

The Perception of Global Citizenship Education Among School Teachers in India: A Survey

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisages many changes in education. It also includes new and contemporary issues important for school education. One of them is Global Citizenship Education (GCED). GCED is based on the principle of respect and appreciation of various cultures, different forms of expression, and diverse human realities to ensure an equitable educational environment. The successful implementation of GCED requires a theory-based understanding of the concept by teachers and teacher-educators, and other informal and non-formal settings. A globalised world and its challenges are what future generations are likely to inherit. Hence, it is essential that today's education helps to prepare children for tomorrow's world. This paper sheds light on the teachers' understanding of the concept and practicality of implementing the GCED values in school curricula.

INTRODUCTION

It is not surprising when the words 'national' and 'international' appear together in the same title as in this one. World leaders have emphasised that, to build a more sustainable world, there is a need for collective action.

As the poet Donne says "No man is an island"; no nation can exist in isolation. In other words, there are issues that transcend national boundaries: climate change, environmental laws, displaced populations, etc. These cannot be solved by a single country acting

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alone; they are neither feasible nor desirable. Increased levels of dialogue and cooperation among countries will not only lead to mutual benefit but also encourage goal-directed behaviour towards peace. The definition of cooperation is — *combining energies to work towards a common goal*. Cooperation requires a combination of character attributes, such as being respectful, honest, helpful and above all, the ability to listen. They can, however, learn these traits over time through frequent encouragement and modelling by parents, teachers and other elders. Not surprisingly, the concept of global citizenship is being explored with increased intensity and, as might be expected, there has been a corresponding – and growing - interest among educators in various parts of the world to strengthen the global dimension of citizenship education in school curricula at all levels.

Global Citizenship Education (GCED) aims to empower learners of all ages to assume active roles, both locally and globally, in building more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure societies. UNESCO's work in this field is guided by the Education 2030 Agenda and Framework for Action, notably target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4 on Education), which calls on countries to “ensure that all learners are provided with the knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture

of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development”.

Thus, as times change, and societies adapt themselves to new challenges, education systems are redesigned. The New Education Policy (NEP) of India reflects this metamorphosis: an approach which takes into account the whole of human society and the environments, yet maintains an identity rooted in Indian values.

The New Education Policy (NEP)

The New Education Policy (NEP) was released by the government of India on July 31, 2020. The NEP is a 66 pages document that talks about vision of education in the country: for ECCE (Early childhood care education), School Education, Higher Education and Professional Education. The NEP 2020 replaces the previous National Policy on Education, 1986. Thus it is a comprehensive framework for elementary education to higher education as well as vocational training in both rural and urban India. The policy aims to transform India's education system by 2040.

The vision of the Policy is to instil among the learners a deep-rooted pride in being Indian, not only in thought, but also in spirit, intellect, and deeds, as well as to develop knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being, thereby reflecting a truly global citizen (NEP, 2020: p.7).

Schools play an important role in harnessing the transformative potential of education to empower learners with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to become global citizens. As children's perspectives expand to include their classrooms, schools, community, nations, and the world, they take the first steps toward understanding the concept of global citizenship.

Teachers have a crucial role in readying learners for climate change, sustainable development and global citizenship. In order to empower learners, educators themselves need to be equipped with the knowledge, skills, values and behaviours required for transformative education. This exercise aims at mapping the existing awareness of the concept of GCED among school teachers in India, to capture the teachers' perception and understanding of GCED. The survey includes the teachers' understanding of learning competencies related to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and GCED; specifically, in the syllabus, textbooks and assessment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher education can make an important contribution to raising understanding of SDGs within education. ESD, GCED, human rights, peace and inter-cultural understanding can be seen within a range of courses for the initial training and continuing professional development of teachers.

The extent to which these themes can be interpreted as instruments to achieve pre-determined goals is a feature of the discourses surrounding ESD and GCED that is directly relevant to teacher education. The dangers of focusing on societal outcomes and behaviour change rather than educational processes is particularly relevant in the discussions on ESD and teacher education (Pipere, et al., 2015; Manteaw, 2012; Mannion, et al., 2014).

Increasingly, governments and policy-makers are encouraging teacher development programmes to include themes, such as cultural understanding, global awareness and sustainable literacy. Examples of this can be found in Canada (Mundy et al., 2007); Finland (Alasuutari, 2011); Ireland (Martin et al, 2016); Scotland (Bourn et al, 2016; Wisely et al., 2010); South Africa (Lotz-Sistka, 2011) and South Korea (Sung, 2015).

Proponents of ESD and GCED tend to call for a constructivist approach to learning and see it as part of a transformative approach to learning (Mc Keown and Hopkins, 2010; Sterling, 2001). Similar themes emerged in discussions about GCED, human rights, and intercultural education (Bourn, 2015; Gaudelli, 2016; Osler and Starkey, 2010; Scheunpflug, 2011; Wisely et al., 2010). However, as evidence from different regions of the world has identified, the skills that many teachers have mastered are often related to reproduction of bodies of

knowledge within the classroom, teacher rather than learner-led pedagogical approaches, and an over-emphasis on usage of textbooks (Darling-Hammond and Liebermann, 2012; Bajaj, 2012; Kithuka, 2015; Griffin, 2012). How teachers are trained and the pedagogical focus of that training is therefore crucial.

OBJECTIVES

- To get a picture of the current situation regarding the understanding and implementation of GCED in Indian schools.
- To gauge the teachers’ understanding of learning competencies related to ESD and GCED; specifically, in syllabus, textbooks and assessment.

METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire related to GCED was created using google forms. Two types of questions were given — multiple choice and short answer type questions in the form. Data was obtained from more than 80 school teachers, hailing from different states of the northern part of India.

ANALYSIS

The data collected via google forms showed that more than 60 per cent of respondents were familiar with the concept of GCED and less than 10 per cent of participants had no idea about the concept at all. Similar was the case

with their knowledge of SDG 4 and the term “glocal”. The seminars and workshops that are organised from time to time for teachers have played a crucial role in keeping up with the changes in the field of education both at the national and international level. This awareness was evident in the responses of more than 70 per cent of participants all with teaching experience of more than half a decade.

How would you rate your awareness of GCED?

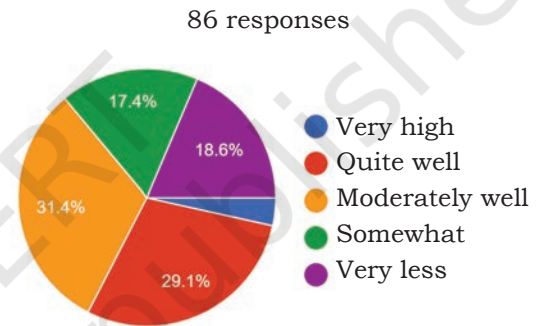


Figure 1: GCED awareness among participants

How would you rate your awareness of SDG 4 that calls for quality and equitable education?

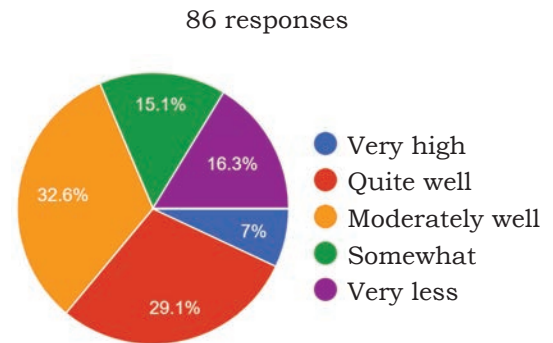


Figure 2: Awareness regarding quality and equity

It did not come as a surprise that more than 95 per cent of participants were aware of the phrase “*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*” for it is one of the facets of the cultural ethos of India. The three notions of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) — solidarity, respect for diversity and shared sense of humanity — are deeply embedded in the concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. Rabindranath Tagore, more than a century ago, during one of his lectures in the USA rightly said that “The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence” (Tagore, 1917, p. 116). India’s commitment to peaceful co-existence plays a crucial role in making the country a safe space for people of different cultures, religions, etc.

As per the responses given by the participants on the presence of various GCED values in the current NCERT textbooks, an overwhelmingly

The textbooks that you currently teach: do they endorse inclusion?

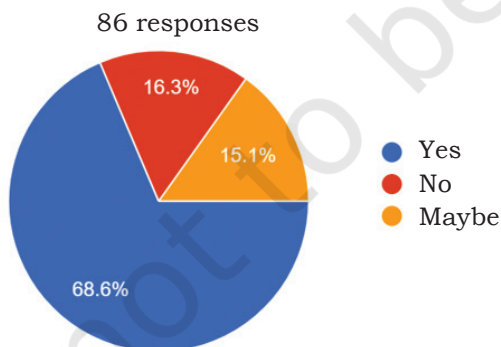


Figure 3: Inclusion in textbooks

positive response was observed for all values, but one. One GCED value which received the mixed response was ‘INCLUSION’. Around 30 per cent of participants were not certain about the endorsement of inclusion by the textbooks.

The term “inclusion” in itself carries multiple aspects. While it is quite evident from the textbooks that pertinent efforts were made to create all-inclusive textbooks. However, more emphasis may be given to various disabilities listed in the RPWD Act, 2016. Further, exercises and activities that contribute to sensitisation towards issues related to inclusion may be added. Following the analysis of textbooks from the participants’ perspectives, they were further asked to rank a few significant areas pertaining to GCED. The seven areas are as given below:

1. practical application of GCED pedagogy in the classroom;
2. linking GCED with real-life issues;
3. planning projects on GCED;
4. identifying learning goals related to GCED;
5. reaching out to the community;
6. the whole school approach to GCED;
7. assessment of GCED practices.

For the first six areas, no clear-cut preference could be deciphered from the data. It was the seventh area, assessment of GCED practices, which was marked least important by 25.6 per cent of the total participants.

Below are the seven areas of importance in implementing GCED in the classroom teaching-learning process: 1 practical application of GCED p...nt of GCED practice out of the above seven areas

86 responses

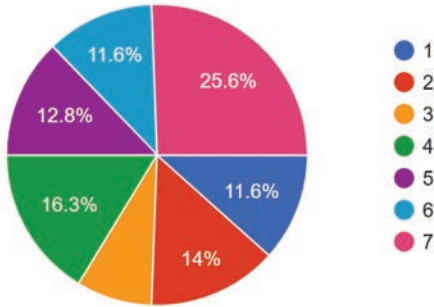


Figure 4: Assessment of GCED practices

It reflects that teachers perceive GCED values, which cannot be easily assessed unlike other subjects, and hence, they deemed it least important. It is possible that a child may modify a particular behaviour while in the presence of adults simply because s/he is aware of being observed and the pressure of being assessed. Even while writing the answers to value-based questions, learners often opt for answers which are seen as acceptable by teachers and elders. Assessment involves setting criteria and it is unlikely to result in anything of significance unless used as feedback for parents or input for the system. Learners would be more motivated if they are in an environment where they get to see the adults incorporating these values in

a “natural manner” instead of being pressured to memorise and write down the “acceptable responses”.

“I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.”

Chinese Proverb*

The proverb is appropriate to the context especially when it comes to the implementation of GCED. Learners, especially the younger ones, put their teachers on a pedestal. They imitate and follow them. Learners are more likely to be inspired if teachers make the values inherent to GCED a part of their daily lives. Performing simple tasks like switching off the lights and fans while leaving the classroom, watering plants, and giving equal opportunities to participate in different activities may seem routine to adults, but such simple acts leave a lasting impression on young minds.

GCED Values in Textbooks

Participants seemed more comfortable in locating the GCED values in textbooks. They confidently pointed out lessons, poems and activities that resonated with the values of GCED. It seemed that the participants’ level of awareness of GCED was more evident in examples than with the concept.

The NCERT textbooks published in 2006–2008 were envisaged based on the National Curriculum Framework 2005. The textbooks, ahead of their time, still echo the

* Usually attributed to Confucius, this quote at times also gets ascribed to one of the Confucian scholars. Due to lack of clarity regarding the original author/speaker, it has been quoted as such.

values of GCED even after a decade and a half of their conception. Many responses given by participants included examples from NCERT textbooks, of all classes, which reflect the GCED Values.

Most of the examples by the participants were from language textbooks followed by science and social science textbooks. However, there were no examples from mathematics textbooks. A deeper probe revealed the reason behind it—GCED values are comparatively less explicit in mathematics textbooks. Educators tend to focus solely on analysis of mathematical problems.

Teachers of mathematics tend to see the subject as being abstract in nature. There seems to be a disconnect between the field of mathematics education and the social and cultural life of learners. This compartmentalisation could easily be one of the reasons for non-integration of GCED values in mathematics.

GCED, Pandemic and School Education

The input regarding the incorporation of GCED values in the pandemic year is broadly concerned with two aspects of teaching-learning.

Digitisation

The abrupt pause that the Covid-19 put on the life of everyone has led to revolutionising the education sector. India, where in-person teaching was prevalent, also faced the brunt. In the

responses given by the participants, lack of access to the internet was a major concern. It was suggested to make education accessible to all by finding alternative means in the cases where children face such issues because of insufficient digital infrastructure. Constraints of time and access made teachers focus only on the content of the textbooks. Discussions on GCED values embedded in lessons could not usually take place.

Globalisation

Most of the responses mentioned the impact of the pandemic and how it has become a universal experience for school-going children. A consensus could be seen regarding post-Covid textbooks and teaching, by including in more topics and issues of a global nature. Such sentiments are also echoed by the NEP 2020.

“The vision of the Policy is to instil among the learners a deep-rooted pride in being Indian... as well as to develop knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being, thereby reflecting a truly global citizen” (NEP, 2020: p. 6).

Follow Up

Based on the responses received, it is clear that GCED is relatively new, albeit not a foreign concept to India. Although the survey constituted a small sample size, more surveys may

be conducted across the country to assess the outreach of the concept of GCED among school teachers. Further, workshops and seminars on various aspects of GCED may be organised to get a clearer perspective of school teachers, their expectations as well as apprehensions concerning the implementation of GCED.

CONCLUSION

The present survey of primary and secondary stage school teachers highlights significant fact: GCED as advocated in NEP 2020 cannot be implemented in the fullest sense, if teachers do not have clarity of the concept. The survey is also relevant

as it is a compilation of information on GCED from the perspective of one of the key actors in education systems worldwide—teachers themselves.

GCED has a lifelong learning perspective, beginning in early childhood and continuing through each level of education into adulthood. It requires formal and informal approaches, interventions covering both educational programs and extracurricular activities, conventional and unconventional methods to encourage wide participation of learners. For the NEP to achieve its operational definition of global citizenship, teacher training is needed to achieve the goal.

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