

**Examining Changes in Self-Reflection and Empathy through Short-Term Global
Citizenship Education: A Quasi-Experimental Study with High School Students in Japan**

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Research Overview

This study examines how a short-term global citizenship program shapes students' perspective-taking, empathy, and reflective attitudes. Using a quasi-experimental design, it investigates how narrative- and discussion-based learning on Nikkei identities fosters internal psychological change among high school students in Japan.

Keywords: global citizenship education, perspective-taking, self-reflection, quasi-experimental design, narrative-based pedagogy

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Purpose of Study

As societies become more diverse and interconnected, it becomes increasingly more important to cultivate individuals who can engage thoughtfully with global and intercultural issues while appreciating multiple perspectives. Global citizenship education is instrumental in fostering such capacities, especially where exposure to diversity is not always readily available, such as in relatively homogeneous contexts like Japan.

This study examines whether a short-term global citizenship program influences high school students' perspective-taking, empathy, and attitudes toward diversity. Focusing on the Japanese diaspora (Nikkei), a community with historical ties to Japan but often unfamiliar to students, the program used historical narratives, video materials, and oral testimonies of Japanese-Americans to prompt reflection on cultural assumptions, social expectations, and complex identities. It examines whether such an intervention can foster internal psychological changes associated with global citizenship.

Research Methods

The study employed a quasi-experimental design. The intervention consisted of a two-day program (120-minutes per day; 240-minutes total) implemented with first- and second-year high school students in Japan.

Participants included students who attended the program ($n = 18$) and a comparison group who did not participate ($n = 10$). Both groups completed pre- and post-intervention surveys measuring global citizenship-related constructs, including perspective-taking, empathy, and attitudes toward diversity. To assess baseline tendencies, a pre-intervention survey was also administered to a larger cohort from the same school and grade level ($N = 213$).

The first-day session focused on building historical and cultural understanding of Japanese American communities through lectures, videos, and case-based learning. Students learned about key immigration events, wartime displacement, and postwar redress movement, and engaged in discussions highlighting divergent perspectives among Nikkei individuals. These activities encouraged students to question assumptions and develop a more nuanced understanding of diversity within a community.

The second-day session centered on lived experiences. A guest speaker of Nikkei background shared personal reflections on identity and belonging in navigating multiple cultural frameworks, followed by guided discussions and reflective exercises where students examined their own assumptions, identified points of empathy, and explored how they might respond in similar intercultural situations. A roundtable format encouraged idea exchange, active listening, and deeper engagement with both the content and peers' perspectives.

Across both sessions, the program integrated content learning with structured reflection. Students recorded their reflections on paper worksheets prior to group and class discussions, allowing them to capture emerging ideas and engage in exploratory thinking.

Quantitative data were analyzed using two-way mixed-design ANOVA to examine interaction effects between group (participant vs. comparison) and time (pre vs. post). Qualitative data from open-ended responses were analyzed to explore changes in students' interpretations of global citizenship. Thematic coding was used to examine students' in-class reflections.

Results and Discussion

Quantitative analysis revealed significant interaction effects between group and time. Students who participated in the program demonstrated increased reflective awareness of their own assumptions and perspectives, along with a modest increase in empathy toward others' emotional experiences. These changes were not observed in the comparison group, suggesting a positive effect of the intervention. However, relatively high baseline scores in recognizing diversity and understanding different perspectives indicate possible ceiling effects, suggesting that the program may have influenced reflective and affective dimensions more strongly than cognitive recognition alone.

Qualitative findings indicated that both before and after the intervention, students tended to define a "global citizen" as someone who understands others rather than someone who possesses specific skills or experiences. After the program, particularly among students who attended both sessions, there was a notable shift toward emphasizing self-reflection, questioning one's biased assumptions, and accepting differences between oneself and others. Many students also expressed increased willingness to engage with people from diverse backgrounds.

At the same time, only a few students demonstrated a clear articulation of the multilayered nature of perspectives. While many developed more open and reflective attitudes, fewer could explain how perspectives are shaped by intertwined social, cultural, and historical factors. This suggests that short-term interventions can initiate meaningful psychological change but may be insufficient for developing deeper conceptual understanding of diverse perspectives.

Overall, the findings suggest that narrative- and discussion-based global citizenship education has possibilities to foster important internal changes. By engaging students with transnational perspectives such as those of the Nikkei diaspora, the study highlights the potential of indirect intercultural experiences to promote empathy and reflection. At the same time, it underscores the importance of sustained and repeated learning opportunities to support deeper understanding of global and intercultural complexity.