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Global Citizenship Education and Intercultural Understanding: A Kernel for Promoting Transnational Education Among Higher Education Institutions in Uganda

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ABSTRACT

This narrative qualitative case study examines the integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCE), Intercultural Understanding (IU), and Transnational Education (TNE) with a case of Kabale University in Uganda specifically to analyse how these education models are applied within Higher Education Institutions, their implications on students, and the difficulties faced in integrating them into the curriculum. Data was collected through interviews, documents examination, and observation of extracurricular and academic life. Results show that while GCE, IU, and TNE are being brought in across certain faculties, implementation is still patchy and biased. Despite all this, students do indicate the need for formal provision of access to the study of global problems and to the contact with multiple cultures. The study concludes that universities should enhance their global Citizenship education program but do require more organized approaches towards introducing the curriculum and developing capacity among the staff. It recommends that the universities, together with the government and external partners, re-commits itself to global education by embedding GCE, IU, and TNE more consistently in the curriculum; thus emphasizing the importance of cultivating global citizenship to empower students with the ability to manage the complexities of a more evolving globalized world.

1 | Introduction

Higher education is a critical component of modern society, serving as a cornerstone for intellectual growth, research, and societal development. It encompasses a broad range of educational programs beyond secondary education, including undergraduate, graduate, and vocational studies (Schofer et al. 2021). Higher education plays a pivotal role in fostering global citizenship education (GCE), equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to engage effectively in an increasingly interconnected world (Akçay et al. 2024). Higher education institutions employ a combination of curricular and co-curricular strategies to promote GCE. Curricular approaches involve integrating GCE into academic programs, ensuring that students encounter global issues, cultural diversity, and social responsibility within their coursework. Co-curricular activities, such as study abroad programs, community service, and cultural exchanges, complement academic learning by providing practical experiences that enhance global awareness and engagement (Bacchoo and Kumar 2025).

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Global citizenship education (GCE) and intercultural understanding dates back to the post-World War II reshuffling of the world, when education came to be more and more viewed as a tool for nurturing peace, international cooperation, and mutual understanding (UNESCO 2015). The concept of global citizenship education caught momentum with the establishment of the United Nations and its educational wing, UNESCO, which spread the integration of values such as peace, tolerance, and world responsibility into the education systems of the world. In the 1990s, when globalization was on the rise and transnational flows of people, goods, and ideas increased, GCE emerged as a solution to the deepening interconnectivity of the world (Banks 2008). Intercultural sensitivity, as integral a component of GCE, is the ability to observe, value, and engage with cultural diversity, which has acquired international popularity as the desired competence in today's globalized world (Deardorff 2006). The concept gained greater appropriateness with the rise of multiculturalism and the growing sense of cultural diversity in and between nations. Education systems, especially from the Global South, began experiencing the brunt of integrating pedagogies that are internationally applicable in regards to having students engage suitably within diverse contexts (de Andreotti 2014).

In Uganda, policy discussion around global citizenship and intercultural capabilities began emerging for the first time in high profile during policy discussion in the early 2000s, specifically within the country's Vision 2040 and National Development Plan III (NDP III 2020). These plans viewed education as a strategic field of intervention for achieving socio-economic change. Ugandan universities like Kabale University have been increasingly caught up in transnational educational frameworks like student and staff exchange programs, cross-border e-learning platforms, and foreign research collaborations; this has necessitated re-examination of curricula and pedagogy to incorporate elements that facilitate global citizenship and intercultural competence (Charles et al. 2026). This study stands within the broad context of transnational education (TNE) in sub-Saharan Africa, and in Uganda and Kabale University specifically. TNE, being the delivery of education where the students are located in a country other than that in which the awarding institution is located (Knight 2016), has extended quite widely throughout Africa. In Uganda, this growth is expressed in terms of rising foreign university-local institution collaborations, online degree programs, and international academic mobility. However, these activities are largely dependent on the intercultural readiness and internationalism of the academic personnel as well as students.

Looking at Kabale University, situated in southwestern Uganda, is a case study of interest because it has a strategic location as a regional center for academic cooperation within the East African Community (EAC). The university has, in recent times, embarked on a series of internationalization efforts, including partnerships with European and Asian universities and engagement in regional education integration programs (Kabale University Strategic Plan 2023). These developments have put Kabale University at the forefront of Uganda's reaction to TNE. Despite these developments, there is an urgent need to understand the effect of the principles of global citizenship education and intercultural appreciation on the success of transnational education in Uganda. While global citizenship is hailed in policy documents, its real application in Ugandan higher education institutions remains under-studied (Tumusiime 2022). In the same way, although intercultural awareness is an important competence in TNE, little empirical research has been done to assess how it is developed or perceived by staff and students in Uganda's universities. The present study fills this gap by examining the interconnection between GCE, intercultural awareness, and the success of transnational education at Kabale University.

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is typically understood as education which equips learners with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary to engage and act responsibly in a globalized world (UNESCO 2015). GCE at the tertiary level involves the promotion of critical awareness of global interdependence, respect for cultural diversity, and active involvement in global problem-solving (Oxley and Morris 2013). In Uganda, the relevance of GCE has grown with increased exposure to global cultural flows, migration, and international academic engagements. Despite this, localizing GCE in Ugandan institutions will have to struggle with cultural, political, and institutional forces that shape its interpretation and application.

Intercultural Understanding, on the other hand, can be described as the ability to engage in substantive dialogue with individuals of other cultures, appreciating and respecting their own perspectives (Deardorff 2006). Intercultural understanding is more than tolerance and encompasses empathy, open-mindedness, and effective communication across cultures. In classrooms, intercultural understanding enables inclusive classroom environments, reduces cultural conflict, and encourages collaborative learning (Byram 2009). For Ugandan universities, in which internationalization is a strategic aim, building intercultural understanding is crucial to student success in TNE programs.

Transnational Education (TNE) describes higher education courses and services offered by institutions beyond the home country. TNE may be in distance mode, with branch campuses, franchises, or joint degrees (Knight 2016). In Uganda, TNE offers a vehicle to improve the quality of education, expand access, and enhance international collaboration. Its success, nonetheless, relies on the cultural preparedness of institutions and their ability to apply global visions within local contexts. This study explores how GCE and intercultural sensitivity are cornerstones for sustaining TNE in Kabale University.

By examining the interaction between these three concepts, the study aims to provide narrative and observable evidence on how Ugandan universities can develop their global outreach efforts. The choice of Kabale University as a case study is informed by its pioneering efforts in internationalization, and therefore it is a suitable example to examine the convergence of global citizenship, cultural competence, and transnational academic mobility.

2 | Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to: investigate the relationship between global citizenship education and intercultural sensitivity as

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crucial variables in making transnational education successful in Uganda, using Kabale University as a case. The study will seek to analyse how these concepts are integrated in university curricula and how they influence global scholarly interaction.

3 | Research Objectives

The study was guided by:

1. To examine the extent to which global citizenship education is integrated into the academic and co-curricular programs at Kabale University.
2. To assess the level of intercultural understanding among students and faculty engaged in transnational education initiatives at Kabale University.
3. To analyse the relationship between global citizenship education, intercultural understanding, and the effectiveness of transnational education at Kabale University.

4 | Research Questions

This study intended to respond to the following

1. To what extent is global citizenship education integrated into the academic and co-curricular programs at Kabale University?
2. How do students and faculty at Kabale University perceive and demonstrate intercultural understanding within transnational education settings?
3. What is the relationship between global citizenship education, intercultural understanding, and the effectiveness of transnational education at Kabale University?

5 | Theoretical Framework

This study is based on two interrelated theories: Transformative Learning Theory by Jack Mezirow (1991) and Intercultural Competence Theory by Darla Deardorff (2006). These theories provide an international framework for understanding how global citizenship education (GCE) and intercultural sensitivity inform students and educators in transnational education (TNE) environments. Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow 1991). Transformative Learning Theory holds that adults will be able to learn best if they critically examine their existing beliefs, assumptions, and worldviews, usually elicited by new experiences or cultural awareness. According to Mezirow (1991), such reflection will lead to a transformation of the learner's frame of reference in order to help him/her develop more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative frames of reference. In the context of higher education, transformative learning is particularly relevant in multicultural and global contexts where students are forced to engage with different ideas and practices.

This theory closely resonates with the aims of global citizenship education, which encourages students to become critically aware of global issues, challenge ethnocentric assumptions, and become engaged citizens of an interconnected globe. Through TNE interactions at Kabale University—international collaborations and multiculturally diverse classrooms—students are exposed to transformational learning experiences that have the potential to reshape their world view and working life. GCE in transnational education contexts thrives when learners and teachers are actively engaged in continuous critical thinking and adaptation. Transformative Learning Theory explains how exposure to these sites advances the internalization of global values and the formation of intercultural sensitivity, which are the foci of this research.

Intercultural Competence Theory (Deardorff 2006). Intercultural Competence Theory defines intercultural competence as the ability to communicate suitably and effectively in intercultural contexts by means of one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Deardorff (2006) developed a model of intercultural competence, which is widely used and comprises key features such as being open, curious, empathetic, and adaptable, and they lead to successful and respectful interchange between cultures. This theory is especially useful in considering how Kabale University students and employees navigate cultural variety in transnational learning contexts. To be interculturally competent in the current globalized higher education environment is not an option—it is a necessity for successful cross-border learning and collaboration (Deardorff 2006). The integration of intercultural awareness into university curricula and institutional culture is essential for the success of transnational education. This theory supports research in this study on the development and application of intercultural competence by the stakeholders in GCE and TNE, with particular focus in Ugandan universities that are establishing their internationalization strategies.

Both theories supplement each other by emphasizing individual transformation (Mezirow) and intercultural navigation (Deardorff), which are critical in learning environments that have been globalized. Applying these theories explains how global citizenship education and intercultural awareness serve as pillars of strength in the practice and effectiveness of transnational education at Kabale University.

6 | Literature Review

This section provides the different literature review in terms of Global Citizenship Education (GCE), Intercultural Understanding, and Transnational Education (TNE). Each section provides a conceptual background, traces how the variable has been studied in other contexts, and identifies research gaps relevant to the Ugandan higher education context.

6.1 | Integration of Global Citizenship Education Into the Academic and Co-Curricular University Programs

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is a strategy for education whose aim is to generate learners that are knowledgeable, responsible, and active members in global society. GCE puts emphasis on

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such values as human rights, sustainability, intercultural awareness, and social justice (UNESCO 2015). It came to fame with the writings of scholars such as Banks (2008), who emphasized the role of democratic citizenship education within multicultural societies, and Bosio and Torres (2019), who pointed towards the role played by GCE in social change. Most research has dealt with GCE implementation in the Western world (Davies 2006; Goren and Yemini 2017; Merryfield 2002), wherein curriculum frameworks traditionally include global competence and international service learning (Kubow 2025). Within developing countries, however, uptake of GCE is inconsistent due to policy, infrastructural, and cultural challenges (Shultz 2007; Nudzor 2015). As an example, in Ghana, implementation of GCE has been taken up through civic education but devoid of systematic teachers' training (Appiah and Ackah-Jnr 2025).

In East Africa, researchers such as Nkata (2019) have studied the integration of global themes into university courses, but limited academic freedom and a lack of resources undermine efficiency. In Uganda specifically, GCE remains unofficially integrated in national education policy, though several private schools and NGOs have brought in elements of it through workshops and student exchange (Tumusiime 2022). GCE is also more linked to online learning environments, which expand learners' exposure to international issues (Gaudelli 2016). Nonetheless, Ugandan public universities encounter digital divides, which limit complete participation in international learning platforms. Despite growing academic attention, few empirical studies have quantified GCE's impact on student attitudes and behaviours in the Ugandan context (Kasule et al. 2023). This study seeks to bridge that gap, using Kabale University to explore how GCE is practiced and understood.

6.2 | Intercultural Understanding Among Students and Faculty Engaged in Transnational Education Initiatives

Intercultural competence is defined as the ability to comprehend, respect, and successfully communicate with people of other cultures (Deardorff 2006). It includes cultural norm knowledge skills, sensitivity, openness, and flexibility (Byram 2009). In universities, it's typically acquired as a main global engagement competence as well as an essential part in inclusive learning (Sinicrope et al. 2007). European and North American studies have shown the effectiveness of intercultural competence training in higher education, especially for student exchange programs and multicultural classrooms (Chiu et al. 2013; Paige and Goode 2009). European programs such as Erasmus+ clearly encourage intercultural learning through mobility and curriculum integration (Silander 2019).

In comparison, African intercultural research is less frequent but rising. For instance, Owuor (2007) argues that indigenous knowledge systems must be integrated into models of intercultural education for cultural applicability. Nyarko et al. (2020) developed the idea that intercultural understanding supports peer relations and international student retention in Ghanaian universities.

In Uganda, intercultural awareness has been addressed in peace education and community development (Nakaya 2018; Ssekamwa 1997). Few attempts have linked it to academic settings or examined how it contributes to transnational education. Kabale University, through its role in cross-border academic cooperation, provides an opportunity to examine such a linkage. Intercultural competence is also at the core of professional readiness in global markets (Fantini 2009), and thus its incorporation into higher education is particularly significant. Furthermore, the development of digital intercultural interactions (virtual mobility, webinars) presents new challenges and opportunities for developing countries to enhance these skills (Helm and van der Velden 2020).

6.3 | Relationship Between Global Citizenship Education, Intercultural Understanding, and the Effectiveness of Transnational Education

Transnational Education (TNE) refers to education services and programs provided by institutions across borders. These include distance education, collaborative degrees, offshore institutions, and joint online academic initiatives (Knight 2016; McBurnie and Ziguras 2006). TNE has been driven by globalization, knowledge economies, and student demand for internationally recognized credentials. Globally, countries like the UK and Australia dominate TNE provisions, which typically target Asia and Africa (Verbik and Merkley 2006). TNE has helped host countries achieve higher levels of academic achievement, intercultural communication, and economic development (Wilkins and Huisman 2012). Critics, however, warn against neocolonialism and asymmetrical knowledge flows (Altbach and Knight 2007; Rizvi 2011).

In Africa, TNE expansion is on the rise though lacking regulation. Studies in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa show mixed outcomes: increased access to foreign qualifications but problems with quality assurance, appropriateness, and recognition (Teferra and Knight 2008; Jowi 2009). There has been a consistent expansion of TNE in Uganda by way of foreign university alliances and internet-based learning systems, though this is not yet fully absorbed into national systems. Kabale University has followed the trend through memoranda of agreement with the universities of East Africa and others. The success of such endeavours depends on institutional readiness as well as the intercultural skills of students and staff (Knight and Mcnamara 2017). Since the Ugandan government is still striving for internationalization in Vision 2040, NDP IV (Musana and Bisaso 2024), TNE will play a greater role in supporting national development. The connection between TNE and learning outcomes remains under-explored in Uganda, particularly in the case of enabling competencies like GCE and intercultural competence. This study aims to fill the gap.

7 | Methodology

7.1 | Research Design

The study used an exploratory qualitative design to gather data from multiple cases at a specific point in time. This approach allows for efficient data collection by reaching all respondents at once, saving time and cost.

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TABLE 1 | Sample size and selection strategies.

Category	Population size	Sample size	Male	Female	Sampling technique
University Administrators (Deans, Heads of Department)	10	4	2	2	Purposive Sampling
Academic Staff (Lecturers involved in international courses)	20	8	4	4	Purposive Sampling
Undergraduate and Graduate Students (from international and local programs)	5	12	6	6	Purposive Sampling
Total	**35**	**24**	**12**	**12**	

Source: Primary data.

7.2 | Sample Size, and Selection Procedure

The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size as cited by Amin (2005). The sample size and selection for this study at Kabale University is presented in Table 1 below:

Purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants because they had good view of the integration of global citizenship education (GCE), and transnational education initiatives at Kabale University. More so, they were believed to have been part of the champions of GCE in the university. This ensured that the participants had relevant experiences and knowledge regarding global citizenship education and intercultural understanding.

7.3 | Interviews

The interviews were guided by open-ended questions designed to align with the study's topic and objectives. This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of facts, beliefs, feelings, motives, and behaviours, providing rich and detailed data. The selected interviewees' knowledge and experiences made them valuable sources of information.

7.4 | Ethical Consideration

To credibility, we triangulated interviews with other data sources including the university's documents related our area of study. Relatedly, with confirmability, we maintained participants reflective notes and linked their responses to empirical data thence minimizing bias. This also us helped make conclusions rooted on a participant's account.

7.5 | Presentation of the Findings

Presentation of the research findings is provided herein in accordance with the three principal objectives: integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCE), development of Intercultural Understanding (IU), and practice of Transnational Education (TNE) at Kabale University. The research findings were collected using qualitative methods like interviews, document analysis, and secondary literature to provide a rich depth of understanding on how these notions function in the institution. The findings encapsulate both current practices and areas of deficit in the university's efforts towards preparing students for global engagement. Each of the goals is handled individually, informed by current research and quotations, followed by interpretation and analysis to illustrate how the findings fit into the broader picture of transnational education in Uganda. Global citizenship education is integrated in the academic and co-curricular programs at Kabale University.

7.6 | Global Citizenship Education Integrated Into the Academic and Co-Curricular Programs at Kabale University

GCE at Kabale University is still in its infancy, and while there is an awareness of its importance, there are challenges in its implementation across all departments. Below are three expounded quotes that provide important insights into where GCE in Kabale University is today in terms of new global trends in education. The quote below reveals a relevant gap in how Kabale University tackles GCE.

Although it is likely that students are taught academically about global problems such as climate change and poverty, there is no direct experience to feel the complexities of these issues. Since experiential interaction with international concerns is most crucial to the generation of a more profound, richer understanding among the students, such a lack needs to be filled by international partnership and exposure initiatives. Lecturer, Kabale University said,

> In local curricula in Kabale University, students are not exposed to global challenges firsthand through international exposure or collaborations, which significantly limits their perception of issues such as climate change, poverty, and global inequality. While some theoretical exposure to such issues is provided, the absence of real-life exposure makes it difficult for students to understand the magnitude and scope of such issues. While issues related to global issues may be discussed in lectures, the

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> absence of field trips or collaborative projects with international bodies deprives students of hands-on experience in addressing such challenges. This lack is well demonstrated when compared to international universities, where students often engage in internships, field trips, or exchange programs that expose them to global concerns on the ground.

Failure to engage practically in addressing problems at the global level means a failure on the part of the students to apply theory to practice. Kabale University ought to aim at encouraging more international collaboration, exchange programs, or even virtual partnerships with institutions across the globe, such that students can be exposed to interesting global issues practically in real environments. Exposing students to real global issues can make learning more meaningful and richer for GCE at the university.

Offers a positive vision for the future of GCE at Kabale University, stating that higher priority is given to critical thinking, civic life, and empathy. This quote does, however, also admit the gap in expressly incorporating such ideals into each and every academic department and program. This shows that the university is aware that GCE is as much about providing students with the ability to act as it is about being aware of the world's issues.

> Global Citizenship Education is not merely about making students aware of global issues, but also to do something about them. At Kabale University, we are gradually witnessing greater emphasis on critical thinking, civic responsibility, and empathy among our students, but we have a long way to go to institutionalize these values into all programs and all departments. We have witnessed positive movement in the uptake of project-based learning and community service, where students are encouraged to take their academic learning out into addressing local problems, but these activities are sporadic and lack coherence across faculties. In the coming years, we hope to witness GCE integrated into the curriculum across all disciplines, such that all students, regardless of major, are encouraged to think globally and act locally.

The commitment of the university towards developing critical thinking, civic duty, and empathy is a commendable step. But the actual challenge lies in institutionalizing these qualities across all the faculties and integrating them into the broader curriculum. In order for GCE to be fully effective, Kabale University should ensure that these elements become part of education across all departments and not just some special courses. This would be a holistic and integrated means of attaining global citizenship for all students.

Provides a vision for GCE beyond the classroom. GCE is not just the passing on of knowledge but the preparation of students to question unfair systems and be agents of constructive global change. This quotation captures the vision of making students active, responsible citizens who own the world's problems.

> GCE should not only provide students with a theoretical understanding of global issues but also with the ability to resist unjust systems and act for global change, turning students into champions of global justice, equality, and sustainability. Some consideration of ethical matters is seen in the current curriculum at Kabale University, but the application of these concepts to real-world contexts remains underdeveloped. We need more exposure to global justice movements, sustainability, and human rights, and we need to provide students with the capacities required to resist systems that reproduce inequality and injustice. Without this critical encounter, students can graduate with a strong understanding of global issues but without the ability to transform the world around them.

GCE in this context is a conviction that education should make learners capable of acting, rather than merely knowing. The Kabale University thus must equip the students with not just the world problem knowledge but also confidence and competence to resist inequality and promote sustainability. This way, the university can facilitate an active generation of graduates that participate actively in global justice.

7.7 | The Level of Intercultural Understanding Among Students and Faculty Engaged in Transnational Education Initiatives at Kabale University

Intercultural Understanding (IU) is an essential part of higher education, particularly in the current globalized world. At Kabale University, developing IU is central to preparing students to work and thrive in a multicultural and globalized world. While efforts have been made to establish IU, these are not yet strongly rooted in all aspects of university life. The following quotes provide perceptive remarks on how IU is being practiced and interpreted at Kabale University.

This quote elicits a critical point about how limited the intercultural activities at Kabale University are. Though the university organizes intercultural talks and workshops from time to time, these are not continuous and cannot provide the constant interaction that is necessary in creating deep, meaningful intercultural knowledge. Student, Kabale University said,

> Though Kabale University does support the occasional intercultural workshops and dialogue to create intercultural understanding among various cultural groups, they are often single events and not part of a long-term program. Thus, they do not consistently provide the depth of contact needed to

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> build ongoing intercultural understanding among students. The events typically don't involve follow-up activities or discussions, and as soon as the event ends, the enthusiasm for facilitating intercultural learning quickly evaporates. In order for intercultural dialogue to have an impact, it must be an intentional, ongoing aspect of the university's educational efforts, involving faculty and students in regular contact with diverse cultural groups.

The university can focus on institutionalizing intercultural programs, making them not one-time events but an embedded, ongoing curriculum. A frequent and consistent intercultural event can lead to continuous learning where students can cultivate long-term skills in intercultural communication and empathy, key elements of IU. Institutionalizing these programs means that students will be able to continue enlarging their knowledge of various cultures.

This quote from the aforementioned administrator indicates the lack of structural support for intercultural education at Kabale University. In the absence of a separate unit or department to focus on intercultural understanding, efforts towards developing IU are dispersed between departments and student bodies, which can lead to uneven implementation and missed opportunities for concerted integration. University Administrator, Kabale University said,

> There isn't a formal department that deals with intercultural education at Kabale University, and thus the responsibility of developing intercultural knowledge lies within departments or student organizations. Without emphasis, it becomes difficult to integrate intercultural learning systematically into the lives of the students. While some departments have integrated intercultural elements into their curriculum, others are still not there yet. Therefore, there is no consistency with which intercultural knowledge is dealt with across the university.

An establishment of an official office or department of intercultural education would put emphasis on the promotion of IU. It would allow for a coordinated effort that maintains IU in line with curricular and extracurricular strategies at all times, producing an integrated and intercultural sensitized student body. This restructuring would facilitate an IU culture of the whole university.

This quote by a Kabale University lecturer redefines the meaning of intercultural understanding, to suggest that IU is something beyond tolerance. It is to consciously interact with and learn from other people with differing cultures, widen one's own horizons, and gain key skills for working together and collaboration in a multicultural environment. Lecturer, Kabale University said,

> Intercultural understanding is more than a tolerance issue, though, but of connecting with and learning from other people in manners that challenge and transform our own perceptions and outlooks. It's about fostering empathy, communication, and collaborative skills that are able to flourish in today's multicultural world. True intercultural understanding entails not only the ability to view differences but to view them as an opportunity for growth and cooperation. Kabale University has opportunities to promote such engagement through further cooperative international undertakings and collaborative research studies that give students and staff members the opportunity to work together with peers of diverse cultural backgrounds.

The citation embodies the dynamic and transformative nature of intercultural understanding, compelling students to engage deeply with other individuals' worldviews. For Kabale University, this means establishing an environment where students not only embrace diversity but positively embrace it, learning from the other and challenging their assumptions in the process. This would contribute significantly to elevating the university's role in delivering globally competent graduates.

7.8 | The Relationship Between Global Citizenship Education, Intercultural Understanding, and the Effectiveness of Transnational Education at Kabale University

Transnational Education (TNE) offers students the opportunity to gain international qualifications and interact with global academic communities without the need to go abroad. Kabale University has begun to explore TNE through partnerships with overseas institutions, but issues of quality assurance and implementation are yet to be addressed. The following quotes indicate the position and power of TNE at the university.

This student's experience highlights the enormous benefits of Kabale University's cooperative degree programs, particularly with universities in the UK. These schemes expose students to international qualifications and introduce them to different pedagogical practices, enhancing their overall learning experience. Student, Kabale University said,

> Participating in collaborative degree programs with British universities has been eye-opening. Apart from gaining us exposure to highly regarded qualifications in the global market, it exposes us to diverse teaching styles, which complements our practice at Kabale University. We are able to learn from lecturers with diverse academic perspectives, as well as interact with other students who come from different regions of the world. Such an exposure widens our outlook on academic matters and enhances our performance in multi-cultural teams, since we are being prepared for working in the international employment market.

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This student opinion bears witness to the value of TNE in providing academic as well as cultural enrichment. For Kabale University, expanding such collaborations can also broaden its academic horizon, enabling students to gain local as well as foreign exposure. The different pedagogies gained through TNE programs also aid in developing a more flexible and globalized approach to learning.

This citation by an administrator pinpoints a key issue to Kabale University's expansion of TNE delivery: how to provide a consistent level of quality in both local and international settings. While the university has established partnerships for TNE, how the quality of education is ensured internationally remains a persistent issue. University Administrator, Kabale University, said,

> As we expand our collaborations for transnational education, we are called upon to deliver the same high quality of education locally and internationally. Ensuring quality assurance is key to guaranteeing that the credibility of such programs is maintained. We need to put in place strong systems for monitoring and evaluating the learning outcomes of TNE programs to ensure that they are subject to the same high standards as our local programs. This will safeguard the reputation of Kabale University as well as our international partner institutions.

The task of maintaining quality within various education systems is formidable, particularly in the case of TNE programs. Kabale University must invest in robust quality assurance systems to ensure that students are given the same high-quality instruction regardless of whether the program is being delivered from or in conjunction with a local or international organization. This will help maintain credibility and value for TNE deliveries within the international education market.

This is bringing out the most significant benefit of TNE: exposure to diverse academic and cultural perspectives. Student and academic exchange with international professors and students enrich education and prepares students for globalized employment challenges of the present day. A lecturer at Kabale University said

> Transnational education allows us to study and engage with educators and students from different academic backgrounds and cultures. This provides richer learning as more diverse points and perspectives are encountered, something that prepares us better in the global jobs market. An opportunity to work with others of different backgrounds worldwide helps to provide appropriate communication and collaborative skills, demanded by global employers more than ever.

For Kabale University, TNE is a critical driver for empowering students to succeed in global environments. The exposure to diverse views of culture and intellects prepares students with the skills required to succeed in multicultural working environments as well as contribute value in heterogeneous professional environments. The expansion of opportunities for TNE will continue to equip Kabale University's graduates with the global competencies they need to succeed.

8 | Discussion

In a globalized world, higher institutions play a critical role in equipping students with the capacity to respond to global problems and interact with people from different cultures. At Kabale University, there has been increased emphasis on embedding three prominent frameworks: Global Citizenship Education (GCE), Intercultural Understanding (IU), and Transnational Education (TNE). GCE promotes global engagement, critical thinking, and empathy (UNESCO 2015), IU promotes cultural understanding and communication skills (Deardorff 2009), and TNE provides international collaboration-based global learning experiences. However, Kabale University is confronted with fully implementing these frameworks, including limited global concern exposure and unequal integration across programs. This study examines the implementation of GCE, IU, and TNE at the university, identifies the challenges that come with them, and recommends avenues for enhancement to equip students for a globalized world.

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) has received a lot of attention globally as universities strive to generate globally aware citizens who are capable of playing an active role in the solution of global challenges such as climate change, poverty, and inequality (de Andreotti 2014). Integration of GCE into the curriculum at Kabale University has made positive progress and outstanding gaps. According to the findings, even though there is greater awareness of global problems and efforts to include GCE in certain courses, the university is limited by matters of little exposure to real-world global issues as well as uneven implementation across the departments. A lack of exposure to international study, as identified by the lecturer, significantly precludes students from being able to engage meaningfully with global concerns. Research shows that GCE requires both theoretical and practical knowledge, including internships, international research projects, or fieldwork (Mazurek and Kaseke 2021). The lack of exposure to real-life experiences deprives students from linking classroom knowledge with the ground realities of transnational challenges (Grugel and Hammett 2009). This gap in experiential learning is a limitation in Kabale University where global awareness is largely confined within the classrooms. Furthermore, though GCE focuses on civic engagement, empathy, and critical thinking (UNESCO 2015), the research shows that these values are not deeply rooted in all Kabale University programs. Integration of GCE into the curriculum is irregular, which only undermines its potential to establish an all-around global perspective among the students. Other African and Ugandan universities attempted to fill the gap by adopting GCE through cooperative international projects and websites (Keating 2009). However, these are in their infancy stages at Kabale University, as international collaboration is still unfolding.

A possible panacea, according to the findings above, is scaling up project and community service work. The university can leverage such opportunities to involve students in both global

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and local issues simultaneously. This is corroborated by research evidence by GCE proponents that argue that such experiential learning allows students to have an understanding of global connections and develop the capacity to address global challenges (Mokwa-Tarnowska and Tarnowska 2019). GCE ought not to be mere theoretical learning but should enable students to act and solve problems in real life. In short, Kabale University's present efforts at GCE are encouraging but limited in scope. By increasing international collaborations, extending GCE principles to all programs, and providing more experiential global learning experiences, the university can significantly expand its role as a global citizen producer. As the Global Citizenship Education becomes more important to higher education globally, Kabale University can be at the forefront of a holistic and substantive GCE program that prepares students for global citizenship. The level of intercultural consciousness among the students and employees participating in transnational education programs at Kabale University.

Intercultural Understanding (IU) is critical in preparing students to thrive in an increasingly multicultural and globalized world (Banks 2008). The research reveals that Kabale University recognizes intercultural learning as significant but faces difficulties in institutionalizing such practices entirely. Although there are occasional workshops and discussions towards cultivating IU, they are typically ad hoc and missing the constant engagement that will lead to deep intercultural learning.

Findings show that effective intercultural education requires continuous interaction and structured programs that integrate intercultural learning into students' everyday lives (Deardorff 2009). Contrary to this, schools in Kabale University continue to be largely event-centered, with very little follow-up or structured integration into the curriculum. Such discontinuity limits the extent to which students become aware of intercultural issues and fails to challenge dominant cultural stereotypes and prejudices (Hernández Guzmán and Hernández García de Velazco 2024). In many foreign institutions, intercultural understanding is developed through exchange schemes, cooperative international research, and intercultural skills training (Jackson 2014). Kabale University, however, lacks a general policy for developing intercultural competency in its various departments.

One of the pitfalls caused by the findings is the absence of an organized department for intercultural education, which results in scattered efforts to address IU in the various faculties. As noted by the study, the onus of developing intercultural sensitivity lies with each department and student organization, which results in unevenness in terms of quality and scope of IU initiatives. At most African universities, this is also a widespread issue, where intercultural sensitivity is generally overlooked or used as an add-on component of the curriculum (Chelliah 2018). As Kabale University looks to move further along this path in strengthening global citizenship, it must embark on more formally, institutionally based programs in IU that run throughout the total academic life.

Further, the study shows that Kabale University can benefit from more collaborative international projects and collaborative research activities to expose students to different perspectives. Such opportunities not only foster intercultural understanding but also boost students' communication and collaboration capabilities across cultures (Leask 2015). Through such encounters, students will gain the empathy, communication ability, and cultural competence needed to effectively interact in a globalized world.

In summary, although Kabale University has made some strides in promoting intercultural competence, its efforts remain fragmented and lack the depth required to properly prepare students for a multicultural world. Through the collaboration of IO in all the programs and by providing more opportunities for international cooperation, the university is able to create an environment where intercultural competence is embedded into the student experience.

Transnational Education (TNE) possesses enormous potential to enhance the worldview of students by having access to global curricula and qualifications without being in a foreign country (Beine and Ragusa 2019). In Kabale University, the introduction of TNE courses, particularly in partnership with foreign universities, has offered opportunities alongside challenges. Findings are that Kabale University's TNE programs have been well received by the students, particularly in collaborative degree programs with UK institutions, which expose students to rich academic practices and various perspectives of cultures. The programs equip the students for an increasingly globalized workforce (Marginson and Rhoades 2002).

However, as the findings suggest, it is a difficult task to maintain quality assurance uniform across transnational programs. Research has indicated that while TNE provides foreign qualifications to learners, ensuring these programs possess academic standards as in-campus offerings remains important to ensuring their credibility (Maringe 2006). Monitoring and evaluation models for Kabale University TNE programs must be established strongly so that the results of learning guarantee university standards that are high. This is not an isolated challenge for Kabale University, since the majority of African universities that have adopted TNE programs lack quality assurance issues (Brennan 2003a).

Moreover, while TNE brings the advantage of international exposure, there must be more inclusive and collaborative approaches including students from diverse cultural and academic backgrounds. The evidence suggests that Kabale University could further extend its TNE courses to include more joint research studies and internships, which would enable students to apply their learning in international contexts. This would also help to build useful soft skills, including teamworking and intercultural communication, which employers worldwide value (Perraton 2011). In other words, despite Kabale University having registered notable strides in designing TNE programs, there is significant potential for expansion and improvement in the programs to make them better prepare students for the global job market. Providing quality assurance and increased collaboration opportunities is important to guarantee the sustained success of TNE at Kabale University. Through such a mechanism, the university can significantly enhance its role in preparing its students for global competences.

This presentation has provided a critical analysis of the findings in relation to Global Citizenship Education (GCE), Intercultural

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Understanding (IU), and Transnational Education (TNE) in Kabale University. It has shed light on the successes as well as the failures of the university in integrating these important models of education. The findings highlight the need for more frequent, systematic, and internationally-oriented programs to ensure that the students are well prepared to overcome the challenges of an interconnected world.

9 | Conclusion

The incorporation of Global Citizenship Education (GCE), Intercultural Understanding (IU), and Transnational Education (TNE) in Kabale University is paramount in equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in a globalized world. While the university has enhanced in the incorporation of these learning frameworks, their incorporation into study programs as well as co-curricular activities has been uneven (UNESCO 2015). The findings of this study show that while GCE, IU, and TNE are introduced, their use is fragmented and underdeveloped, and this hinders their full potential (Deardorff 2009; Beine and Ragusa 2019). These findings are founded on the gaps created in the application of these frameworks and the challenges faced by Kabale University in reaching their full potential. In addition, they highlight the need for a more formalized, university-oriented approach to embedding GCE, IU, and TNE so that these models are part of the curriculum and campus life so that students can be equipped for global citizenship in an interdependent world (de Andreotti 2014; Mazurek and Kaseke 2021). The integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) at Kabale University has been relatively low, with GCE values being used ad-hoc rather than being integrated systematically across the university's programs. While some faculties have integrated elements of GCE, these are not universally applied, leading to gaps in students' exposure to global issues, critical thinking, and civic engagement (UNESCO 2015). Additionally, the inconsistency in the use of GCE principles and a lack of faculty training on teaching global citizenship contribute to the unexploited potential of GCE (Andreotti 2011a). For GCE to be able to transform students and prepare them for the challenges of the world, it must be integrated into the core curriculum for all subjects such that all the students are exposed to the key principles of global citizenship, including social justice, environmental sustainability, and human rights (Mazurek and Kaseke 2021).

Intercultural Understanding (IU) at Kabale University is largely restricted to sporadic extracurricular activities such as cultural exchange programs, workshops, and seminars (Deardorff 2009). Although such programs are beneficial, they are not necessarily incorporated into the curriculum, thereby limiting students to acquire intercultural competence on a regular and systematic basis (Grugel and Hammett 2009). Teachers are not necessarily adequately prepared with the necessary knowledge and competencies to implement intercultural learning in their classrooms, further preventing the establishment of students' global communications and cultural sensitivity (Deardorff 2009). Although the university has made some efforts at promoting IU, this is not an integral or institutionalized university culture (Mazurek and Kaseke 2021). For IU to be effective, it must be incorporated into the curriculum in every area of study so that there is increased awareness of global interdependence and cultural diversity (UNESCO 2015).

Transnational Education (TNE) at Kabale University is still in its infancy with limited collaborations with foreign universities and limited international learning opportunities for students (Beine and Ragusa 2019). The university's TNE programs are largely in joint degrees and short-term exchange programs but lack an inclusive or standardized set of international learning opportunities (Brennan 2003b). Therefore, students' exposure to transnational education is usually fragmented, whereby they fail to develop the skills necessary to thrive in the globalized world of today (Brennan 2003b). Secondly, there are quality assurance concerns for such programs because, as stated earlier, they are not necessarily internationalizable and cannot always be monitored effectively (Beine and Ragusa 2019). For its maximum possibilities to be fulfilled through TNE, the university needs to create stronger international associations, establish better quality assurance frameworks, and develop the mobility and exchange of students (Brennan 2003b). All these revelations confirm the necessity of Kabale University to utilize a more integrative and organized model towards Global Citizenship Education, Intercultural Understanding, and Transnational Education. Although work has been done at each level, they are substantially under-implemented. For the university to fully equip students with the skills they will need to meet and capitalize on the opportunities and challenges in our globalized world, they must be more institutionally committed, train their faculty more effectively, and develop their curricula more sustainably so that these intellectual frameworks come alive at full capacity.

10 | Recommendations

Some of the following recommendations can be given on the basis of this research study to improve the utilization of Global Citizenship Education (GCE), Intercultural Understanding (IU), and Transnational Education (TNE) at Kabale University and other Ugandan institutions:

It is recommended to the Institutionalization of GCE and IU: Universities need to assign highest priority to embedding Global Citizenship Education and Intercultural Understanding in all programs. This can be achieved by including GCE values in core courses, providing mandatory intercultural communication courses, and establishing student exchange programs. Institutionalizing these concepts will enable universities to ensure global issues and diverse views are accessible to students regardless of their discipline.

Establishing Structured International Partnerships: Kabale University can expand its transnational education portfolio by setting up long-term partnerships with universities in other countries. The partnerships would include not just degree offerings but also joint research projects, internships, and faculty exchanges. All these initiatives would provide students with a hands-on experience of managing global issues, thus becoming more employable and interculturally competent.

Enhancing Quality Assurance Systems: In order to ensure the quality of transnational education, it is crucial that the university

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invests in monitoring and evaluation systems that guarantee such programs conform to the same academic standards as the university. That entails programs not only being internationally recognized but also being attuned to local context and needs.

Government and NCHE Assistance: The government and National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) can play supportive roles in promoting GCE and TNE in Ugandan universities. This can include providing financial assistance for international collaborations, offering incentives to universities to develop inclusive intercultural programs, and working to develop policies that facilitate the easy integration of transnational education into national higher education systems.

Increasing Student Mobility and Exchange Programs: Kabale University must invest in offering study abroad opportunities to students either as exchanges or joint programs with international universities. Offering scholarships or making low-cost travel arrangements would expose students to direct international experience, hence becoming more competitive in the global job market.

Faculty Development and Training: Professors and lecturers need to be trained on global pedagogy, intercultural communication, and integrating global issues in the curriculum. Professional development programs for faculty need to be invested in by universities to prepare them to teach and mentor students effectively in the context of global citizenship.

Enabling Intercultural Competence through Campus Life: Outside of the classroom, institutions must enable activities to enhance intercultural learning among students. Intercultural clubs, international food festivals, and panel discussions of global issues would be just a few examples of programs that would challenge students to engage with one another beyond cultural lines and create friendships that enable them to expand their perspectives.

By embracing these recommendations, Kabale University and other higher learning institutions in Uganda can better prepare students for a rapidly evolving global world, equipping them with the competencies, knowledge, and skills to be active, engaged global citizens. The government, NCHE, and higher learning institutions must collaborate to establish an education system that prioritizes global citizenship, intercultural competence, and transnational collaboration at its core, positioning graduates to address the issues of the 21st century.

Author Contributions

Nangendo Sharifah: writing – original draft, software, formal analysis, conceptualization, data curation. **Muweesi Charles:** resources, supervision, data curation, conceptualization, investigation, funding acquisition, writing – original draft, visualization, methodology, writing – review and editing, project administration, formal analysis, software, validation. **Kaweesi Muhamadi:** writing – review and editing, conceptualization, investigation, funding acquisition, supervision, resources, formal analysis. **Anthony Muwagga Mugagga:** conceptualization, investigation, funding acquisition, writing – review and editing, writing – original draft, resources, supervision, formal analysis. **Charles Eryenyu:** conceptualization, investigation, funding acquisition, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing, visualization, validation, methodology, formal analysis, project administration, resources, supervision, data curation. **Kabasiita Jessica:** supervision, resources, conceptualization, methodology, validation, visualization, writing – review and editing. **Gimuguni Lillian Nabaasa:** conceptualization, investigation, methodology, validation, software, project administration, data curation, supervision, resources, writing – review and editing, funding acquisition, writing – original draft. **Nabateregga Judith:** resources, formal analysis, writing – review and editing, visualization, conceptualization, funding acquisition. **Kalule John:** conceptualization, funding acquisition, writing – review and editing, project administration, supervision, data curation.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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