



# Planned thinking and democratic personality: Karl Mannheim's legacy for global citizenship education today

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**Abstract** This article attempts to re-evaluate Karl Mannheim's notion of "planning for freedom" within the context of contemporary global citizenship education (GCE). First, it examines Mannheim's distinctions between "planning", "founding", and "administration" and analyses his notion of *principia media*. It argues that Mannheim conceptualised "planned thinking" as a dynamic and interdependent type of thinking necessary for grasping the whole situation of a changing world. This kind of thinking is interdisciplinary and serves to develop human capacity, through higher education, towards the cultivation of active global citizens. Second, this article examines Mannheimian conceptions of "democratic personality", "integrative behaviour", and "creative tolerance", all of which are related to civility, which in turn is an indispensable aspect for GCE. The aim of this article is not to simply study Mannheim's thoughts in the strictest sense of the word. Rather, it interprets his insights in the context of current GCE's values and knowledge.

**Keywords** Karl Mannheim · Global citizenship education · Planned thinking · Creative tolerance

*We shall discover new values which were lost to us in the age of unlimited competition; identification with the other members of the society, collective responsibility, and the necessity for possessing a common background for our attitudes and behaviour.*

(Mannheim 1940, p. 264)

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The effects of neoliberal globalisation have been accelerated since the end of the Cold War. Every aspect of society is now changing at a rapid and continuous pace. Nearly twenty years ago already, Anthony Giddens (2003) called this changing world a “runaway world” in which no one knows where to turn. While almost all the elements of society are interconnected with each other, there are also many dividing lines in the social world; anarchical competition in a runaway market economy and insufficient social security have brought about the growth of inequality. This has led to identity politics sustained by anger and resentment of the poor and marginalised, who are left behind economically and socially (Fukuyama 2018). Consequently, the world is now facing almost uncontrollable illiberal democracy, often called “populism”: People tend to have exclusivist emotions and support extremist, nationalistic political leaders (Brown 2019; Mounk 2018; Todorov 2014). This is the context within which global citizenship education needs to be conceptualised. The purpose of global citizenship education may vary (Bosio 2020), but certainly there is a need for it from at least two aspects: first, to create citizens who can decently grasp the dynamics of a changing world; and, second, to nurture open-minded people with the ability to coexist and cooperate with those who have different ways of thinking, cultures, identities, and historical backgrounds. When we consider these aims of global citizenship education, we may recall the sociologist Karl Mannheim (1893–1947), whose work has been forgotten in recent times.

Mannheim, a Jewish intellectual who spent time living in Hungary, Germany, and England, was famous for his studies and works regarding the sociology of knowledge, especially his work *Ideology and Utopia* (Mannheim 1936). However, after he was forcibly exiled from the crumbling Weimar Republic to England in 1933, his interests drastically shifted towards the subjects of mass society theory, democratic planning for the purpose of social reconstruction, and social education. After a lectureship at the London School of Economics, in 1946 Mannheim became a professor at the Institute of Education, University of London, where he continued to develop his ideas about democratic planning. In the same year, he was also appointed chair of UNESCO’s European division. (Regarding Mannheim’s life and circumstances in England, see, in particular, Kettler et al. 1984; Loader 1985; Remmling 1975; Woldring 1986.) His untimely death in January 1947 prevented him from fully developing his theory and thoughts regarding democratic planning and social education, and his fragmentary ideas regarding these concepts did not attract close attention after his death. This may be one of the reasons that his English-period works are often compared unfavourably with his German-period works. However, there are several insights to be obtained from the legacy of this refugee intellectual for contemporary global citizenship education. According to Mannheim’s conceptualisation of “planning”, social reconstruction would require the transformation of humankind, and education was indispensable for this purpose.

In this article I focus on two aspects of Mannheim’s English-period ideas: first, dynamic thinking or “planned thinking”, which makes it possible to grasp changes in the world; and, second, education designed to develop democratic personality traits, or what Mannheim called “creative tolerance”. The aim of this article is not simply to “study” Mannheim’s thoughts in the strict sense of the word but, rather, to reassess and interpret his insights in the context of today’s global citizenship education.

## Planned thinking in a changing world

Since his German period, Mannheim's task as a sociologist involved diagnosing his own time period; that is, he attempted to grasp or understand the changes in the social world of his own time. In particular, while he lived in England, he began to focus on what he called "mass society", which was a hotbed of fascism, or a society prone to change within a short period while lacking any guides. It was a society headed for disintegration because of industrialisation, urbanisation, atomisation, and the ruin of traditional communities under laissez-faire liberalism that minimised government intervention in the market transactions of civil society (Yamada 2016, 2018). The term "mass society" signified this irrational aspect of a modern industrial society with large organisations, and Mannheim pointed out that all the parts of such a society were characterised by a growing degree of interdependence: "the more minutely the individual parts of a large mechanism fit into one another, and the more closely the single elements are bound up together, the more serious are the repercussions of even the slightest disturbance" (1940, p. 50). Mannheim suggested that this social situation was the cause of the irrational and highly emotional mass movements that enthusiastically fuelled fascism, and that this crisis of democracy was the consequence of laissez-faire liberalism. This type of liberalism in the first half of the twentieth century and today's neoliberalism are not necessarily the same. (The aim of this article is not to examine the various versions of liberalism.) Nevertheless, there is some similarity between this so-called "mass society" and today's "runaway world"; both of these concepts describe a rapidly and constantly changing world in which there is an interconnectedness between almost all social elements and people have a strong tendency to be emotional and to seek strong leaders. Mannheim called this situation a "mass democracy" situation and worried about the danger posed by the "democracy of emotions", stating that "democracy itself produces its own antithesis and even provides its enemies with their weapons" (1940, p. 63).

Mannheim's relevance today lies in his attempts to use education to locate a way to overcome such an irrational situation. To reconstruct a mass society that was disintegrating, he proposed "planning for freedom" or "democratic planning" as a third way that subscribes to neither laissez-faire liberalism nor to totalitarian dictatorship (Mannheim 1940, 1943, 1951). The term "planning" was (and is) misleading because many theorists tended to associate it with Soviet-type communist regimes and/or fascist regimes, such as Nazi Germany. Mannheim's contemporaries, especially Friedrich A. Hayek and Karl R. Popper, strongly criticised his idea of planning, as they believed that planning would inevitably lead to centralised control, thereby threatening freedom (Hayek 1944; Popper 1957). However, Mannheim rejected the presupposition that planning and freedom were incompatible. He attempted to elaborate on his concept of democratic political power, which would be necessary for "planning for freedom" (Mannheim 1951, chapter 3), but his writings on this point were not fleshed out. Rather, major parts of his arguments regarding planning and social reconstruction concerned social education (Mannheim 1943, chapters 3, 4, and 5; Mannheim 1951, part III). It is noteworthy that the starting point of his discussion about planning was "planned thinking" (Mannheim 1940, part IV). Mannheim can be said to have explored a way of thinking that would be necessary in an age of planning. The following quotation from Mannheim shows his underlying thoughts regarding the reconstruction of mass society: "We are living in an age of transition from laissez-faire to a planned society" (1943, p. 1).

When we reconsider Mannheim's notions about planning and planned thinking, we should be aware that they are different from what Hayek regarded as "constructivism", which was to be rejected. Here, constructivism can be understood as a kind of planning based on an abstract blueprint. Mannheimian planning is a different concept because Mannheim envisioned his planning as a "reconstruction" of a historically presented concrete reality. Mannheim figuratively described his notion of planning by stating that "reconstructing a changing society is like replacing the wheels of a train while it is in motion, rather than rebuilding a house on new foundations" (1940, p. 12). According to Mannheim, instead of being static, planned thinking should be dynamic because the mass society that needs to be reconstructed is changing from moment to moment. To clarify this point, we should note the distinction he makes among three notions: "planning", "founding" (or "establishment"), and "administration". First, for Mannheim, founding is different from planning (or reconstruction) because it involves building something anew on the basis of a blueprint. Mannheim presented his viewpoint as follows:

society as a whole can never be *established* or *founded*, for the elements of which it is constructed are always found in a certain historical relationship. [ . . . ] Planning, on the other hand, begins with the use of what is immediately available. The ends, means, and foundations of planning exist on the same plane of historical reality[.] (Mannheim 1940, p. 192)

In this distinction, Hayek's notion of constructivism corresponds not to planning but to founding. Second, administration also differs from planning because it refers to a completely organised social structure. Although Mannheim's explanation is not so detailed, it seems that "administration" may be equivalent to an established centralised bureaucracy which is the stage at which "all that we now call history, namely the unforeseeable, fateful dominance of uncontrolled social forces, will come to an end" (Mannheim 1940, p. 193). On the contrary, according to Mannheim, "planning is [ . . . ] a form of conduct still operating within the framework of history" (1940, p. 193). Although Mannheim did not mention it, what he called "administration" can be identified with the socialist economic system that was prevalent in Central and Eastern European countries after World War II.

In interpreting these distinctions made by Mannheim, both founding and administration can be said to be based on static thinking, while his notions of planning or reconstruction require dynamic thinking, which seeks to grasp the social world in accordance with its constant changes. To achieve such dynamic thinking and understand the complexity and interdependence of society, Mannheim assigned great weight to finding so-called *principia media*, which are "special laws which hold good only in special spheres of society at a given place and time" (1940, p. 175). Such *principia media* are distinct from both general laws, which are universally valid beyond history, and from each unique historical issue found only in a specific situation. Mannheim stated that the *principia media* could be described as follows:

universal forces in a concrete setting as they become integrated out of the various factors at work in a given place at a given time—a particular combination of circumstances which may never be repeated. They are, then, on the one hand, reducible to the general principles which are contained in them [ . . . ] But on the other hand, they are to be dealt with in their concrete setting as they confront us at a certain stage of development and must be observed within their individual patterns, with certain characteristic sub-principles which are peculiar to them alone. (Mannheim 1940, p. 178)

According to Mannheim (1940, p. 173), every object exists in a particular world with a structure, not in a world in general. Furthermore, he explains that “[a]n epoch is dominated not merely by a single *principium medium* but by a whole series of them. A number of mutually related *principia media* [ . . . ] produce a structure, in which concrete patterns of factors are bound up with one another in a multidimensional way” (1940, p. 183). Each of the economic, political, and ideological spheres represents a single dimension of the events as a whole, and “existing reality in fact consists in the mutual relationships between many such spheres and the concrete *principia media* at work in them” (Mannheim 1940, p. 183). Therefore, it is vital for dynamic planned thinking to find its *principia media* in order to reconstruct a complex mass society.

Mannheim criticised conventional social sciences for negligence in finding *principia media*: Individual disciplines, including politics and economics, had attempted to provide a precise description, and each of them had developed in line with the direction that concrete and specific cases are to be reduced in a single leap to abstract and general principles. However, at the stage during which the interdependency tendency of a mass society increases to such an extent that planning is required, “the separate spheres such as politics, economics, etc., which were formerly thought to be closed circles, are seen to interact upon each other and lead to a multi-dimensional structure” (Mannheim 1940, p. 153). This structure is continuously changing, and it is impossible to regard it as a static one. Therefore, social sciences should not retain disciplines with partial thinking, but, rather, they must become interdependent types of thinking to enable people to adjust themselves in practice to the real conflicts of social life (Mannheim 1940, p. 164).

We can find the germ of Mannheim’s conception of interdependent thinking in his previous work *Ideology and Utopia*, whose original German version was published before he moved to England. The discussion here draws on my previous work (Yamada 2016, pp. 97–98).

In this book Mannheim referred to his intellectual position as “relationism”, meaning that “all of the elements of meaning in a given situation have reference to one another and derive their significance from this reciprocal interrelationship in a given frame of thought” (1936, p. 76). Thus, relationism enables us to overcome the partialness of our ideas or knowledge and to perceive a total view, which implies the transcendence of the limitations inherent in particular viewpoints. Here, Mannheim meant by the term “totality” neither an eternally valid vision of reality nor a self-contained and stable view. Rather, a total view represents “the continuous process of the expansion of knowledge, and has as its goal not achievement of a super-temporary valid conclusion but the broadest possible extension of our horizon of vision” (Mannheim 1936, pp. 94–95). Thus, Mannheim’s sense of relationism when he was in Germany is in harmony with his idea of planned thinking when he lived in England.

These considerations help us to understand that Mannheimian planned thinking is dynamic and interdependent. It can also be regarded as interdisciplinary thinking that can be realised by breaking through the conventional closed circles of individual disciplines. Mannheim himself admitted that it is difficult to find the *principia media*. Nevertheless, the fact that he started his discussion about “planning for freedom” after properly considering planned thinking shows that he believed that conventional and static ways of thinking would not be able to cope with the difficulties of a mass society or a changing world. When we attempt to re-evaluate Mannheim’s arguments about planned thinking by situating them within the context of higher education, we can presume that he was eager to cultivate and develop individuals’ abilities to grasp a complex and constantly changing reality. Such individuals can attempt to engage in the reconstruction of

a disintegrating mass society instead of using laissez-faire thinking that allows things to take their own courses. Mannheim never used the term “active citizens”; however, his conception of planned thinking as a dynamic and interdisciplinary type of thinking could imply an idea of citizenship education that leans towards social reconstruction. His insights are relevant in today’s changing world where interdisciplinary thinking and critical thinking have taken on increasing importance for global citizenship education (Torres and Bosio 2020).

## Democratic personality and creative tolerance

Planned thinking may be an intellectual aspect of Mannheim’s thoughts regarding the transformation of humankind, especially with regard to social reconstruction; however, the development of a democratic personality forms another aspect. After reaching England as a refugee, Mannheim introduced psychological and pedagogical insights into his sociological studies. This was a natural direction for his research because he believed that the mass democracy that had brought about fascism in Central Europe was a dangerous “democracy of emotions”. Mannheim had shown interest in education even before leaving the Weimar Republic when he saw the people’s collective psychological crisis, especially after the start of the Great Depression in 1929 (Loader and Kettler 2002). The uprooted masses, after the decline of communal ties among mass society members, soon formed a very fragile entity. Mannheim described these masses as a “crab without its shell” (1943, p. 95). Explaining this crisis, he stated:

the latent perplexity and moral insecurity of the little man came to the fore, and whole nations answered with the desperate cry for “security”, the demand for something to hold on to. People considered anybody who promised anything resembling security a prophet, a saviour, and a leader whom they would follow blindly rather than remain in a state of utter instability and lawlessness. (Mannheim 1951, p. 19)

When Mannheim, as a sociologist, envisioned social education with the purpose of developing a democratic personality, his idea was based on the understanding that a human being’s personality cannot be separated from social relations and social situations.

When we speak of social education we mean the education which results from the fact that society through its established relationships, through its very texture, is continually moulding our personalities. [ . . . ] [W]e no longer think that the education of personality can emanate from a single focus, the classroom for instance, but that personality grows out of the social context and is to a large extent the result of social interaction. (Mannheim 1953, p. 276)

Here, questions regarding social education in a planning (or social reconstruction) context concerned whether such an education would succeed in developing an individual’s democratic personality traits. Because of the decline of traditional communities and social atomisation, rapidly changing mass societies often lose basic social relationships and shared values among people. This leads to psychological anarchy or what Émile Durkheim labelled *anomie*, which can evoke feelings of insecurity in a person. Referring to Erich Fromm’s *Escape from Freedom*, Mannheim stated that “[t]he Self is the deepest point to which social transformation can penetrate, and if there is no external support, no social provision for overcoming the fear of losing one’s niche in society from which self-assurance originates, basic insecurity will be recognized as one’s greatest bedevilment” (1951,

p. 311). This prevented people from being democratic citizens. Rather, they would often prefer an authoritarian or dominative relationship between leaders and followers—that is, a relationship ripe for enabling totalitarianism (Loader 1985, p. 160).

Therefore, it can be concluded that initiating social education to develop democratic personality traits among individuals is inseparable from social reconstruction. According to Mannheim,

psychological freedom is impossible until fundamental social relationships have been organized. Now there are certain basic virtues which are essential to the maintenance of a planned society and it is necessary that we should use all the resources of our education to create them. These basic virtues are not very different from those which the ethics of all world religions, among others Christianity, have held to be vital: cooperation, brotherly help, and decency. This education is primarily needed to destroy the psychological anarchy of liberal capitalism, which is based on the artificial cultivation of certain exaggerated attitudes. (Mannheim 1940, p. 352)

Although Mannheim did not clearly define “democratic personality”, Colin Loader attempted to summarise the nature of Mannheimian “democratic personality”: It feels secure; it is open to change; it is tolerant of others; and it has a sense of responsibility (Loader 1985, p. 160). Mannheim argued that laissez-faire liberalism could not be able to nurture such a personality and that totalitarian political education and propaganda would attempt to enforce a particular political ideology instead of cultivating the democratic mind of the masses (Mannheim 1943, chapters 1, 3, and 4). By sharp contrast, Mannheim’s democratic planning, as a third way to initiate social reconstruction and social reintegration, would require cooperation and coordination instead of an anarchical and capitalistic competition; those who facilitate such a reconstruction would be people with democratic personalities. Although Mannheim did not clearly indicate the type of education that would successfully cultivate such a person, he continued to insist on its necessity.

In his posthumous volume *Freedom, Power and Democratic Planning*, Mannheim (1951) referred to the essential trait of this democratic personality as “integrative behaviour”. He explained his reasoning as follows: “The important element in this conception of integrative behavior is that the person who acts in its spirit is not only unwilling to superimpose his own view and will upon the other fellow—the essence of domineering attitude—but he is tolerant of disagreement” (Mannheim 1951, p. 201). Some of the following discussions overlap with my previous work (Yamada 2016, especially pp. 98–99).

Mannheim’s notion of “integrative behaviour” is not compromise, which is merely the rational adjustment between two or more opposing views or wills such that, “it is only a matter of expediency that the parties sacrifice some of their original claims. No dynamic progress, no truly creative power is expressed by compromise” (Mannheim 1951, p. 203). Mannheim explained how the “integrative behaviour” component of a democratic personality is more than mere compromise, as follows:

He is tolerant [ . . . ] in the expectation of enlarging his own personality by absorbing some features of a human being essentially different from himself. Practically, this means that the democratic personality welcomes disagreement because it has the courage to expose itself to change. (Mannheim 1951, p. 201).

This means that people, even if fully aware of the fact that differences of constitution and social position, of drives and interests, shape their experience and attitude to life in different ways, still transmute their different approaches for the purpose of cooperating in a common way of life (Mannheim 1951, p. 203).

Thus, Mannheim's sense of "integrative behaviour" included the ideal notion of "creative tolerance". He defined it as "the task of establishing a common purpose and real co-operation with dissenters who are forever in ferment" (Mannheim 1951, p. 205). For Mannheim, integrative behaviour and creative tolerance were significant elements of a democratic personality: These traits are essential for not only the political elites but also the masses. He stressed that democracy functions only "if democratic self-discipline is strong enough to make people agree on concrete issues for the sake of common action, even if they differ on details"; furthermore, he suggested that "this self-restraint will only be produced on the parliamentary scene if the same virtues are being exercised in everyday life" (Mannheim 1943, p. 27). Self-restraint for democratic attitude would be developed in daily life rather than in the classroom alone. Here we can find that Mannheim employed a broader definition of education, whose main agent is the community, including not only the school but also the family, the village, the neighbourhood, the city, and the nation.

Education can only arise out of a social situation. [ . . . ] If the need for education arises out of people living together, one of its aims has to be to enable them to live together more successfully in the widest sense of these terms. Where societies or communities develop, normal ways of organizing their life develop, too.[.] (Mannheim and Stewart 1962, p. 17)

As argued above, initiating social education to develop democratic personality traits among individuals is inseparable from democratic planning or social reconstruction. In summary, for Mannheim, the ultimate purpose of social education was to produce democratic persons who would embody "integrative behaviour" and the virtue of "creative tolerance".

Mannheim might have begun to emphasise the "democratic personality" concept owing to his bitter experience with the Weimar Republic, where liberal democracy had collapsed. He noticed the following sequence of events. First, political parties and groups had been dogmatic and hostile towards each other. (Lacking an attitude of tolerance, they refused to listen to the other side.) Second, people's personalities had shifted in an authoritarian direction owing to social instability. Just after arriving in England, Mannheim was very pessimistic about the future of liberal democracy, but, gradually, he observed that British parliamentary democracy was working well; thus, on the one hand, he began to believe that Great Britain had a special historical mission to protect democracy by fighting totalitarianism. Mannheim repeatedly described this mission by using the term "militant democracy" (1943). On the other hand, he was also worried about the possibility of fascism dominating British society, which could also be regarded as a dis-integrating mass society owing to industrialisation, urbanisation, and atomisation. Considering the ongoing crisis of Western democracy, Mannheim believed that there was no guarantee that British society would never be swayed by fascists. Many of Mannheim's British contemporaries did not seem to share his concerns (cf. Lindsay 1952), and he remained in a marginal position within British sociology circles. Instead, Mannheim turned to a Christian intellectual group, "the Moot", in which he attempted to develop his notion of "planning for freedom" and his idea of social education between 1938 and 1947, just before his death (cf. Clements 2009; Kurlberg 2019; Wood 2019). Thanks to his attendance of the Moot meetings, Mannheim was well acquainted with Fred Clark, a professor at the Institute of Education, University of London. Mannheim succeeded to Clark's position as the Chair of Education after he retired in 1945.

More than seventy years after Mannheim died, a reinterpretation of his concerns about democratic personality in the context of global citizenship education shows that



his conceptualisation of “creative tolerance” is a matter of *civility*, which is a requirement for global citizens. When we envision global citizenship, “citizenship” cannot be reduced to the legal status of people in a particular nation-state; instead, it should also include a citizen’s character, attitude, behaviour, capacity, etc. Two further aspects are outlined as follows (Yamada 2010):

1. the “civic” aspect: active participation in the public sphere (or civic engagement); and
2. the “civil” aspect: civility, which is a requirement for successful coexistence with others with different cultures, languages, religions, or historical backgrounds.

In particular, if communication with others is an important component of civility, one aspect of citizenship should be citizens’ democratic personality. This trait encourages people’s willingness to listen to the other side. Listening to the other side is an often-discussed issue among contemporary deliberative democracy theorists (Dobson 2014; Mutz 2006; Young 2000). I have discussed the possible relationship between Mannheim’s arguments about “planning for freedom” and contemporary deliberative democracy in my previous work (Yamada 2016). The readiness to hear opposing viewpoints and change one’s preference is indispensable in this kind of democracy and for global citizenship in general. Mannheim hardly discussed “participation” (the “civic” aspect of citizenship), but his arguments about democratic personality and creative tolerance correspond to “civility” (the “civil” aspect of citizenship).

Mannheim’s notion of democracy involved aspects of the political system; furthermore, it envisioned a way of life that encouraged spontaneous consensus, cooperation, and coordination between all parties—a concept that converged with his notion of planning (Yamada 2018, pp. 60–66). Today, the term “planning” might not be suitable or relevant for expressing the task of citizenship education. Nevertheless, regardless of the actual term, Mannheim’s notion of “democratic personality” and “creative tolerance” can be regarded as legacies that inspire us to elaborate further on the ideas of global citizenship education in a rapidly changing world (Bosio and Torres 2019)—one that is characterised by increasingly interdependent relationships.

## Conclusion

In this article, I re-evaluated Mannheim’s notion of “planning for freedom” within the context of contemporary global citizenship education. First, by examining Mannheim’s distinctions between “planning”, “founding”, and “administration” and by analysing his notion of *principia media*, I argued that Mannheim conceptualised “planned thinking” as a dynamic and interdependent type of thinking. Such thinking is necessary for grasping the whole situation of a changing world as much as possible. This kind of thinking can also be called interdisciplinary thinking, and it can serve to develop human capacity through higher education to cultivate active citizens. Second, I examined Mannheimian conceptions of “democratic personality”, “integrative behaviour”, and “creative tolerance”, all of which are related to civility, which in turn is an indispensable aspect of global citizenship. This kind of personality, the core element of which is the willingness to hear the other side’s viewpoint, is often necessary to develop a deliberative democracy. Today, we hardly use the term “mass society” to describe the world in which we live. Furthermore, it may be advisable to avoid using the misleading word “planning” owing to its negative connotations.

Many of the ideas that Mannheim left behind were, unfortunately, very fragmented, and his sociological thoughts regarding education remain unfinished. Nevertheless, I have shown that his intellectual efforts to integrate sociological, psychological, historical, and political insights with his strong orientation towards social reconstruction (as a “third way” that rejects both laissez-faire liberalism and totalitarian dictatorship) eventually converged with what we call citizenship education. Thus, I can conclude that the attempt to reread and interpret Mannheim’s works within such a globalised “runaway world” context may help to deepen our understanding about the necessary types of thinking for facilitating global citizenship education.

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