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Deployment of Community-Based Programs for Optimizing Global Citizenship Education and Education for Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Our world is intricately interwoven, interdependent, and complex. We are all impacted by the severe global issues that our planet and cultures are dealing with. From armed conflicts to extreme poverty to unequal resource management, we are all exposed to these issues. Global Citizenship Education aims at promoting a better world and future through positive civic actions that focus on the development of interconnectedness between people locally and globally. Such an education that also focusses on sustainability ought to prepare learners with the necessary skills, information, attitudes, and values if they are to deal with problems of the twenty-first century and discover ways to address them locally and worldwide. In this context, teachers have a tremendous amount of power to influence social change. They have an impact on students' lives, aid in forming their worldviews and attitudes, and develop their abilities. The present paper presents excerpts of activities carried out at SIES Institute of Comprehensive Education, an institution training teachers and counsellors to provide Global Citizenship Education (GCED) as envisaged by the United Nations based on the 3 core conceptual domains – cognitive, behavioural and socio-emotional aspects. Adopting the four-dimensional approach of integrating the Learning Content with optimal Pedagogical and learning environments to achieve optimal Learning Outcomes in order to facilitate Societal Transformation, Community based activities from outreach programs to women

empowerment courses to participation in plastic waste management activities students are sensitized to contribute towards a better world. The paper reiterates that a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, and sustainable world can be achieved by empowering students to become global citizens and actors in sustainable development.

Keywords: global citizenship education, education for sustainable development, community-based programs

Introduction

Meaning of Global Citizenship Education

The Hitopadesha states that “the thought that one person is related to me and another is not that of the narrow-minded. For the broadminded, however, the whole world is one family”.

According to the Global Citizenship Foundation, Global Citizenship Education (GCED) is a transformative, lifelong endeavour that combines academic study with real-world application to help people develop a mindset of compassion for people and the environment as well as the global competencies they need to take to develop responsibility for their actions and work towards creating more just, peaceful, secure, sustainable, tolerant, and inclusive societies.

GCED is a method of education that aids in the development of the abilities, knowledge, and moral principles required for people to become responsive, active, and responsible citizens who contribute to the creation of more just, peaceful, and sustainable societies.

Dimensions of Global Citizenship Education

According to the UNESCO, Global Citizenship Education encompasses the three conceptual dimensions and reiterates the development of the following: Knowledge or cognitive domain aims at developing global citizenship in students such as human rights, social justice and sustainable development. **Socio-emotional or Affective domain** aims at fostering positive attitudes and values such as diversity, empathy and solidarity. **Behavioural or psychomotor** domain seeks to develop skills and competencies such as critical thinking, problem solving and effective communication to develop a global citizen (UNESCO, 2021).

Who is a Global Citizen?

A global citizen is a person who is open-minded, inquisitive, compassionate, cooperative, co-creative, welcoming, non-discriminatory, responsible, self-reflective, and knowledgeable. He or she need not visit other countries or speak various languages in order to be a global citizen. Being a global citizen needs constant reflection on our perspectives. This life-long learning helps a learner to become a lifelong student who is willing to learn, unlearn, and relearn. A global citizen is someone who actively contributes to the flourishing of people and the earth by being conscious of the many concentric identities that transcend territorial or political boundaries. Our attitudes and behaviours are key components of global citizenship (www.globalcitizenshipfoundation.org).

Why is GCED important?

We are all impacted by the severe global issues that our planet and cultures are dealing with. From armed conflicts to extreme poverty to unequal resource management, we are all exposed to these issues. GCED aims at promoting a better world and future through

positive civic actions that focus on the development of interconnectedness between people locally and globally. The ideas of education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship education (GCED) have gained more recognition and acceptance within the education community since the establishment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015) and the Education 2030 Agenda (UNESCO, 2016). Such an education that also focusses on sustainability ought to prepare learners with the necessary skills, information, attitudes, and values if they are to deal with problems of the twenty-first century and discover ways to address them locally and worldwide. In this context, teachers have a tremendous amount of power to influence social change. They have an impact on students' lives, aid in forming their worldviews and attitudes, and develop their abilities.

In this context, SIES Institute of Comprehensive Education, an institute training preservice teachers, counsellors and special educators aims to develop global citizenship and Sustainability education through community outreach activities. As a teacher, counsellor or a special educator, it is imperative that one develops this important 21st century skill which is the need of the hour. This paper explains the Community Outreach activities that we conduct in order to develop Global Citizenship and Sustainability Education in our students. The findings by the UNESCO 2021 survey on Teachers Perceptions with regard to GCED indicated that there is a lot of emphasis on developing cognitive skills in students with regard to GCED and sustainability, and the fact that areas of behavioural and socio-emotional domains need to be strengthened. We at SIES envisaged a model to enhance Global Citizenship Skills in behavioural and socio-emotional domains through Community Outreach Programs.

- As the first step the students are oriented and sensitized about the issues that need to be addressed locally and globally.
- The next step involves brainstorming and discussion under the guidance of the faculty.
- The next important step is that of implementation. We focus on children in particular and conduct community outreach programs in our adopted villages and also in the nearby community.
- The fourth and the transformative step is one where the students come back and reflect on the experiences. This is a crucial step as learning is concretized only when it is meaningful.
- As preservice teachers, counsellors and special educators it is imperative that our trainees understand Global Citizenship Skills in order to transfer their knowledge and skills to their clientele. We aim to achieve this cascading effect keeping in mind the four key areas as designed by the UNESCO that comprises of:

Learning Outcome: Encouraging learning and the development of fundamental skills including critical and systemic thinking, teamwork in decision-making, and accepting ownership of one's actions for both current and future generations. Faculty plan the learning outcome with the students.

Learning Content: Integrating important issues such as Sustainable production and Consumption, Climate Change, Plastic waste management. Themes are often decided upon and there is always a newer perspective with student inputs.

Pedagogy and Learning Environment: Designing teaching and learning experiences that are innovative, action-oriented, engaging, interesting and transformative. From puppet shows, to street plays to discussions to games, we plan and have it all.

Societal transformation: All activities listed in Table 1 are carried out keeping in mind the following:

- Enabling students of any age in any educational environment to change both themselves and the society in which they live.
- Facilitating the transition to eco-friendly economy and society.
- Encouraging individuals to embrace sustainable lifestyles.
- Enabling individuals to take on active roles in both local and global settings to address and overcome global difficulties and ultimately change to become proactive contributors to the creation of a more just, peaceful, tolerant and inclusive, secure, and sustainable world (UNESCO 2016).

Table 1 gives the details of the Community Outreach activities carried out by our institute as mode to develop Global Citizenship and Sustainability Education.

Table 1

List of Activities Carried out by SIES Trainees for the Benefit of the Community

Sl.	Name of the activity	Beneficiaries	Highlights of the activity
1.	Community Outreach activities at Ghoteghar Ashramshala, Shahpur. This is a school adopted by the SIES family.	School Children	Knowledge about Sustainable production and consumption through innovative teaching methods – games, street play, puppet shows, activities. Career guidance and life skills through presentations, activities, exercises, talks. Physical and mental health activities.

Sl.	Name of the activity	Beneficiaries	Highlights of the activity
2.	Community Outreach activities at Mumbai Mobile Creches (MMC), Wadala.	Children of MMC	Knowledge about Sustainable production and consumption through innovative teaching methods – games, puppet shows, activities. Physical and mental health activities.
3.	Sustainability Education through social media	General public	Social media posts on all sustainable practices and initiatives both for physical and mental well-being were carried out regularly from celebrating Environment Day to Earth Day to World Charity Day to Alzheimer Awareness and Mental Health.
4.	Donation drives - World charity day - NGO Manav Kalyan Kendra, Ghatkopar.	Tribal families in villages of Maharashtra.	Collection and donation of clothes by students of the Institute to the NGO.
5.	Dil se Diwali – Saree Donation to Spark - A Change Foundation Mumbai.	Mothers of Under-privileged children	Staff and students of SIES ICE collected around 40 sarees in very good condition in the month of October as Diwali gifts.

Sl.	Name of the activity	Beneficiaries	Highlights of the activity
6.	Joy of Giving to NGO Robinhood Army	Under privileged from Thane	Students collected clothes and household items which were donated to the NGO Robinhood Army in the month of January 2023.
7.	Joy of Giving to NGO Happy Feet, Sion.	Under privileged children	SIES ICE worked along with students of Grade I and II SIES High School, Matunga and conducted a donation drive. Stationery, games, clothes were donated to NGO Happy Feet, Sion.
8.	Pledge Activity to become Plastic free at SIES Sion and Nerul campuses	Staff and students of Sister institutions	A drive to pledge to achieve the goal of mission 6R (Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Repurpose and Rejuvenate) in order to have a plastic free campus. From teaching staff to students to even housekeeping and security staff, sensitization was carried out.
9.	Street play titled Goonje Yehi Nara, Aayo Bachaye Pariyavaran Humara and a Puppet show on Conserving Marine Life	Invitees for a program on Environmental Sustainability	The objective behind this activity is to create environmental awareness and sustainability initiatives with specific emphasis on water pollution and its effects amongst the minds of young and old.

Sl.	Name of the activity	Beneficiaries	Highlights of the activity
10.	Value-based puppet shows for School Children	Preschool and Grade I and II children of SIES School, Matunga	Puppet shows centered on fostering environmental awareness and sustainability along with protection of nature were presented.
11.	Balmela – Street Play	Grade I and II children of SIES School, Matunga	A street play was staged that emphasized on the effects of water pollution.
12.	Awareness session on Menstrual Hygiene and Mental Health	Students of SIES College, Sion	This activity was carried out to create an awareness about development of a sustainable environment that can aid in lesser use of menstrual pads and adopt to the usage of menstrual cups thereby leading to a cleaner environment.
13.	Sensitization to Child Sexual Abuse	Teachers of Aditya Birla School, Tardeo. Staff and students of SIES ASCN	To create awareness about Child Sexual Abuse amongst educators and students

Sl.	Name of the activity	Beneficiaries	Highlights of the activity
14.	Maintaining your Mental Health – Shiv Kalyan Kendra, Sion	Caretakers of cancer Patients	Special talk by our staff to help caretakers deal with anxiety, stress, guilt and depression.
15.	Perspective of a Teacher Educator and Organizational Head with regard to Mental Health of Teachers	School heads, Teachers and educators from various organization both National and International	Special talk by Director to foster positive mental health amongst educators at a Symposium on Early Childhood Education Curriculum enhancement and Pedagogy conducted by Singapore International Foundation and NGO Mukhtangan.
<p>We have a few international students and regular discussions take place during online classes to understand the global perspective.</p>			

How does this benefit our learners?

We aim to achieve GCED and Sustainability Education through our Community Outreach Programs. Such initiatives will help us address global issues and build a more sustainable, peaceful, and just world for everyone, making education a road for personal transformation.

Such programs help students to achieve the following:

Learn to collaborate to create solutions that attempt to address local, national, and global challenges.

Enhance knowledge, skills, and competencies to make positive contributions.

Reflect on their biases and assumptions.

Value diversity and inclusion.

Develop a greater understanding of countries, communities, and cultures around the world.

Examine events that have shaped our world.

Realise your power for change and your ability to assume your place as responsible global citizens by taking action to create a more equitable, inclusive, peaceful, wealthy, secure, and sustainable world for all.

Explore questions about democracy, justice, inequality, governance, sustainability, and organisation.

There is a lot of emphasis on socio-emotional and behavioural domains as mentioned above.

Excerpts of student feedback about outreach programs are given below:

The outreach visit to Ghoteghar has had a very positive effect on me personally as it gave me an opportunity to connect with people in the community. The joy and happiness that we witnessed on the simple activities and shows that we did, gave me an idea how important our work was.

A simple pen stand art activity was so well received as was the puppet show... and all the small things that we had planned... it gave us an opportunity to converse in their language making us think on how better we could work on our communication skills...

It also helped me develop leadership skills and gain a better understanding of the needs of those around you.

It also helped me to build relationships with people from different backgrounds and to gain a better understanding of the diversity in our community.

Saranya Santosh, SYDECED

My experience in Ghoteghar was transformative, leading me to approach community outreach with a deeper sense of purpose, empathy, and a commitment to fostering sustainable change while respecting the uniqueness of each community.

Jiya Doshi

Conclusion

The Global Citizenship Foundation reiterates a "Two-Systems Thinking"—a perspective through which to see problems and challenges and this can be provided via global citizenship education. This will hence become a place where you "Think and Act, both global and local" as opposed to just "Thinking Global and Acting Local." Instilling in students the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours that underpin responsible global citizenship is the goal of global citizenship education.

We at SIES, through the cascading approach attempt to instil in our students and members of the community knowledge, right attitudes, and beliefs to contribute to the betterment of the society and country at large. Only when teachers themselves are empowered can they bring in a mindset change in their students whom they will be impacting as teachers and counsellors. These initiatives thus make education a road for personal transformation. We do believe that “small drops make an ocean” and every initiative is worth all the efforts. After all Ubuntu the African saying means “I am because of who we all are”.

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