WHAT ABOUT INNER DIALOGUE?

"THE COPS IN THE HEAD"
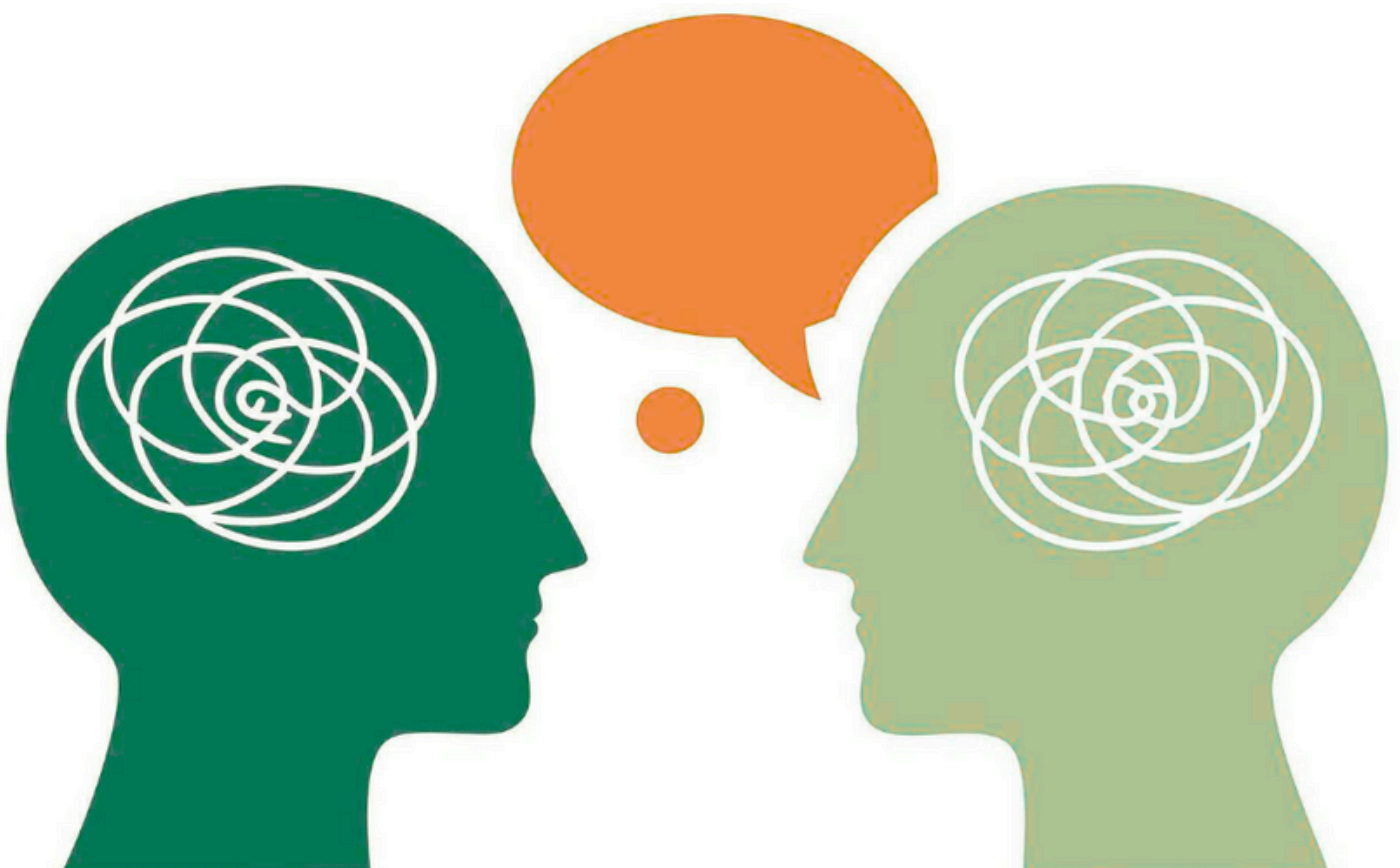
01 Learning Objectives

Learners will identify how internalized, intersectional oppression manifests as "inner voices of control" and connect these to external power imbalances in dialogical learning within any D-GCE program.

02 Connection to GCE / D-GCE / Hybrid GCE

This exercise unpacks patterns of marginalization in dialogue—showing how internalized oppression reproduces power imbalances—and equips participants to transform these dynamics in global citizenship education spaces.
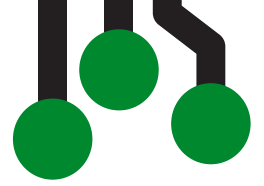
03 Participants

Up to 20 individuals (trainers, educators, activists, students, NGO staff) from diverse social and identity backgrounds, ready for deep personal and group reflection.

04 Duration

60 minutes (including inner-dialogue unpacking, mapping, reflection, and strategy planning).

Preparation

Platform Privacy:

Ensure a space (online or in person) that permits anonymous responses (e.g. polling tool, colored cards, private chat).

Materials:

- Slide or handout listing the 11 inner-dialogue statements (see below).
- Two anonymous polling channels (digital poll, colored cards, or sticky notes).
- Blank diagram template with three concentric layers labeled:
  1. Personal Characteristics
  2. Systems of Oppression
  3. Structures & Institutions

Optional Prompt:

- A brief clip or vignette illustrating one "inner cop" in action.

Instructions to Implement the Tool

1. Introduction (5 min)

- Explain that "The Cops in the Head" comes from Augusto Boal's Rainbow of Desire - those internal voices that police our behavior.
- Emphasize these inner "cops" originate in external systems and structures, then become internalized.

2. Collective Statement Unpacking (10 min)

- Display all 11 statements together.
- Clarify: We will unpack these statements in general - not tally personal scores - to ensure everyone's reflections remain anonymous.
- Ask: "Which statements resonate as examples of inner-dialogue policing? Let's discuss each in turn."

Statements

1 "I'm too old to pursue higher education."

2 "I shouldn't ask for help; people will think I'm less capable."

3 "I have laughed at jokes that demean my ethnicity, gender, or other aspects of my identity."

4 "I need to work twice as hard to be seen as competent because people like me are assumed less capable."

5 "If I speak up about injustice, I'll be labeled angry or difficult."

6 "I shouldn't expect to be in leadership roles; people like me don't belong there."

7 "My background is a barrier; I need to assimilate to be accepted."

8 "My achievements are probably due to tokenism, not my abilities."

9 "Expressing my emotions will confirm stereotypes about my identity."

10 "I should be grateful for any opportunity, even if it underestimates me."

11 "I cannot cry or express emotions publicly because people will judge me as weak."

3. Intersectional Mapping (20 min)

- Present the three-layer diagram:
1. Personal Characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, class, disability, etc.)
2. Systems of Oppression (ageism, patriarchy, racism, ableism, etc.)
3. Structures & Institutions (education systems, labor markets, media, policy bodies, capitalism, etc.)
- In small groups, assign each group 2–3 statements to map onto:

- The personal characteristic it targets
- The system(s) that produced it
- The structure(s) that sustain it

- Note intersections (e.g. genderism + classism).

4. Power Dynamics & Communication (10 min)

- Plenary share: "How do these internalized oppressions amplify some voices and silence others in dialogue?"
- Prompt: "What forms of violent or repressive communication might flow from each mapped intersection?"

5. Healing-Justice Planning (10 min)

- Individually or in pairs, draft 2–3 facilitation strategies or activities that:
1. Prevent or protect against inner-dialogue policing
2. Create space for marginalized voices to lead
3. Establish clear group agreements and response protocols
- Invite 1–2 shares in plenary.

Sum Up / Debriefing / Reflection

Key Questions:

1. Which "inner cop" insight surprised you most?
2. How will you attend to your own inner dialogue before facilitating D-GCE dialogues?
3. What group agreements or supports will you prioritize to disrupt internalized oppression?

Tips & Suggestions for Trainers

- Anonymity Safety: Unpack statements generally; avoid personal scoring to protect privacy.
- Trigger Warnings: Remind learners that discussing oppression can be triggering. Offer a brief pause or private chat option if anyone needs it.
- Discomfort vs. Trigger: Clarify - discomfort (withdrawal, denial, defensiveness) signals privilege being challenged, while a trigger reaction may require emotional support.
- Response Strategies: Model naming the feeling, taking a breath, and re-centering on active listening.
- Accessibility: Provide all materials in advance; use captions, transcripts, and varied engagement modes.
- Emotional Support: Have co-facilitators or support persons on standby.
- Follow-Up Resource: Send a one-pager on "Inner Dialogue & Liberation" after the session.

Skills – SDGs – Key Competences Chart

Skills Developed	SDG Targets	GCE Competences
Self-Awareness & Reflexivity	**SDG 4.7:** Education for Global Citizenship	Learning to Learn
Critical Thinking	**SDG 10:** Reduced Inequalities	Analytical Competence
Empathy & Solidarity	**SDG 5:** Gender Equality	Social Competence
Inclusive Facilitation	**SDG 16:** Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions	Civic Engagement
Collaboration & Care	**SDG 3:** Good Health & Well-Being	Emotional Regulation

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

5 GENDER EQUALITY

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

References & Links

- Boal, Augusto. Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy (origin of "The Cops in the Head" metaphor)
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color"
- hooks, bell. Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black
- Brown, Brené. Dare to Lead (on vulnerability & group norms)
- Edmondson, Amy C. The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety
- TRHT (Truth, Racial Healing &Transformation) Framework