a culture. Further, the focus on human rights as a source of values could be a way to address this if the conflicts are also taken up because human rights form a strong international structure but conflicts do arise between, for example, freedom of speech and freedom from persecution. The emphasis on dignity as an individual is again dislocated from wider structural issues. A student could measure well on global competencies without having a deep understanding of the historical and present-day systemic reasons. It is also interesting that the document gestures to critical, ethical, and responsible action given that the competencies around intercultural skills are quite individualized and not strongly critical.

Given the tendency to continue the trend of assuming a positive and mutually reinforcing relationship between diversity at home on one hand and universality on the other while ethically relating to global “others,” the focus on taking action raises another potentially problematic dynamic. If globally competent students are not engaging with the systems that create and maintain inequalities, the actions they take may, at best, reinforce the status quo, and at worse, reinforce existing unequal relations (Andreotti, 2006). To extend our analysis, we draw on Tarc (2015) who ties together justice-oriented desires, active learning, and neoliberal times in his analysis of the field of global citizenship education. He identifies a key “tension between student efficacy and witnessing, let alone transforming, fraught conditions of the world” (p. 52). Our findings suggest that PISA opens up opportunities to highlight ethical relations, but remains problematically individualistic in its orientation towards what Mitchell (2003) framed as the “strategic cosmopolitan,” thereby exemplifying a predominant aim of more neoliberal, skills-based orientations to global citizenship (Engel, 2014; Rizvi, 2009). The framework expresses a strong attention to individual behaviour and value sets without the necessary critical reflexivity to acknowledge and respond to systemic power imbalances at the heart of global inequalities. There has been a great deal of scholarship looking towards critical transformative approaches and questioning the inherited frameworks for relating to difference (e.g., Andreotti, 2011; Andreotti et al., 2018; Niens & Reilly, 2012).

Further, Tarc (2015) argues that this push for action on the part of our young people raises an ethical issue of intergenerational relations:

Projecting our own incapacities to enact a sustainable human future for most of the world’s peoples onto the next generation prior to their entry into political citizenship seems unfair and disingenuous. Rather than adopt the empowering or transformative mantras of GCE, international educators might envision education particularly in global times, at its best, as a weak force—vital and potentially transformational—but slow, contingent, and without predetermined outcomes. (p. 52)

Tarc (2015) suggests that the most coherent approach to promoting active global citizenship education is an anchor of openness to engage in the world reflectively (p. 53). This need to see reflexivity as an outcome or anchor is particularly important given the tendency to assume a mutually-reinforcing relationship between multicultural and global education. The conflation and/or neutral relationship has led to an over-stepping of fraught issues around race and coloniality and their positioning in local-global nexus because it animates the assumption that being open to “others” is an individual trait. Pushing an action discourse ahead of engagement

with difference is not likely to open up spaces for young people to live differently or tackle on-going global issues otherwise from extant approaches.

Overall, our analysis finds that global competence may represent a larger culture of performativity, prioritizing the actions and achievements of the individual citizen, thereby “individualizes citizenship by seeing it in terms of what individuals have, rather than in terms of what individuals do together” (Mannion et al., 2011, p. 454). This hyper individualist idea of the global citizen “making a difference” may shrink horizons of social action whereby individual action is embedded in capitalist frames of “helping others” (Tarc, 2012; Waters & Brooks, 2019). The risk inherent in the hyper individualistic, charitable globally competent citizen is the reinforcement of elite making, where humanistic values are potentially overshadowed by individual gains (Maxwell, 2018), or as Waters and Brooks (2019) point out, might unintentionally strengthen neocolonial dynamics. Thus, we suggest that while providing an important international discursive space for highlighting the importance of global learning and engaging with difference, the framework inherits key tensions being worked out in exciting new ways in educational research and could represent a drawing of existing lines rather than a move towards building transformative relations between individuals and communities. Further research will be needed to investigate how policymakers respond to the PISA 2018 results on global competencies. If they set out to improve their country’s score, what will be prioritized or overlooked? And what effect global issues and ethical relations are taken up in schools worldwide.

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