

Chapter 7

The Potential of Teacher–Student Communicative Action to Overcome the Repercussions of Global Crises

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Abstract

Globally, teachers are operating in environments influenced by past, current and anticipated crises. Students today need to develop the critical skills that will empower them to be agents of change in response to these crises. Education for global citizenship offers an approach that can mediate both content and process priorities, yet many teachers do not have the tools and strategies needed to deliver these dual outcomes. Habermas' theory of communicative action offers a framework through which teachers can harness the potential of the so-called *learning lifeworld* to educate for global citizenship. This is of particular importance when considering education through the lens of international sustainable development. The contextualisation of communicative acts within the learning lifeworld offers the prospect of elevating students as agentic leaders within their communities. This chapter focuses on and unpacks the concept of education for global citizenship as a key tool for overcoming current crises and positions the theory of communicative action as a viable theoretical framework in the delivery of that concept. The ethnographic case study presented explores students' perspectives on how their learning lifeworlds shape their identities, highlighting the role of culture, society and person in combatting lifeworld colonisation and nurturing global citizens. It finds that the theory of communicative action can be used as a tool to help students develop

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self-directedness and independence. It is argued teachers can use communicative acts to promote and model the values of education for global citizenship, ultimately better preparing today's students for tomorrow's world.

Keywords: Habermas; lifeworld; communicative action; education for global citizenship; ethnographic framework

7.1 Education for Global Citizenship: A Brief Background

Before detailing Habermas' theory of communicative action and its use as a framework for exploring how learning lifeworlds shape students' identities as global citizens, it will first be helpful to establish the context of global citizenship in this chapter. In the current educational context, crises sit central to the experiences of both teachers and students alike. In the last few years alone, disruptions related to climate change, political unrest, international conflicts, technological developments and a global pandemic have demanded that we revisit the purpose of schooling and what an education means for children today. While each of these crises might be attributed to the priorities inherent in past educational models, it is recognised that educational systems which prioritise education for global citizenship, and in particular citizenship education, might provide the best opportunity to overcome these challenges.

[Kushnir and Nunes \(2022\)](#) identify education as the location of soft power in the debate around global sustainability education, as it seems to be key in achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) identified by the United Nations. Despite the difficulty in defining what is meant by education, education is explicitly and implicitly embedded in the SDGs and viewed as critical to the global success towards these goals by their 2030 deadline. By arguing that international policymakers ought to combine their efforts to 'promote a world consensus around the meaning of the scope of education and its potential for development, and to work out more practical ways in which education can support and facilitate sustainable development', [Kushnir and Nunes \(2022, p. 16\)](#) underscore the need for both theoretical and practical action in the educational sector towards sustainable development.

The challenge [Kushnir and Nunes \(2022\)](#) raise with regard to the lack of a singular definition of education in the context of sustainable development holds true for the definition of education for global citizenship more specifically. [Estellés and Fischman \(2020, p. 3\)](#) explain that it is 'frequently presented as the result of a simple evolutionary pedagogical model, that is, the latest, best, and most comprehensive model that incorporates all the positive goals and practices from previous efforts ... and overcome their limitations'. Both pairs of authors call attention to the complexity and multifaceted nature of global citizenship, one that continues to evolve over time.

[Mannion et al. \(2011\)](#) refer to the increasing focus on globally orientated pedagogical models and curricula as a set of key concepts without offering a singular definition. [Table 7.1](#) presents key aspects of three sub-fields they identify within

Table 7.1. Based on Key Aspects of the Education for Global Citizenship Sub-fields as Identified by Mannion et al. (2011).

Environmental Education	Development Education	Citizenship Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation and environmental education • Sustainability studies • Ecological and nature studies • Human–environmental relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education for sustainable development • Third world studies • Global education • Globalisation • Peace education • Social justice and overcoming inequity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justice and democracy • Civic responsibility and civic studies • Private sphere as political • Entrepreneurial education • International education

the umbrella concept of education for global citizenship: environmental education, development education and citizenship education.

Their analysis, synthesised above, includes both a lineage of how each sub-field generally originated as well as commentary on the points of intersection across all three sub-fields. Together, these sub-fields have both historical and contemporary influences on the broader concept of education for global citizenship used today.

At one time, education for global citizenship was critiqued as an education exclusively for the elite (see Drerup, 2020; Estellés & Fischman, 2020). International schools that were founded to provide a Western-style education to the children of internationally mobile parents increasingly cater to both expatriate and local families who want their children to be educated in ideologies characterised by individualism, freedom, democracy, egalitarianism, rationalism, optimism and/or universalism (Tate, 2016). Originally created to serve students in international schools, the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) offers four programmes, at least one of which is implemented in over 5,700 schools in 160 countries worldwide (IBO, 2024). The IBO mission ‘aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect’ (IBO, 2019), and each of its programmes focuses on nurturing global perspectives, international mindedness and independent learners (Hill, 2003; Storz & Hoffman, 2018).

Drerup (2020) offers an argument for a universal application of global citizenship education as one that is worthwhile and worthy for all learners. While he acknowledges some of the difficulties with global citizenship education as one originally reserved for the elite, he states that this conflation of genesis and application is wrong: global citizenship education ‘should not be identified with an elite education, but understood as a means of combatting global educational, economic and political injustices, among others, in the form of a general education, *also* of the elites’ (Drerup, 2020, p. 37). Thus, it is imperative that educators today can provide an education for global citizenship that addresses both the content and skills their students will need now and into the future.

In both national (Mannion et al., 2011) and international (Gardner-McTaggart, 2018; Hayden & Thompson, 2016) school systems, education for global citizenship

has become increasingly central in the development of curriculum objectives and the articulation of learner outcomes. This approach can serve as a mechanism for providing students with the knowledge, skills and dispositions they might need to engage with global issues (Mannion et al., 2011). An increased focus on cognitive, metacognitive and affective skill instruction and development is recognised as particularly crucial to a holistic, future-focused education that prepares students for an uncertain future (Häkkinen et al, 2016; Li, 2012; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2018; van de Oudeweetering & Voogt, 2017). In order to reach their potential, students must be supported to apply cognitive skills in increasingly complex and unfamiliar scenarios (Pellegrino, 2017). Funke et al. (2017) recognise the connection between knowledge and problem-solving and reiterate that the teaching of cognitive competencies is an essential element of preparing students to solve the problems they will face well into the 21st century.

This focus on what students will need to overcome crises, as opposed to reproducing past mistakes, is essential for teachers today. Mannion et al. (2011, p. 452) argue that there is ‘... a need to work critically and creatively at new ways of “doing” education that respond adequately to the new condition of citizenship in a global context’. Estellés and Fischman (2020) speak to the impact of an increased focus on education for global citizenship on teacher training programmes, cautioning that an oversimplification of what it means to be a productive citizen can erode the effectiveness of teachers in being able to deliver authentic and meaningful learning experiences to their students. Considering the three gifts of teaching offered by Biesta (2021), that teaching gives the learner something they did not ask for, that learners develop knowledge within the scope of their current understanding as well the skills to access understanding that is not yet known and that learners gain insights into themselves as learners, it is essential to support teachers is giving these gifts through the lens of education for global citizenship.

7.2 Applying Habermas’ Theory of Communicative Action to Address a Gap in Educating for Global Citizenship

To understand the potential of communicative action as a resource in educating for global citizenship, it is important to first understand the purpose and structure of the theory. In the theory of communicative action, Habermas (1984, 1987) presents a social theory that outlines how an individual comes to understand the social world through linguistic communication. He suggests that speech is used to coordinate action, and that people reach consensus on their interpretations of their shared world through language. Two aspects of rationality are essential to the process of making meaning: communicative reality, which is achieved when an individual reaches ‘an understanding about something in the world with at least one other participant’ (Habermas, 1984, p. 11), and purposive-rational action, when an individual’s choice ‘ends from a clearly articulated horizon of values and organizes suitable means in consideration of alternative consequences’ (Habermas, 1984, p. 281). These two aspects of rationality work in tandem to help an individual engage with and make meaning about their lifeworld.

Habermas refers to three purposes, or validity claims, behind a linguistic act: a validity claim to truth, rightness and truthfulness (1984, 1987). Validity claims are inherent in speech acts and have moral, rational and practical implications for the social order established within a lifeworld (Finlayson, 2005). Essential to the notion of creating democratic societies, validity claims establish an expectation that individuals can and should assert their perspectives and engage as legitimate participants within democratic processes (Moran & Murphy, 2011; von Ahlefeld Nisser, 2017). Ultimately, these validity claims also contribute to the formation of self-awareness through communication, positioning an individual to build self-determination and self-realisation as a legitimate stakeholder within their lifeworld.

While the outcome of ego-identity is an independent action, identity formation is initially social. Habermas (1984, p. 58) explains that '[i]ndividuals owe their identities as persons exclusively to their identification with, or internalization of, features of collective identity; personal identity is a mirror image of collective identity'. This suggests that within a school context, ego development is social before becoming an autonomous process, thus shifting from external to internal. In order to process the influences of teachers, peers and wider community norms, learners must be able to recognise and adapt to all that influences their development, particularly the role of their learning lifeworld.

The process of communicative action and the development of ego-identity takes place within the lifeworld, which forms the boundary for individuals to equitably engage in communicative acts to reach mutual understanding (Habermas, 1984, 1987). This is where speaker and listener come together in 'a context that, itself boundless, draws boundaries' around those participating in the exchange (Habermas, 1987, p. 132). A desire to both understand and be understood implies positive presupposition, and Habermas frames these exchanges as ones in which the lifeworld members should feel empowered to share their perspectives openly and confidently as equals; within the lifeworld, it is 'everyone's right to state their opinions and values based on their experience and knowledge and everyone's willingness to speak in an understandable way' (von Ahlefeld Nisser, 2017, p. 875). This therefore assumes that lifeworld participants engage in these acts sincerely and with good intention.

The lifeworld consists of three components – culture, society and person – each of which is essential within the act of communication (Habermas, 1984, 1987). Culture is the broadest designation, and it provides community members with the necessary knowledge to develop understandings about the lifeworld and beyond. It includes a community's values, traditions and norms as well as the beliefs inherent in commonly used language (Deakin Crick & Joldersma, 2006; MacNeil et al., 2009). School cultures serve as the 'normative glue that holds a particular school together ... steering people in a common direction' (Sergiovanni, 2000, p. 14), shaping patterns of interaction between individuals across the community. Society is a smaller group within a lifeworld that members associate with over time, either by choice or by design. Yelland et al. (2020, p. 1) suggest that '[a] dynamic education system forms part of this ecosystem, both producing and attracting participations and creating aspirational opportunities for citizens that are flexible and globally focussed'. This function of school as society is a key

influence on the development of student ego-identities within a learning community. Person is every individual within a lifeworld, each of whom has the capacity to speak and act such that they ultimately develop their ego-identity. These communicative experiences are what give an individual the potential to develop an understanding of the world and of themselves. Gosling (2000, p. 296) cites Habermas to both acknowledge autonomy and responsibility as key outcomes of an education and caution that, 'to be successful, educational practices must permit and encourage forms of communication which are not distorted by imbalances of power or other blocks to open and rational discussion'. Habermas argues for cultural, societal and personal engagements that are equitable and driven by a desire to understand. The interconnectivity of the lifeworld structures forms the foundation for learning as a social experience and 'becomes a necessary condition for learning because it is the most valid way for producing knowledge, examining the validity of existing knowledge, and providing opportunities for acquiring contextually useful knowledge for each citizen' (Regmi, 2020, p. 225). This pattern of engagement across the three lifeworld elements is reproduced within each lifeworld and is also transferable to other lifeworlds.

In contrast to the lifeworld, Habermas (1987) presents the system as a competing space that shapes identity formation. The system is the 'aspect of society where imperatives of technical efficiency and bureaucracy have precedence' (Murphy, 2009, p. 82) as the influencers of societal and individual development. In our modern age, money and power wield most influence over culture, society and individuation with the intention of furthering capitalist priorities at the expense of individual decision-making and independence. As a self-sustaining and self-replicating phenomenon, the lifeworld is maintained through communicative actions; in contrast, the system is maintained through the meaning made within the lifeworld (Habermas, 1987). This relationship is parasitic, as the system exists within the lifeworld and relies on the lifeworld's cultural and societal pillars to survive. Habermas conceptualises the notion that in order to reinforce the hierarchy of lifeworld over system, patterns of communicative action must be prioritised over patterns of instrumental action. Even so, he recognises that the system is an increasingly powerful threat to the lifeworld (Habermas, 1987). Finlayson (2005) explains that the system benefits from the redirection of decision-making away from the lifeworld and the shifting of agency from the individual to systemic authorities. When this happens, the intention of mutual understanding inherent in communicative acts is no longer present (Habermas, 1987). Regmi (2020, p. 224) specifies that 'when the three components of the lifeworld are not mediated by communicative actions the lifeworld becomes incapable for performing the three basic functions of the lifeworld'.

For schools, bureaucratic structures, political intrusion and external threats due to crises can be seen as system threats to the learning lifeworld. By directly addressing the threat of colonisation in education, Habermas underscores the important role of schools to keep learning focused on lifeworld-nourishing priorities. He goes on to address the potential hazard of the system for teachers, citing threats that could erode the freedom and independence practitioners need to meet to provide dynamic learning experiences for students. The threat posed

by the system colonising the lifeworld is great, thus the uncoupling of the system from the lifeworld is of particular importance (Habermas, 1987). Parkin (1996, p. 423) recognises how ordinary communicative interactions can result in extraordinary outcomes, such as the establishing and reproducing of patterns of belief, of consent and legitimacy, of status and identity, and of perception', reinforcing the importance and value of communicative action in the classroom. Within the context of education for global citizenship, system threats that stem from the priorities of exploitative actors could ultimately perpetuate and even amplify the negative outcomes of crises. For teachers to be able to withstand the colonising threats of the system, they must have the competencies and skills to positively leverage the elements of the lifeworld through communicative acts. This reiterates the importance and value of communicative action as a means for combatting system colonisation and securing the reproduction of the lifeworld within the educational setting.

As young people prepare to engage with a world ravaged by current and potential crises, considering how educational models can actively combat this colonisation and preserve the lifeworld will be of critical importance for the future. A review of the literature suggests that the application of the theory of communicative action in education can serve to protect the lifeworld and stave off the threats of the system through its support of citizenship education, well-being and holistic education and self-directed learning (see, for example, Cherryholmes, 1981; Deakin Crick & Joldersma, 2006; Ewert, 1991; Fleming & Murphy, 2010; Lovat, 2013; Mezirow, 1985; Regmi, 2017). Fleming and Murphy's (2010, p. 203) assertion that '[e]ducation has the task of ensuring that democratic skills and processes are handed on from one generation to the next' implores us to think carefully and seriously about the scope of Habermas' influence on educating for a democratic future.

While some research has shown how the theory of communicative action can be used to support education for global citizenship, the perspectives of students as the perceived beneficiaries of communicative acts have not been researched. The originality of this chapter is therefore in surfacing the voices of students through an ethnographic case study designed to explore the influence of their learning lifeworlds on the development of their ego-identities as individuals.

7.3 Methodology

The gaps in prior research about how students perceive the development of their ego-identities in their learning lifeworlds prompted me to seek answers to how the theory of communicative action could be an effective tool in educating for global citizenship. A fundamental question this gap surfaces hinges on the construct of communicative action and its potential to transform students into active and engaged global citizens who can overcome persisting repercussions of the impact of crises on their generation: *How might the theory of communicative action serve as a vehicle for developing student self-directedness and independence as facets of education for global citizenship?*

Using Habermas' theory of communicative action as my theoretical framework, I designed an ethnographic case study that would seek out student perspectives on their learning lifeworlds and engage them in the creation of knowledge through communicative action. This methodology allowed for the generation of data that could be used to explore the relationships between data sets as well as accommodate the study of theory in a real-world setting (Fusch et al., 2017). Designing an ethnographic case study aligned with the use of Habermas' theory of communicative action as through their involvement, participants had the opportunity to define the realities of their lifeworld experiences.

The research site was an international school in Hong Kong offering the International Baccalaureate Primary Years (IBPYP), Middle Years (IBMYP) and Diploma (IBDP) Programmes. As referenced earlier in this chapter, these IB programmes seek to support students in becoming internationally minded and develop skills to prepare them for an uncertain future (see Häkkinen et al., 2016; IBO, 2019; Li, 2012; OECD, 2018; van de Oudeweetering & Voogt, 2017). I was particularly interested in exploring student experiences within the IBMYP to better understand how this framework influenced student learning lifeworlds. Taking place over two phases, the study included 136 IBMYP students in Grades 6 and 10. The grade levels that were selected were the first and last ones in the IBMYP, thus allowing for the exploration of ego-identity development at different stages of student learning journeys.

The mixed-methods approach of using questionnaires and interviews as the tools for data generation allowed for a larger number of student perspectives to be solicited and were designed to generate both quantitative and qualitative data. All 136 participants completed the questionnaire, which itself included both quantitative and qualitative elements: respondents rated responses to some questions using a Likert scale, and some questions provided additional opportunities to include open-ended responses. Twelve students opted to participate in a semi-structured interview designed to function as a communicative act that 'presupposes language as the medium for a kind of reaching understanding, in the course of which participants, through relating to a world, reciprocally raise validity claims that can be accepted or contested' (Habermas, 1984, p. 99). In the process of data generation, communicative action served as a driver for how equity through mutual understanding could be elevated.

The qualitative data generated through the questionnaires and interviews were analysed following Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2022) guidelines for thematic analysis. Their six-step process provides a flexible and methodologically sound approach to qualitative data analysis, which includes researcher immersion in the data, generation of initial codes, identification of themes, review of themes, definition and naming of themes and publication of findings. Drawing on this approach, I leveraged my identity as an ethnographer to emphasise what Braun and Clarke describe as the 'inevitable subjectivity of data coding and analysis, and the researcher's active role in coding and theme generation' (2022, p. 8). Through reflexive thematic analysis, I framed my engagement with the data through the theory of communicative action and used the pillars of the lifeworld as the organising concept for my analysis. The centrality of Habermas' theory in my study led

me to decide on and develop themes I identified as relevant to the case location of an international school offering the IBMYP, holding value in relation to the life-world elements of culture, society and person and representative of the literature related to education for global citizenship. The intention in the following sections is to present the value of these themes through the lens of communicative action to support individual teachers, school leaders and policymakers in future application or further exploration.

7.4 The Impact of the Lifeworld on Student Self-Directedness and Independence

This section presents the findings from the ethnographic case study exploring student perspectives on their learning lifeworlds. The discussion below highlights the critical role of the lifeworld elements of culture, society and person in resisting colonisation by the system; this area of focus is emphasised as it provides a justification for communicative acts as a mechanism for delivering an education for global citizenship that prepares students to overcome the challenges of crises.

7.5 Student Self-Directedness and Independence

Education for global citizenship strives to create learning environments in which students can monitor their own capabilities with increasing independence. [Biesta \(2020, 2008\)](#) identifies qualification as one key function and outcome of education, that is to provide students with the knowledge, skills, understandings, dispositions and critical thinking skills they will need to operate in the world. In addition to the responsibility of schooling to provide direction and motivation, [Ryan and Deci \(2020\)](#) reiterate the need for self-determined learning experiences, through which teachers can encourage students to become more intrinsically motivated and strengthen their investment in their own learning.

In this study, participants reflected on their familiarity with and use of 13 skill subsets included in the IBMYP framework referred to as approaches to learning (ATL) skills. Over 50% of respondents reported familiarity with self-management, organisation, reflection, research, creative thinking and communication skills, and over 75% highlighted self-management and communication as skills they recognised. As a framework designed to deliver a holistic education that teaches global mindedness, the IBMYP has identified these as skills core to its programme, reiterating their importance for an education for global citizenship.

In both the questionnaire and interview responses, students identified both strengths and areas for growth for themselves as learners as they relate to ATL skills. The following illustrative quotes show how students were reflective about their own capabilities as learners, a key facet of ego-identity development within their learning lifeworlds:

At times I get a bit confused and frustrated and ... I have been pushed out of my comfort zone, but a personal goal of mine is to take opportunities to do things that are out of my comfort zone, get

over my fears and ... I have been able to do things I couldn't before which will help me achieve hopefully great things in the future.

I think [I have improved in] organisation, because I've become a bit more organised with my work. And even if I tell my parents I don't have homework it's because I don't want them to worry and I know I could do it in my own time. Without them pestering me and telling me to be organised because I know how to do it – I know how to be organised, but sometimes it's just a little hard.

If you learn something on your own or you work on it by yourself, ... you remember it better The feeling of anxiety and, 'Oh my gosh, I have this huge project to do' ... it's almost part of it. I feel like working on your own and creating your own project, managing yourself and researching and thinking, organising, those are all the ATL skills, but you do them by yourself. And that way it's more independent. You create a better piece at the end, because you've done all this stuff and you understand it better.

These students are able to identify the impacts of their learning lifeworld on their development, reflecting the findings of [Jeno and Diseth \(2014\)](#) that through authentic learning experiences, students find relevance and become more self-determined. Their comments are indicative of students who are both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to develop their skills as learners, skills that will be essential for them as they become the workers and leaders of tomorrow.

7.6 Withstanding the Threat of System Colonisation

As the domain of interactions characterised by open, authentic and rational discourse ([Habermas, 1984, 1987](#)), the lifeworld has the potential to situate space in which education for global citizenship can thrive. Individuals can build shared understanding and foster mutual recognition through communicative acts in which they treat each other as equals. In contrast, the system is composed of societal elements that disempower the individual. Markets, political apparati and oppressive structures instead determine and drive the types of exchanges that take place in the system. [Habermas \(1987\)](#) goes so far as to suggest that system colonisation can infringe upon the basic human rights of students. In order to deliver an education for global citizenship, teachers need to be able to perpetuate the lifeworld and stave off the threat of the system.

In both academic and social-emotional realms, the influence of teachers on student development is palpable. In their four dimensions of teacher effectiveness, [Stronge et al. \(2011\)](#) highlight both craft and environment as essential to teacher success. The learning lifeworld of each student will be impacted directly by the content and the processes delivered by their teacher. In this study, over 40% of respondents identified factors related to inclusivity and safety as being important to their learning, with 31 alluding to fun and 23 to confidence as either positive or

negative impacts on their learning. Those who responded positively spoke about working in their comfort zones, feeling relaxed, receiving help, being with friends and having independence and choice as beneficial factors in their experiences.

The illustrative quotes that follow demonstrate what some participants identified as the specific ways in which teachers shaped their learning lifeworlds:

Everyone's very helpful in trying to help you specifically grow ...
Everyone's pretty selfless in helping you develop in your own way,
in your journey ... [Teachers] are helpful in the way that they're
able to ... get you to do the best that they can, by being critical
on yourself and thinking 'hey, maybe I can refine this' and going
through multiple, multiple drafts and doing them with you as well.

It's nice, and the people ... they're really nice, and there's a lot of
things to learn ... It's very different from my other school because
there's more people and they're a lot nicer ... and you get to learn
a lot more ... than some other schools.

Our teachers have always pushed us to go beyond ourselves ...
they ask us to first identify how do we connect with something.
And how does it connect to us. And then from there, they really
try to get us to go beyond into the ... wider world.

These quotes reiterate how critical a teacher's role is in setting the cultural tone in the learning lifeworld and the direct impact a teacher's approach has on student learning. This suggests that students valued the support they received for being able to work towards goals that had meaning to them personally and were crafted to align with their own strengths and areas for growth as a learner.

As teachers directly influence school culture and student learning (see, for example, [Deakin Crick & Joldersma, 2006](#); [Sergiovanni, 2000](#); [Stronge et al., 2011](#)), the capacity of a teacher to cultivate dynamic learning environments and contribute to positive school cultures might be curtailed by a colonising system. [Milley \(2008, p. 67\)](#) reiterates that teachers might internalise gaps in programming as personal failures, '... leading to crises of motivation whereby they detach themselves from their academic identities, educational endeavours, or the labour market'. These are all fundamental threats posed by the colonisation of the lifeworld. A loss of meaning, withdrawal of legitimation and crisis in orientation and education could deteriorate teacher purpose and trust in the educational system, adversely impacting students and their learning.

Protecting the lifeworld against colonisation is essential for its survival. [Kemmis \(1998\)](#), [Deakin Crick and Joldersma \(2006\)](#) and [Regmi \(2017\)](#) all consider colonisation of the lifeworld as fundamentally disruptive to achieving the philosophical aims of education. As students experience an education for global citizenship, they are engaging with their immediate learning lifeworld as well as learning the skills to transfer to future lifeworlds. [Weinberg \(2007, p. 82\)](#) anticipates the threat of colonisation when she asks '...what consequences might flow

for Habermasian theory if in fact our efforts to sustain the assumption of communicative competence are not just temporarily interrupted but quite simply fail over the long term.' It is imperative that in our efforts to equip students to face and overcome the challenges that lie ahead, communicative acts are used to perpetuate the learning lifeworlds that will best position students to innovate future success.

To this end, the call to action for teachers to embed communicative action into approaches to education for global citizenship is apparent. By seeking to engage students as equal partners through communicative acts, teachers can actively and authentically nurture self-directed and independent learners who understand and value the positive impact they can make within and beyond the classroom. In addressing power through communication, the theory of communicative action recognises the importance of classroom spaces that decrease hierarchy and increase agency in learners. For students to be able to address power dynamics through their own communicative acts, they must first experience what it means to engage in communicative acts that are intended to support participants in reaching mutual understanding within an exchange. The perspectives surfaced through this study indicate that students are aware of when teachers are and are not successfully creating learning environments that foster the skills of global citizenship. In those successful examples, intentional and accessible communicative acts formed a foundation of perpetuating the lifeworld through positive cultural, societal and personal engagements. When teachers can consider the learning lifeworld as a core focus of their instruction, the theory of communicative action and the use of communicative acts can support teachers as they develop and deliver education for global citizenship for their students.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the important role education for global citizenship can play in overcoming the repercussions of global crises. Fostering student mindsets that promote self-reflection, self-directedness, responsibility and agency will be essential to prepare them for a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world (Stein, 2021). Habermas' theory of communicative action has served as a viable framework for leveraging communicative acts to empower teachers in their design and delivery of an education for global citizenship. An ethnographic case study has been used to demonstrate how students see their learning lifeworlds and the role that culture, society and person play in shaping their identities as learners.

This analysis substantiates Habermas' assertion that humans share cultural knowledge, reach mutual understanding and connect to society through language, all key skills in an education designed to address current and future challenges students will face. Drerup (2020, p. 36) impels us to think about the possibility inherent in an education for global citizenship, suggesting that 'it should be clear that the global elite should cultivate the values that are central to GCE, but that CGE, despite many socio-economic obstacles, *can* in principle be taught and practiced in all kinds of educational contexts'. The notion of agency within one's

learning lifeworld is something every student deserves, and the results presented in this chapter emphasise the critical role that culture, society and person play in shaping an individual's worldview.

Habermas' theory of communicative action provides a rationale for increasing the opportunities for equitable communicative acts in the curriculum with the intention to nurture student voice and self-directedness (Sarid, 2017). For this to happen, educators must increase the kinds of exchanges that put student and teacher on equal footing in recognition of the viability of each student's lifeworld experiences (Harris, 2019). The classroom environment, and school in general, must become a place where every voice holds value and is respected. If teachers can engage students in authentic and meaningful communicative acts, we stand a better chance of delivering an education for global citizenship that will allow us to serve the needs of learners in particular, and humanity in general, today and in the decades to come. By inviting students themselves to deconstruct the impact of culture, society and person on their experiences as students, this study fills a gap in exploring students' perspectives on the impact of the learning lifeworld in shaping their identities as learners. The results presented in this chapter offer a unique contribution by surfacing student voices to showcase the value of communicative action in developing self-directed and independent global citizens.

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