Preparing Teachers for Global Citizenship Education

27-29 July 2015

Bangkok, Thailand

Summary Report of Meeting

The Global Education First Initiative launched in September 2012 by United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon prioritised the importance of fostering global citizenship.

UNESCO has taken up this challenge to promote global citizenship through education in view of current trends, events and turmoil in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world. Respect for human rights, gender equality, social justice and acceptance of diversity are qualities that must be promoted and practiced to ensure a better world and future for all. An education that can inculcate desirable values, knowledge and skills will empower learners to be responsible global citizens.

With increasing interest in Global Citizenship Education (GCED), one of the first questions being asked is “what is global citizenship education?” This seemingly simple question is difficult to answer because there are multiple interpretations and manifestations of GCED with corresponding implications for policy, curricula, teaching and learning practices that should be relevant and appropriate for the respective education systems at all levels.

Nonetheless, some core principles can be agreed upon, as follows:

- GCED stands on many foundations, with an emphasis on how they inter-connect and support each other
- It includes universal principles such as human rights, democracy, inclusions, gender equality, non-discrimination, participation, empowerment, non-violence and respect for all, and so on.
- It is transformative and needs action at the local level and should be contextualized to help build peaceful and sustainable societies.
- Supporting a lifelong learning perspective, it begins from early childhood and continues through all levels of education into adulthood, requiring both formal and informal approaches, curricular and extracurricular interventions, and conventional and unconventional pathways to participation.
- The focus is on the role, content and relevance of education.
- Three core conceptual and inter-related dimensions provide a framework for GCED:
  - cognitive: e.g., knowledge, understanding and critical thinking about global issues and the interconnectedness/inter-dependency of countries and different populations
  - socio-emotional: e.g., sense of belonging to a common humanity, sharing values and responsibilities, holding rights, empathy, solidarity and respect for differences and diversity
  - behavioural: e.g., acting effectively and responsibly at local, national and global levels for a more peaceful and sustainable world

These principles are in line with global efforts to build a more equitable and sustainable world. Several events have been held to formulate strategies and action plans for GCED. The World Education Forum in Incheon, Republic of Korea in May 2015, has set a goal for education until the year 2030 towards an inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all, which is expected to be adopted and endorsed as one of the Sustainable Development Goals at the United Nations Summit in September 2015 in New York, USA.

The challenges we face today know no national boundaries and sustainable solutions require collaborative and coordinated responses from all stakeholders. However, to be successful in these efforts, we must first educate and empower those at the frontlines of education – our teachers. With support from the Korean Funds-in-Trust, UNESCO Bangkok is implementing a project on “Preparing Teachers for Global Citizenship Education” to address some of these challenges. The project aims to
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enhance the capacity of teachers to transmit GCED knowledge, skills and values to their students. The objectives of the project are to:

- Increase knowledge of GCED among teacher educators, teachers and school leaders.
- Enhance capacity of teacher educators and teachers to deliver GCED contents.
- Strengthen school leaders’ capacity in supporting and implementing GCED in their institutions.

Nine pilot countries will participate in the project:

- South Asia (Bhutan, India, Sri Lanka)
- Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand)
- East Asia (China, Japan, Republic of Korea)

As a first step, UNESCO Bangkok organized a meeting to launch the project in July in Bangkok, Thailand, bringing together more than 60 participants which included resource persons, policy makers, teacher educators, teachers, youth and representatives from international agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to plan project activities.

Discussions throughout the 3-day meeting were extremely engaging and enlightening with participants sharing exciting projects and activities. While the participants are fully aware of the challenges ahead, there was clear commitment and excitement about the potential of making an impact collectively at this pivotal time as the world looks towards the UN Summit and the promise of a new set of sustainable development goals to end poverty and transform lives over the next 15 years.

One project activity is to map GCED-related programmes and projects at the regional and national levels to identify good practices and avoid duplication of efforts. Based on the presentations given, many innovative activities are available, as can be seen in a few examples below:

- Schools-related Gender Based Violence
- Fostering Digital Citizenship through Safe and Responsible Use of ICT
- Happy Schools Project
- Gaming Challenges: competition for game developers
- YES Peace
- Asia-Pacific School Leadership Academy
- International teacher exchange programmes
- GCED Clearinghouse
- South East Asia Primary Learning Metric
- Connecting Classrooms
- Global Incubation x Fostering Talents (GiFT)

Similar efforts are evident at the national level, such as the Gross National Happiness index in Bhutan, liberal studies and critical thinking curriculum in Hong Kong, Education for Sustainable Development in Japan, students’ performance index in Malaysia, teaching GCED through theatre activities in the Philippines, Education for Intercultural Understanding in Republic of Korea, and Olympic values education in Thailand, among many others.

Recognizing the importance of ownership, country representatives also discussed how they can work together among themselves and with UNESCO and partners to implement the project activities in their own countries. Framing their discussions around the context, entry points, delivery mechanisms, challenges and enabling factors, the country team were able to develop some strategies and follow-up action plans.

In the summarizing the key points of the meeting, Professor Wing-On Lee from the Open University of Hong Kong noted that the relationship between the three domains – cognitive, socio-emotional and
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behavioural – is not linear. Rather, participation/taking actions may need to happen first in order to change behaviours and feelings. It is by doing that we learn, and by learning that our feelings can change. Professor Lee also pointed out as adults we have learned to compromise, and as a result our ideals and perspectives are “polluted”. On the other hand, students and young children are more open and accepting, and perhaps would be better teachers of GCED. In this case, the role of teachers need to be re-examined, and a reversal of roles between teachers and students may be necessary, including letting students re-define and re-design the curriculum and assessment systems.

But are we ready for this change? This will be a question we will continue to ask and challenge ourselves in the coming months and years.

In conclusion, the take-away messages from the meeting are:

- GCED is for the future
- GCED is about dialogues and not impositions of one’s views or ideas onto others
- GCED is for learning together
- GCED is student-centred
- GCED is not a set of the targets to achieve but a journey and process
- GCED is transformative education
- GCED is multi-disciplinary and can be integrated into existing curriculum and subject areas

Finally, the participants have proposed that UNESCO establishes the GCED-Net to continue the dialogue and share knowledge. This network will be instrumental in meeting the objectives of the project, and in contributing to the overarching goal of the Education 2030, *Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all.*


For more information about the meeting and project, please contact [lc.tan@unesco.org](mailto:lc.tan@unesco.org).