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## Catching them Young — Nurturing Primary Students into Global Citizens

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### Abstract

*Global Citizenship Education (GCED) aims to transform students into global citizens by developing core competencies in them, allowing them to actively engage with the world, and making it a more just and sustainable place to live in. This paper underlines that education is not only about obtaining high scores in examination but involves in-depth knowledge and insightful learning as well, especially, at a time, when the students have easy access to a vast array of information available online. Teachers, who are the most effective interface between students and knowledge, play a crucial role in shaping these young minds, many of whom may emerge as future leaders. Therefore, they need to be skilful, updated at all times, and use teaching–learning methodologies or strategies to ensure maximum learning. This paper also tries to bring forth some of the best teaching–learning practices, including ‘blended learning’, that may be implemented in classrooms.*

### INTRODUCTION

With the world shrinking to becoming a global village, it is imperative to develop a feeling of mutual trust and respect among students, coming from diverse backgrounds — beginning right at the primary stage of education. It is important for educators to see to it that the young learners are happy and calm so that they may be able to contribute

towards building a happy and peaceful world. Besides, it is equally important to educate them about ‘human rights’ and ‘dignity’ from an early age, and that every citizen in the world enjoys this ‘basic right’. They also need to be educated about promoting a gender neutral world, and the importance of living in harmony with each other and nature, and thus, conserving it.

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The *National Curriculum Framework* (NCF) 2005, too, underlines promoting and upholding the values of equality, justice and freedom; democracy; concern for the well-being of oneself and others; respect for human rights and dignity; and promoting sustainable development as some of the main aims of education. The NCF-2005 goes on to declare “human rights” as a “universal frame of reference” and recommends age appropriate introduction to these. It emphasises human rights to be at the core of peace education and peace building in society.

## GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

These educational goals, as enshrined in the NCF-2005, are synonymous with those listed in the *Global Citizenship Education* (GCED). The GCED aims to transform the existing education system and nurture learners to becoming global citizens by encouraging creativity and innovation in education, and also promoting the values of peace, human rights and sustainable development. The GCED ideals include aspects like education for respect of cultural diversity; human rights education; peace education; education for sustainable development, local and global justice; and education for gender equality.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which published the *Global Citizenship Education — Topics and Learning Objectives* in the year 2015, outlines three core conceptual

dimensions of GCED — cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural, which are interrelated. Each of these dimensions indicates the learning domain it focuses on in the learning process.

### **Cognitive**

To acquire knowledge and understanding about global, regional, national and local issues; and analyse the interconnectedness and interdependency between different countries and populations on each other

### **Socio-emotional**

To have a sense of belongingness to a common humanity, sharing values and responsibilities, empathy, solidarity and respect for differences and diversity

### **Behavioural**

To act effectively and responsibly at the local, national and global level in order to create a more peaceful and sustainable world

## **GCED — key learner attributes**

The UNESCO has identified three learner attributes that the GCED aims to develop among students — informed and critically literate; socially connected and respectful of diversity; and ethically responsible and engaged.

### **Informed and critically literate**

Students at the primary stage are curious by nature. In pursuit to know and learn more, they are actively engaged in acquiring knowledge and information, making sense of

the world around. Teachers and educators can help these young minds to understand the interdependence and interconnectedness between local and global issues. These young learners may also be imparted knowledge and skills through effective and meaningful teaching-learning activities. This would help them to inculcate the skills of reflective thinking, critical inquiry and analysis.

### **Socially connected and respectful of diversity**

The young learners need to be educated in such a way that they are able to understand and respect their own identities and that of others. Besides, they must be taught to develop an understanding of relationships and belongingness with the society and the world around; shared values and human dignity. They must be able to appreciate and respect individual differences and diversity; and understand the complex relationship between diversity and commonality. This will lead to the development of global citizenship values in the young learners as they would be able to understand the reasons behind such diversity in language, religion, culture and food habits, and identify themselves with the people around, despite the differences. Once they are able to do so, they will be able to understand the ill effects of inequality and discrimination in society, and be committed to fight against these prejudices.

### **Ethically responsible and engaged**

Education at the primary stage plays a crucial role in the life of a person as it helps in shaping one's character. Classroom teaching at this stage may address issues like those relating to climate change, consumerism, poverty, sustainable development and peace. Values like compassion, caring and sharing, respect for all individuals and the environment may be nurtured in the young learners only by following effective pedagogical practices in classrooms. These would help in transforming their personality, and developing a sense of personal, social and environmental responsibility in them. Besides, they will feel motivated to participate in community activities, and develop collaborative and social entrepreneurship skills in the process, inching closer to achieving the aims of GCED.

### **Embedding GCED at the primary level**

As GCED is progressive in nature and aims to transform education, it is important to adopt learner centred pedagogies. These would help in achieving the holistic development of the students. Therefore, the existing teaching-learning practices need to be revisited and revamped so as to meet the requirements of the learners and provide them with ample opportunities to experiment, explore, innovate and reflect.

Teachers may use a variety of pedagogical practices to create a safe, inclusive and engaging classroom environment. Some such practices that may be incorporated in the classroom are as follows.

- The teachers may work with the learners to frame basic rules for interaction.
- Furniture and other articles in the classroom may be arranged in such a manner that allow the learners to move freely and facilitate them to work collaboratively in small groups.
- There must be enough space for the learners to move around and display their works.
- The teachers must also pay attention to factors like a student's socio-economic background, physical and mental ability, race, culture, religion, gender and sexual orientation, among others.

### **GCED — pedagogical principles**

The GCED observes six pedagogical principles, which mark a shift from conventional to transformative teaching-learning processes. These may be incorporated in classroom teaching as well. It has been illustrated with examples from NCERT's Class III EVS textbook, *Looking Around*.

#### **Dialogue and participation**

This principle suggests creating a democratic and liberal atmosphere in the classroom, where the learners

get an opportunity to think, analyse and reflect, and voice their opinions. Creative and learner centred teaching-learning strategies need to be employed in the classroom so as to encourage active learner participation and student-teacher interaction. Adopting such classroom measures would empower the students to voice their opinions on many social and environmental issues.

A few examples have been cited from NCERT's Class III EVS textbook, *Looking Around*.

#### **'The Concept of Water'**

The teacher can pose some questions to the learners. For example — why do we need to boil or filter water? Why has water become so dirty? Who is responsible for making it dirty? What can you do to ensure that water does not become dirty? How can we save water? Why do we need to save water?

Such questions would make the students think and reflect, evoking responses. This would, in turn, help them acquire twenty-first century competencies like communication, analytical and critical skills.

#### **'Our First School'**

The teacher may start a dialogue in the class by asking some questions to the students, making them think and reflect. For example — do you love your family members? Who all are there in your family? How do you help your mother and father? Do you sometimes fight with your brother and sister? What are the reasons for the fights?

Are you able to solve the problems that lead to the fights by talking to each other? Do your parents settle the disputes between you and your siblings? How do they do it? Do both of you get scolded for quarrelling? Would it be better if you would manage to settle your disputes mutually? Will you try to resolve your disputes peacefully in future?

These questions would again make the young learners think and reflect, evoking responses, and hence, make the classroom environment interactive and participatory. Here, the teacher may encourage the students to resolve disputes among themselves, or with their siblings, or anyone else through communication and dialogue, and educate them about the importance of 'peace' and 'non-violence' at the same time.

### **'Poonam's Day Out'**

The teacher may ask some questions to the students. For example — do you love animals? Where have you seen a tiger, a lion and a panther? In a zoo? How would you feel if you were locked in a cage? Do you think we have kept the environment and surroundings safe for animals? Besides, videos may be shown to the learners on how plastic dumped into water bodies like lakes, rivers, seas and oceans is life-threatening for animals and fish inhabiting these. Such things will encourage critical thinking, analytical and decision making skills among the learners.

Moreover, it will sensitise them about the importance of coexistence of different species on the planet and conserving the environment.

### **Holistic and interdisciplinary approach of teaching**

This principle emphasises inter-connectedness on all issues, affecting both humans and the environment. It involves analysing the issues from different perspectives. It also takes into account the diverse backgrounds and experiences that the learners come from. Besides, it aims that all domains of learning—cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural—are taken into account in the teaching-learning process.

A few examples from NCERT's Class III EVS textbook, *Looking Around*, are as follows.

### **'Chhotu's House'**

The story starts with the picture of a boy, living in a pipe. A teacher may refer to this story and sensitise the young learners about how difficult life is for some people and how vast inequalities between people belonging to different classes exist. The teacher must try to sensitise the learners and make them realise that they are fortunate as they have a home to live in and a family to come back to.

Referring to the pictures given in the chapter, one may discuss other dimensions, such as overcrowding on roads, noise and air pollution.

The teacher may talk about the coexistence of human beings with

other living beings like plants and animals, and that it is important to live in harmony without disturbing or destroying their habitat.

Besides, the teacher may inculcate among the learners the values of maintaining cleanliness and hygiene as illustrated through an image, carried in the story, that shows the importance of keeping the toilet clean and hygienic at all times. The students must also be educated about the importance of maintaining hand hygiene, and that they must wash their hands appropriately and frequently. The learners may also be encouraged to participate in activities like cleaning the classroom and the school premises on a regular basis. Such exercises will help them to grow up into responsible adults.

All these dimensions may, therefore, be linked with the lives of the learners, encouraging participatory and joyful learning.

### ***'Foods We Eat'***

This chapter starts with a picture of children telling each other the meal they had eaten the previous day. Someone relished fish, someone had *poori* (deep-fried bread made from unleavened whole-wheat flour) and *kheer* (rice pudding cooked in milk), someone ate *langar* (religious dining) at a gurdwara, someone's mother brought noodles on return from her workplace, etc. But there were some children who had to go without food.

Here, the teacher may underline aspects like a human body's need for a balanced diet, and glaring inequalities in society as some people are compelled to go without food.

The teacher may, thus, inculcate in the students the value of giving respect to the food that they get to eat every day, and also feel grateful towards the person who cooks meals for them.

The teacher may also introduce a classroom activity like preparing a healthy weekly menu. The students may be asked questions as to why food must not be wasted.

The chapter also talks about the food requirements of the young and the elderly, and also the physical challenges that old people face like difficulty in climbing the stairs, etc. Here, the teacher may evoke the value of compassion in the young learners and they may be made to understand their responsibility to help the elderly.

The learners may also be educated to respect the cultural diversity existing in the country and the world through the example of food. Besides, there is an instance cited in the book, where a woman has picked up a culinary style from a place that she had visited some time ago. This may help to bring forth the point of interconnectedness and interdependence among people, and how these aspects influence and enable each other to acquire and learn new things.

These are some of the important points mentioned in the GCED principles.

The teachers may nurture basic human values like empathy and kindness in the students by way of role-play, dialogue and discussion, etc. They must, therefore, ensure that holistic learning includes cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural domains of learning.

### Multi-modal learning strategies

This implies employing varied or multiple teaching-learning strategies in the classroom in order to make learning innovative, interactive and participatory. The teachers may make use of books, newspapers, magazines, audio-visual aids, etc., in the teaching-learning process and also promote art integrated learning. Such participatory pedagogies would ensure individual freedom to the learners and also enrich their learning.

All chapters in the Class III EVS textbook have incorporated art integrated learning. The teachers can make the learners do the exercises given in the chapters. For example, in the chapter — ‘It’s Raining’, the children can sing and dance on the poem. They can also draw clouds and colour a rainbow. Similarly, in the chapter — ‘The Plant Fairy’, they can draw the pictures of leaves and colour them. They may also be encouraged to go to a nearby garden or park, and collect leaves of different shapes, sizes and colours from various plants. In the chapter, ‘What’s Cooking’, the learners may be encouraged to prepare simple dishes like sprouts

*chaat* and beverages like lemonade, etc. The chapter, ‘From Here to There’, talks about a song sung aboard a train. The students may be taught the song, and encouraged to sing and dance to its tunes. Besides, the teachers may encourage them to play some games like those suggested in the chapter, ‘Games We Play’, to enable their physical and mental development. This will ensure that the students have fun as they learn.

### Value formation

Learning must not only centre around imparting knowledge to the young learners and asking them to memorise the facts. Rather, it should focus on their holistic development, and inculcating values like empathy, tolerance, mutual respect, etc., in them.

The chapter, ‘Saying without speaking’, enlightens the learners to express themselves without using their voice. It sensitises them about people, who may not be able to speak, see or hear, but be blessed with multifarious talents. Therefore, as teachers, one may help the young learners to become sensitive and respectful to people with differential needs. The teacher may also help the students learn basic Braille or sign language, and decode and understand various emotions by the way of gestures, postures and facial expressions.

The chapter, ‘It’s Raining’, may also be used to sensitise the learners about being sensitive to the

environment, and the need of plants and animals for water.

### Critical empowerment

The GCED empowers the learners to critically respond to a situation, analyse it and take action. The learners are expected to understand the challenges they encounter in different areas of life and take appropriate actions. For example, each child can plant a sapling and take care of it, thereby, helping in preserving the environment.

### Applicable and relevant

This implies that the pedagogies employed must be relevant to the learners' contexts and experiences. A teacher, as an effective and efficient facilitator and classroom manager, may use participatory techniques in the teaching-learning process, allowing the learners to make meaning out of their experiences.

In all examples cited in the article, there is a lot of scope for group work and collaborative learning activities, which would help in promoting creativity and innovation among students.

### CONCLUSION

Thus, as educators, one must understand that students at the primary stage are at the most impressionable age in life, and hence, imbibe the values and lessons imparted quickly. So, the teacher must see to it that they are able to relate with the examples being given in the class. Apart from the content, the teacher must be cautious of one's language and style of communication. One also needs to be careful of one's behaviour and mannerisms at all times as children, usually, take their teachers as role models, and imitate their actions and mannerisms.

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