

Integrating Global Citizenship and Transformative Learning: An Explanatory Sequential Analysis of Graduate School Curricula

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) within the graduate curricula of Romblon State University. Using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, the research analyzed survey data from 88 graduate students through descriptive and inferential statistics, followed by qualitative interviews and focus group discussions with students, faculty, and administrators. Results indicate that key transformative learning processes—critical reflection, rational discourse, experiential learning, and perspective transformation—are substantially embedded in the curriculum. These processes contribute to the development of global awareness, social justice orientation, cultural competence, civic engagement, and ethical responsibility among graduate students. The findings highlight the role of transformative pedagogy in operationalizing GCED and suggest institutional strategies for strengthening globally oriented and socially responsive graduate education.

Keywords: Civic Engagement; Global Citizenship Education; Graduate Curriculum; Higher Education; Social Justice; Transformative Learning Theory.

INTRODUCTION

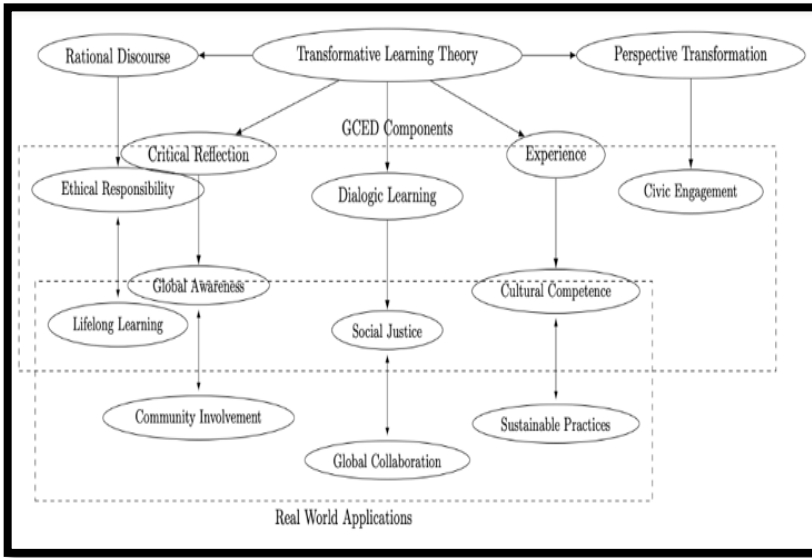
Graduate education is increasingly called upon to move beyond the traditional transmission of knowledge and to prepare learners for the complexities of globalization, social inequities, and cultural diversity. In this context, Global Citizenship Education (GCED) has emerged as a critical framework for equipping future leaders, educators, and policymakers with the knowledge, values, and attitudes necessary to contribute to a just, peaceful, and sustainable world (Aktas et al., 2017; Myers, 2016; Massaro, 2022; O’Flaherty et al., 2025). The Philippines, as a UNESCO signatory, has aligned with international commitments such as the Education 2030 Framework for Action, which emphasizes the integration of GCED into national education systems (UNESCO, 2015; UNESCO, 2017). At the graduate level, institutions play a vital role in advancing this agenda by cultivating professionals who are ethically informed and socially conscious (Mustafida et al., 2026; Dhandapani & Kaur, 2026).

Despite policy commitments, the systematic implementation of GCED within Philippine graduate education remains underexplored (Ibrayeva et al., 2022; Quevedo-Padilla, 2024; Olapane et al., 2024). Graduate curricula often encounter challenges in aligning pedagogical approaches, assessment strategies, and institutional practices with the transformative demands of GCED. This study addresses this gap by critically examining how GCED principles and TLT processes are embedded in the graduate programs of Romblon State University’s Graduate Education and Professional Studies (GEPS). TLT, as conceptualized by Mezirow (1991) and expanded by subsequent scholars (Mezirow, 1997; Esther & Abdul-Samad, 2024; Taylor & Cranton, 2012), emphasizes the role of critical reflection, rational discourse, experiential learning, and perspective transformation in achieving profound shifts in learners’ worldviews. When paired with GCED, TLT provides a powerful theoretical and practical lens for reimagining graduate curricula as spaces for producing leaders who are both globally competent and socially responsible (Caling et al., 2025; Montañez et al., 2026).

The study is therefore anchored on Transformative Learning Theory within the context of GCED, as shown in Figure 1. This theoretical framework illustrates how transformative processes—critical reflection, dialogic learning, experiential learning, and perspective transformation—serve as pathways toward GCED outcomes such as global awareness, social justice advocacy, cultural competence, and civic engagement (Mezirow, 1991, 1997; Esther & Abdul-Samad, 2024; O’Flaherty et al., 2025; Spronken-Smith et al., 2024).

Figure 1.

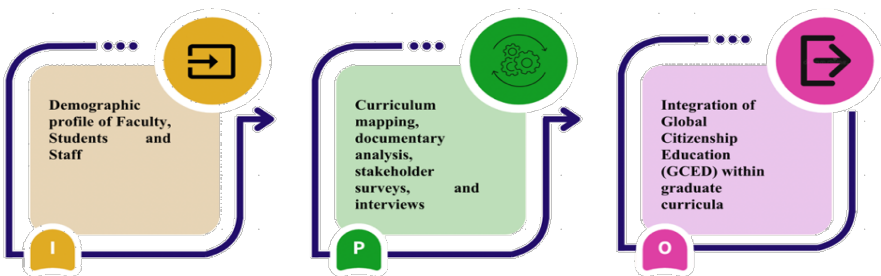
Framework of Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) Within the Context of Global Citizenship Education (GCED)



Complementing this is the Conceptual Framework of the study, presented in Figure 2, which applies the Input–Process–Output (IPO) model. The IPO framework identifies the inputs (TLT principles, GCED integration, stakeholder experiences), the processes (mixed-methods design involving surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions), and the outputs (findings on GCED integration and recommendations for curriculum reform).

Figure 2.

Conceptual Framework of the Study



By grounding the study in these frameworks, the research provides both theoretical depth and practical clarity. It focuses on components, outcomes, and applications of GCED integration, aiming to generate insights that will inform curriculum enhancement, faculty development, and policy reform. Ultimately, the investigation contributes to both the local discourse on graduate education in the Philippines and the global conversation on how universities can advance sustainable development goals through transformative and globally oriented learning (Massaro, 2022; Myers, 2016; UNESCO, 2017).

Contributions and Novelty

This study makes an original contribution to the literature on Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) by empirically examining their integrated implementation in graduate school curricula within a Philippine public university context. While previous studies have explored GCED or transformative learning as separate constructs, limited research has systematically examined how GCED outcomes are operationalized through specific transformative learning processes in graduate education, particularly in developing country settings (Massaro, 2022; O’Flaherty et al., 2025).

At the global level, much of the existing literature on GCED in higher education focuses on undergraduate programs, internationalization initiatives, or policy oriented analyses (Aktas et al., 2017; Massaro, 2022; Myers, 2016; UNESCO, 2017). Empirical studies that explicitly connect GCED outcomes such as global awareness, social justice, and civic engagement with core transformative learning processes including critical reflection, dialogic learning, experiential learning, rational discourse, and perspective transformation remain limited (Taylor & Cranton, 2012; Spronken-Smith et al., 2024). This study addresses this gap by aligning measurable GCED outcomes with the foundational components of TLT as articulated by Mezirow and subsequent scholars (Mezirow, 1991, 1997; Esther & Abdul-Samad, 2024; Taylor & Cranton, 2012).

At the national and regional level, empirical research on GCED integration within Philippine graduate education remains scarce despite national commitments to UNESCO frameworks and the Education 2030 agenda (UNESCO, 2015; İbrayeva et al., 2022; Quevedo-Padilla, 2024; Olapane et al., 2024). By examining the graduate programs of Romblon State University, this study contributes context specific evidence from a provincial state university, an institutional setting that is often underrepresented in both national and international GCED research. The findings therefore extend existing literature by illustrating how GCED principles are enacted in localized graduate curricula beyond metropolitan and policy centered contexts (Mustafida et al., 2026).

From a theoretical perspective, the study strengthens the conceptual linkage between GCED and Transformative Learning Theory by demonstrating

how transformative learning functions as a mechanism through which global citizenship competencies are cultivated (Taylor & Cranton, 2012; O’Flaherty et al., 2025). The findings extend TLT by showing that while components such as critical reflection, rational discourse, and perspective transformation are strongly embedded in the curriculum, dialogic and experiential learning are comparatively less emphasized. This variation provides insight into how institutional and pedagogical conditions shape the depth of transformative learning within graduate education (Spronken-Smith et al., 2024; Caling et al., 2025).

Methodologically, the study contributes through the use of a sequential explanatory mixed methods design that integrates quantitative survey results with qualitative insights from graduate students, faculty, and administrators. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of GCED integration by explaining quantitative trends through stakeholder experiences, thereby demonstrating the value of mixed methods research in curriculum evaluation studies (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In terms of practical and policy contributions, the study offers empirically grounded recommendations for graduate curriculum development, faculty capacity building, and institutional planning aligned with national higher education directives and global education goals (UNESCO, 2017; Dhandapani & Kaur, 2026). The findings provide actionable insights for higher education leaders and policymakers seeking to strengthen GCED implementation through transformative pedagogical practices within regional and resource constrained university contexts.

Study Aim and Rationale

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the extent to which Global Citizenship Education is integrated into graduate school curricula through the lens of Transformative Learning Theory. Specifically, it seeks to determine the degree to which transformative learning components are embedded in graduate instruction, to assess the resulting GCED outcomes among graduate students, and to examine how these outcomes are translated into real world applications. By integrating GCED and TLT within a sequential explanatory mixed methods framework, the study aims to generate evidence based insights that inform curriculum enhancement, faculty development, and policy formulation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Taylor & Cranton, 2012).

Ultimately, the research contributes to both local and global discussions on how graduate education can intentionally cultivate globally competent, socially responsible, and ethically grounded leaders (Massaro, 2022; Myers, 2016; UNESCO, 2017; O’Flaherty et al., 2025). In addition, recent higher education studies emphasize that integrating reflective pedagogy, intercultural dialogue, and socially responsive learning experiences can significantly strengthen the development of global citizenship competencies among university students

(Mustafida et al., 2026; Dhandapani & Kaur, 2026). Such integration is particularly important in graduate education where professional preparation, leadership development, and civic engagement intersect with broader societal challenges and global sustainability goals (Spronken-Smith et al., 2024; Caling et al., 2025)..

LITERATURE REVIEW

Global Citizenship Education in Higher Education

Global Citizenship Education has been widely advanced as a framework for preparing learners to respond ethically and responsibly to global challenges such as social inequality, cultural diversity, and sustainability (Aktas et al., 2017; Myers, 2016; Massaro, 2022; UNESCO, 2017). In higher education, GCED emphasizes the development of global awareness, social justice orientation, cultural competence, ethical responsibility, and civic engagement. Scholars generally agree that GCED requires more than content knowledge, calling instead for pedagogical approaches that promote critical thinking, value formation, and action oriented learning (Massaro, 2022; Myers, 2016; O’Flaherty et al., 2025).

Despite this shared understanding, debates persist regarding how GCED should be implemented within university curricula. Some studies emphasize internationalization initiatives and cross border engagement as primary pathways for cultivating global citizenship (Aktas et al., 2017; Massaro, 2022), while others argue that GCED must be locally grounded and connected to learners’ lived realities to be meaningful and transformative (Myers, 2016; Spronken-Smith et al., 2024). This tension highlights an unresolved issue in GCED scholarship concerning whether global exposure or local contextualization should serve as the primary driver of global citizenship development.

Furthermore, much of the existing GCED literature in higher education remains focused on undergraduate populations or policy level analyses, with limited empirical attention to curriculum implementation at the graduate level (İbrayeva et al., 2022; Massaro, 2022). As a result, there is insufficient understanding of how GCED principles are translated into graduate teaching and learning practices, particularly within non Western and developing country contexts (Mustafida et al., 2026; Dhandapani & Kaur, 2026). This gap underscores the need for studies that examine GCED as an embedded curricular process rather than as a peripheral or aspirational goal.

In relation to the present study, this body of literature establishes the importance of GCED in higher education while revealing a lack of empirical clarity on how GCED is operationalized within graduate curricula, particularly in localized institutional settings (Olapane et al., 2024).

Transformative Learning Theory in Higher Education

Transformative Learning Theory, originally articulated by Mezirow, positions learning as a process of critical reflection, rational discourse, experiential engagement, and perspective transformation that leads to shifts in meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1991, 1997; Taylor & Cranton, 2012). Subsequent scholarship has expanded this framework by emphasizing dialogic learning, social interaction, and contextual experience as essential conditions for transformative learning to occur (Esther & Abdul-Samad, 2024; O’Flaherty et al., 2025).

Within higher education, transformative learning has been widely recognized for its potential to foster critical consciousness, ethical reasoning, and lifelong learning dispositions (Mezirow, 1997; Shek et al., 2023; Spronken-Smith et al., 2024). Scholars largely agree that transformative learning aligns with educational goals that prioritize learner agency and social responsibility (Spronken-Smith et al., 2024). However, there remains debate regarding the extent to which transformative learning can be systematically embedded within formal curricula, as opposed to emerging organically through isolated learning experiences (Taylor & Cranton, 2012).

Another point of contention concerns the uneven emphasis placed on transformative learning components. While critical reflection and rational discourse are commonly integrated into academic instruction, experiential and dialogic learning opportunities are often constrained by institutional structures and assessment practices (Cantor, 1997; Bartle, 2015). This imbalance raises questions about the depth and sustainability of transformation achieved through formal higher education programs (Caling et al., 2025).

For the present study, Transformative Learning Theory provides a critical lens for examining not only whether GCED outcomes are present in graduate education, but also how specific learning processes contribute to these outcomes.

Integrating Global Citizenship Education and Transformative Learning Theory

Recent scholarship increasingly recognizes the conceptual compatibility between Global Citizenship Education and Transformative Learning Theory. Both frameworks emphasize critical reflection, ethical responsibility, and active engagement with social realities (Mezirow, 1997; Myers, 2016; Taylor & Cranton, 2012). Scholars argue that transformative learning offers a pedagogical mechanism through which GCED outcomes can be meaningfully cultivated rather than superficially addressed (Massaro, 2022; O’Flaherty et al., 2025).

However, despite this conceptual alignment, empirical studies that explicitly integrate GCED and Transformative Learning Theory remain limited. Existing research often treats transformative learning as an implicit pedagogical assumption rather than as an analytically examined process linked to specific GCED outcomes (İbrayeva et al., 2022). As a result, the dialogical relationship between GCED goals and transformative learning mechanisms remains under

theorized and under tested, particularly in graduate education contexts (Spronken-Smith et al., 2024).

This gap is especially evident in the lack of mixed methods studies that examine how transformative learning components operate across different stakeholder perspectives within higher education institutions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Without such analysis, it remains unclear which transformative processes are most strongly associated with GCED outcomes and how institutional conditions shape their implementation.

The present study addresses this gap by explicitly examining the integration of GCED through the core components of Transformative Learning Theory, thereby contributing to a more systematic understanding of their combined application in graduate curricula.

Philippine Context and Regional Considerations

Within the Philippine context, policy frameworks strongly endorse Global Citizenship Education as part of national commitments to Education 2030 and sustainable development goals (UNESCO, 2015; UNESCO, 2017). However, empirical research examining how GCED is implemented within higher education institutions remains limited, particularly at the graduate level (İbrayeva et al., 2022). Existing studies tend to focus on policy alignment, internationalization efforts, or undergraduate teacher education, leaving graduate curricula under examined.

Quevedo-Padilla (2024) provides one of the few Philippine based studies that critically examines institutional efforts and challenges in integrating Global Citizenship Education within higher education curricula. The study highlights persistent gaps between institutional aspirations and actual pedagogical practice, emphasizing the role of faculty capacity, curriculum coherence, and administrative support in sustaining GCED initiatives. Similar findings have been observed in recent studies examining higher education access and social transformation through government funded tertiary education programs in the Philippines (Olapane et al., 2024).

The limited number of Philippine studies should not be viewed as a weakness of the field but rather as a methodological and contextual gap that warrants further investigation. The absence of graduate level empirical research reflects broader structural challenges in higher education research within developing contexts and underscores the importance of localized, institution based studies.

By situating the present research within this gap, the study responds directly to the need for Philippine focused empirical evidence on GCED and transformative learning integration. It extends existing regional and global scholarship by providing context specific insights into how graduate education can

serve as a site for cultivating global citizenship through transformative pedagogy (Mustafida et al., 2026; Dhandapani & Kaur, 2026).

Summary and Link to the Present Study

Taken together, the reviewed literature demonstrates strong theoretical support for both Global Citizenship Education and Transformative Learning Theory, while revealing persistent gaps in empirical research on their integrated application within graduate education (Massaro, 2022; O’Flaherty et al., 2025; Taylor & Cranton, 2012). The limited Philippine focused literature further highlights the need for context specific studies that move beyond policy rhetoric to examine curriculum level implementation (UNESCO, 2015; Quevedo-Padilla, 2024; Olapane et al., 2024). In particular, recent higher education research emphasizes the importance of embedding global citizenship competencies through reflective pedagogy, intercultural dialogue, and socially responsive learning environments within universities (Mustafida et al., 2026; Dhandapani & Kaur, 2026).

Guided by these gaps, the present study investigates how GCED is operationalized through transformative learning processes in graduate school curricula, addressing unanswered questions regarding implementation, outcomes, and real world application. By doing so, the study contributes to both national and global discussions on advancing graduate education that is transformative, socially responsive, and globally oriented (Myers, 2016; Massaro, 2022; UNESCO, 2017; Spronken-Smith et al., 2024).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed methods research design to examine the integration of Global Citizenship Education and Transformative Learning Theory within graduate school curricula (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Ivankova et al., 2006). The design was selected to allow quantitative data to establish patterns in the extent of GCED integration, followed by qualitative inquiry to explain and contextualize these patterns through the perspectives of key stakeholders. This approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of curriculum implementation by combining the strengths of quantitative measurement and qualitative interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Quantitative Phase and Sampling Strategy

The quantitative phase was conducted among graduate students enrolled in master’s and doctoral programs under the Graduate Education and Professional Studies unit of Romblon State University during the second semester of Academic Year 2024 to 2025. A total of eighty eight graduate students participated in the survey. A census based sampling strategy was employed, wherein all eligible

graduate students during the data collection period were invited to participate. This approach was appropriate given the manageable population size and ensured broad representation across academic programs and levels (Etikan et al., 2016).

Participation criteria required respondents to be officially enrolled during the study period and willing to provide informed consent. By including both master's and doctoral students, the quantitative phase captured varied academic experiences and perceptions related to curriculum integration. This sampling strategy strengthened internal validity by minimizing selection bias and ensuring that findings reflected the actual graduate student population of the institution (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Instrument Validity and Reliability

The quantitative instrument consisted of a structured questionnaire designed to assess the integration of Transformative Learning Theory components, Global Citizenship Education outcomes, and real world applications within graduate school curricula. Prior to administration, the instrument underwent content validation through expert review to ensure alignment with the study objectives and theoretical framework (Polit & Beck, 2006).

Reliability testing was conducted through pilot administration, and internal consistency was established using Cronbach alpha coefficients. The results indicated acceptable to high levels of reliability across the major constructs of the instrument, confirming that the survey items consistently measured the intended dimensions of GCED integration and transformative learning processes (Chan et al., 2015; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). These reliability results support the rigor and credibility of the quantitative findings and are reported in detail in the Results section.

Qualitative Phase and Participant Selection

Following preliminary analysis of the quantitative data, the qualitative phase was conducted to provide explanatory depth to the survey findings. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who could offer informed and diverse perspectives on curriculum implementation (Palinkas et al., 2015). The qualitative participants included ten graduate students, all graduate faculty members, and key administrators, including the Dean and Associate Dean of Graduate Education and Professional Studies.

Data were collected through semi structured interviews and focus group discussions that explored experiences, perceptions, and contextual factors influencing the integration of GCED and Transformative Learning Theory within graduate programs. This multi stakeholder approach enabled the study to capture pedagogical, experiential, and institutional dimensions of curriculum implementation (Guest et al., 2017).

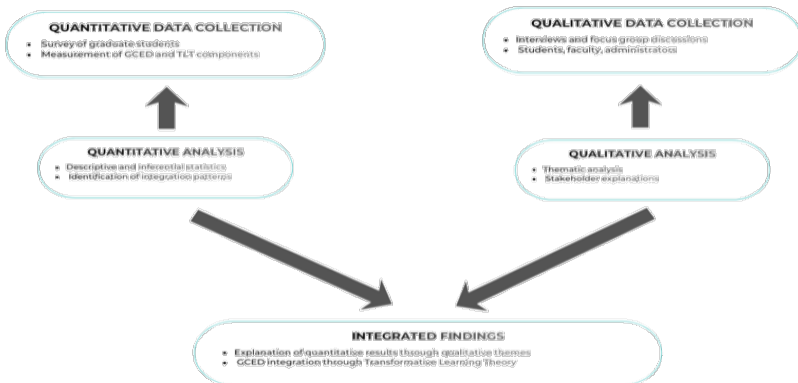
Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis guided by Braun and Clarke (2006). Both deductive coding, informed by Transformative Learning Theory, and inductive coding, allowing themes to emerge from participant narratives, were employed. This analytical approach ensured theoretical coherence while remaining sensitive to context specific insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017).

Mixed Methods Integration Procedures

Integration between the quantitative and qualitative phases occurred at several points in the research process. Initially, quantitative results were used to identify patterns in the integration of transformative learning components and GCED outcomes. These patterns informed the focus of the qualitative inquiry, guiding the development of interview and discussion questions that directly addressed areas of strong and weaker integration identified in the survey results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Further integration occurred during the interpretation stage, where qualitative themes were systematically linked to quantitative findings. Qualitative data provided explanations for observed statistical patterns by revealing pedagogical practices, institutional conditions, and stakeholder experiences that influenced curriculum implementation (Fetters et al., 2013). For instance, areas with comparatively lower quantitative ratings were explained through qualitative accounts describing limited opportunities for sustained dialogic engagement and extended experiential learning.

Figure 3.
Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Integration Diagram



Value Added of the Sequential Explanatory Design

The sequential explanatory mixed methods design enhanced the study by enabling a holistic examination of GCED integration that could not be achieved through a single methodological approach. Quantitative data established the overall extent and consistency of GCED related outcomes across respondents, while qualitative data enriched these findings by explaining how and why such outcomes emerged within the institutional context (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

This design also supported the inclusion of multiple stakeholder perspectives, allowing the study to move beyond student perceptions alone and incorporate faculty and administrative viewpoints. By integrating these perspectives, the study provided a comprehensive account of curriculum implementation that aligns empirical measurement with lived experience and institutional practice (Ivankova et al., 2006).

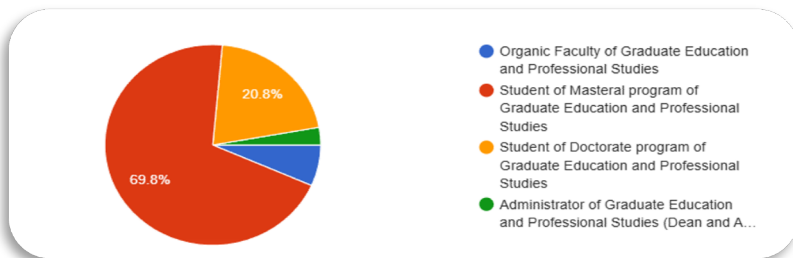
Through the explicit integration of quantitative and qualitative findings, the research design strengthened the credibility, interpretive depth, and practical relevance of the study. The mixed methods approach therefore ensured that the investigation not only measured GCED integration but also generated contextually grounded explanations that inform curriculum development and educational policy.

RESULTS

This discussion interprets the findings presented in Figures 4 and 5 and Tables 1–5 through the combined lenses of Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED). Rather than reiterating numerical results, the discussion focuses on explaining why the observed patterns matter, how variations across transformative learning components can be understood theoretically, and how the findings align with prior studies and cross-country research, while maintaining all figures and tables intact (Massaro, 2022; O’Flaherty et al., 2025).

Figure 4.

Respondents’ profile



As shown in Figure 4, the majority of respondents were master’s students, followed by doctoral students, faculty members, and administrators. This distribution places graduate students at the center of the data, which is appropriate given that they are the primary recipients of GCED and transformative learning interventions. The dominance of student perspectives helps explain the consistently high ratings across components, as students directly experience reflective, dialogic, and experiential pedagogies within the curriculum. At the same time, the inclusion of faculty and administrators provides triangulation, reinforcing the credibility of the findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Fetters et al., 2013).

Integration of Transformative Learning Components (Table 1)

Table 1 shows that critical reflection, rational discourse, and perspective transformation obtained the highest mean scores, all interpreted as Strongly Agree. From a TLT perspective, these components represent the core cognitive and reflective processes that enable learners to question assumptions, engage in reasoned dialogue, and revise frames of reference (Mezirow, 1991, 1997; Taylor & Cranton, 2012). Their strong presence suggests that the graduate curricula intentionally prioritize reflective inquiry and analytical engagement, which are foundational to transformative learning.

Table 1. Summary of Integration of Transformative Learning Components

Component	Grand Mean	Descriptive Interpretation (DI)
Critical Reflection	3.7	Strongly Agree
Dialogic Learning	3.49	Agree
Experiential Learning	3.47	Agree
Rational Discourse	3.6	Strongly Agree
Perspective Transformation	3.54	Strongly Agree

Legend:

Mean (M)		Descriptive Interpretation (DI)
3.26 - 4.00	-	<i>Strongly agree (SA)</i>
2.51 - 3.25	-	<i>Agree (A)</i>
1.76 - 2.50	-	<i>Disagree (DA)</i>
1.00 - 1.75	-	<i>Strongly disagree (SD)</i>

In contrast, dialogic learning and experiential learning, while still positively rated, received comparatively lower mean scores. This variation is theoretically significant. TLT posits that transformation is most effective when reflective processes are complemented by dialogic interaction and concrete experiences that expose learners to alternative perspectives and real-world complexity (Mezirow, 1997; Cantor, 1997; Bartle, 2015; O’Flaherty et al., 2025). The relatively lower emphasis on these components may reflect structural limitations such as fewer opportunities for sustained intercultural dialogue,

international exchanges, or extended community immersion within graduate programs.

Cross-country studies similarly report that dialogic and experiential learning are the most challenging components to institutionalize, particularly in contexts with limited resources or heavy academic workloads (Spronken-Smith et al., 2024; Shek et al., 2023). Thus, the pattern observed in Table 1 aligns with international trends rather than indicating a deficiency unique to the institution.

Outcomes of Transformative Learning in the Context of GCED (Table 2)

As presented in Table 2 below, all GCED-related outcomes—global awareness, social justice, cultural competence, ethical responsibility, and civic engagement—were rated Strongly Agree. This alignment between high transformative learning integration and strong GCED outcomes reflects a key proposition of TLT: that sustained critical reflection and rational discourse lead to perspective transformation that manifests in ethical, civic, and socially responsible orientations (Mezirow, 1991, 1997; Taylor & Cranton, 2012; Esther & Abdul-Samad, 2024).

Table 2. Summary of Outcomes of Transformative Learning in the Context of GCED in Graduate School Curricula

Outcome	Grand Mean	Descriptive Interpretation (DI)
Global Awareness	3.73	Strongly Agree
Social Justice	3.65	Strongly Agree
Cultural Competence	3.62	Strongly Agree
Ethical Responsibility	3.68	Strongly Agree
Civic Engagement	3.67	Strongly Agree

The consistently high outcomes also mirror findings from international research showing that graduate programs emphasizing reflective pedagogy can effectively cultivate global awareness and civic responsibility, even when experiential learning opportunities are more limited (Aktas et al., 2017; Massaro, 2022; Myers, 2016; Mustafida et al., 2026). The results in Table 2 therefore demonstrate that the curriculum succeeds in translating transformative processes into GCED outcomes that are central to global education agendas.

Real-World Applications of Transformative Learning (Table 3)

Table 3 highlights strong real-world applications of transformative learning, particularly in lifelong learning and sustainable practices. These findings correspond to the later phases of transformative learning, where revised perspectives are integrated into professional practice and long-term behavior (Mezirow, 1997; Taylor & Cranton, 2012). Within the GCED framework, this is

significant because it shows that learning extends beyond academic understanding into sustained civic, environmental, and professional engagement (UNESCO, 2017).

Table 3. Summary of Real-World Applications of Transformative Learning in the Context of GCED in Graduate School Curricula

Application	Grand Mean	Descriptive Interpretation (DI)
Community Involvement	3.64	Strongly Agree
Global Collaboration	3.6	Strongly Agree
Sustainable Practices	3.7	Strongly Agree
Lifelong Learning	3.72	Strongly Agree

Community involvement and global collaboration, while slightly lower than lifelong learning, remain strongly evident, suggesting that the curriculum supports both local and global forms of engagement. Cross-country literature similarly identifies lifelong learning and sustainability as common strengths of GCED-oriented graduate education, particularly in institutions emphasizing professional development and community-based learning (Massaro, 2022; O’Flaherty et al., 2025; Spronken-Smith et al., 2024).

Differences in Perceptions Across Educational Groups

The results of the Kruskal–Wallis H test below in Table 4 indicate no significant differences in perceptions of GCED integration, outcomes, or real-world applications across educational levels. This lack of variation suggests a shared institutional experience of GCED and transformative learning across master’s students, doctoral students, faculty, and administrators.

Table 4. Kruskal–Wallis H Test of Significant Difference in the Perceived Integration of GCED in Graduate School Curricula in terms of Education

Component	χ^2	df	p
Integration Ave	2.74	3	0.434
Outcomes Ave	2.31	3	0.51
Real-life Ave	1.85	3	0.605

From a theoretical standpoint, this consistency supports the idea that transformative learning and GCED are embedded at the programmatic level rather than being dependent on individual course exposure. Similar findings have been reported in cross-institutional studies where GCED is systematically integrated

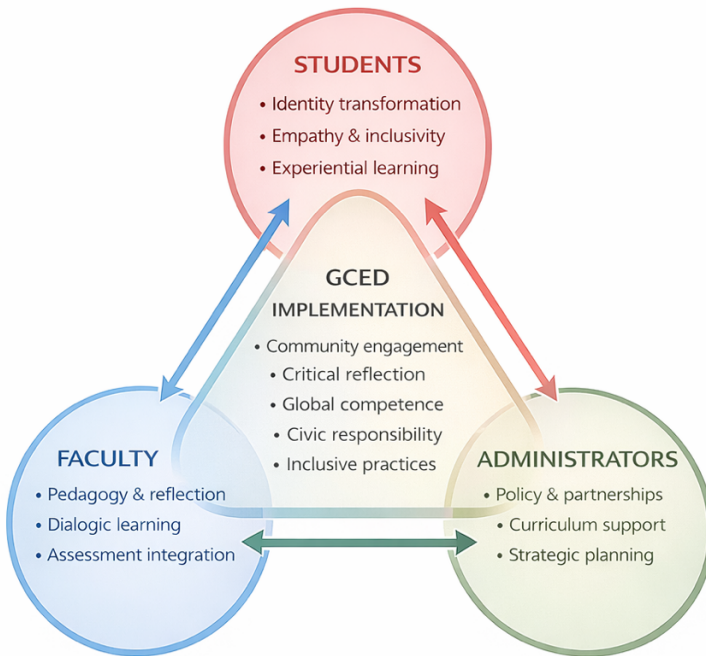
across curricula, resulting in comparable perceptions among different stakeholder groups (Massaro, 2022; Spronken-Smith et al., 2024; Dhandapani & Kaur, 2026).

Stakeholder Perspectives on GCED Implementation (Figure 4 and Table 5)

Figure 5 and Table 5 collectively illustrate the interaction and alignment of stakeholder perspectives on the implementation of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) within the graduate school curriculum. The model highlights how faculty, students, and administrators contribute distinct yet complementary roles in advancing GCED initiatives.

Figure 5.

Stakeholder Perspectives on Global Citizenship Education (GCED) Implementation



Faculty perspectives emphasize pedagogical strategies grounded in transformative learning processes, such as critical reflection, dialogic learning, and integrated assessment practices that scaffold the development of global awareness and ethical responsibility. Students, on the other hand, emphasize experiential learning, empathy development, and identity transformation, reflecting how GCED principles are internalized through community immersion, peer learning networks,

and intercultural engagement. Meanwhile, administrators focus on the institutional mechanisms that sustain GCED integration, including strategic planning, curriculum development, policy support, and partnerships with local and global stakeholders.

Table 5. Consolidated Themes and Sub-Themes of Stakeholder Perspectives on GCED Implementation

Stakeholder Group	Themes	Sub-Themes
Faculty	Scaffolded Critical Consciousness Development through Multi-Modal Pedagogy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Critical Reflection Integration 2. Dialogic Learning & Rational Discourse 3. Experience-Based Learning
	Holistic GCED Outcome Development through Integrated Assessment & Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Global Awareness & Cultural Competence 2. Social Justice & Ethical Responsibility 3. Civic Engagement
	Contextual Real-World Application through Community-Embedded Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Involvement 2. Sustainable Practices
Students	Experiential Learning as Identity Transformation Catalyst	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Immersion 2. Peer Learning Networks 3. Personal Narrative Integration
	Empathy Development through Cultural Bridge-Building	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Intercultural Competence 2. Social Justice Advocacy 3. Global–Local Empathetic Connection
	Professional Integration & Career Trajectory Transformation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ethical Leadership 2. Innovation through Global Perspectives 3. Lifelong Learning
Administrators	Strategic Institutional Transformation through GCED Integration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Curriculum Design & QA 2. Faculty Development & Capacity Building 3. Resource Allocation
	Partnership Development & External Relationships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. International Collaboration 2. Community Partnership Integration 3. Industry/Professional Networks
	Assessment, Evaluation & Continuous Improvement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outcome Measurement 2. Stakeholder Feedback 3. Innovation & Best Practices

Faculty perspectives emphasize pedagogical strategies aligned with TLT, students highlight identity and worldview transformation, and administrators focus

on institutional structures and sustainability. Together, these perspectives demonstrate that GCED implementation operates as an interconnected system, consistent with theoretical models that stress the alignment of pedagogy, learner experience, and institutional leadership in achieving transformative outcomes (Mezirow, 1997; Aktas et al., 2017; O’Flaherty et al., 2025; Mustafida et al., 2026).

Strengthening Weaker Transformative Learning Components

While the findings in Tables 1–3 indicate strong overall integration, the comparatively lower ratings for dialogic and experiential learning point to areas for strengthening. Within the existing GCED–TLT framework, targeted interventions such as expanded community-based projects, structured intercultural dialogue, and enhanced partnerships can deepen experiential engagement without altering curricular goals (Cantor, 1997; Bartle, 2015; Massaro, 2022; Spronken-Smith et al., 2024). Strengthening these components would balance reflective and experiential dimensions of transformation, further reinforcing the translation of learning into sustained civic and professional action.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study examined the integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) within the graduate school curricula of Romblon State University using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The findings demonstrate that GCED is meaningfully embedded through transformative learning processes, resulting in strong outcomes related to global awareness, social justice, cultural competence, ethical responsibility, civic engagement, and real-world application. The convergence of quantitative and qualitative results underscores the coherence of GCED implementation across pedagogical, experiential, and institutional dimensions (Massaro, 2022; O’Flaherty et al., 2025).

Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, the findings provide empirical support for Transformative Learning Theory as a viable framework for advancing Global Citizenship Education in graduate education. The strong integration of critical reflection, rational discourse, and perspective transformation affirms Mezirow’s assertion that transformation occurs through reflective and dialogic meaning-making processes that reshape learners’ frames of reference (Mezirow, 1991, 1997; Taylor & Cranton, 2012). The alignment between these transformative processes and GCED outcomes demonstrates how TLT operationalizes GCED principles within higher education curricula (Myers, 2016; Massaro, 2022).

Furthermore, the consistency of GCED outcomes across stakeholder groups reinforces the theoretical proposition that transformative learning is not

solely an individual cognitive process but a socially situated and institutionally mediated phenomenon. The convergence of faculty, student, and administrator perspectives highlights the interdependence of pedagogy, learner experience, and institutional support in sustaining transformative and globally oriented education (Aktas et al., 2017; O’Flaherty et al., 2025; Spronken-Smith et al., 2024). These findings contribute to the broader theoretical discourse by illustrating how TLT functions within a GCED-aligned graduate curriculum in a developing country context.

Practical and Policy Implications

Practically, the study offers insights for curriculum developers, faculty, and academic leaders seeking to strengthen GCED integration in graduate programs. The strong emphasis on reflective and discursive pedagogies suggests that graduate curricula are effective in fostering ethical reasoning, critical consciousness, and civic responsibility (Myers, 2016; Massaro, 2022; Mustafida et al., 2026). However, the relatively lower emphasis on dialogic and experiential learning indicates opportunities to enhance structured intercultural dialogue, community-based engagement, and experiential activities that reinforce transformative outcomes (Cantor, 1997; Bartle, 2015; Spronken-Smith et al., 2024).

From a policy standpoint, the findings support institutional and national efforts to align graduate education with global education goals and CHED directives (UNESCO, 2015; UNESCO, 2017). Administrators play a critical role in sustaining GCED implementation through curriculum design, faculty development, partnerships, and resource allocation. Strengthening these institutional mechanisms can ensure that GCED is not treated as an isolated initiative but as an embedded and sustainable component of graduate education that prepares learners for socially responsible leadership (Dhandapani & Kaur, 2026).

Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted within a single institution, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other graduate schools or national contexts. Second, the quantitative phase relied on self-reported perceptions, which may be influenced by social desirability or respondents’ subjective interpretations of GCED and transformative learning experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Third, while the mixed-methods design provided depth and triangulation, the study did not include longitudinal data that could capture changes in transformative learning outcomes over time (Ivankova et al., 2006).

Directions for Future Research

Future research may build on this study by examining GCED and TLT integration across multiple institutions to enable comparative and cross-cultural analysis (Massaro, 2022; Spronken-Smith et al., 2024). Longitudinal studies could further explore how transformative learning outcomes develop throughout graduate education and translate into sustained professional and civic engagement (Taylor & Cranton, 2012). Additionally, future research may investigate specific pedagogical strategies, institutional policies, or partnership models that strengthen dialogic and experiential learning components within GCED-oriented curricula (O’Flaherty et al., 2025; Mustafida et al., 2026).

By addressing these directions, subsequent studies can deepen understanding of how transformative learning processes support global citizenship development and contribute to more inclusive, ethical, and sustainable graduate education systems (UNESCO, 2017).

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