



GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES AND CURRICULUM GAPS

* Mr. Samrat Pawar, **Dr. Vaibhav Jadhav & *** Dr. Nisha Valvi

* Postgraduate Student, Department of Education and Extension, Savitribai Phule Pune University, 411007

** Professor, Department of Education and Extension, Savitribai Phule Pune University, 411007

*** Associate Professor, Department of Education and Extension, Savitribai Phule Pune University, 411007

Abstract:

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) has gained importance in secondary education, driven by the imperatives of internationalization and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4.7). However, its practical integration remains limited and inconsistent across school systems. This study examines the challenges and curriculum gaps that hinder effective GCE adoption. Drawing from UNESCO reports, OECD's PISA assessments, and global research, the findings reveal that GCE is often superficially integrated into curricula. For example, a study of 57 textbooks in Jordan showed minimal representation of global citizenship themes, with local civic content predominating. UNESCO's 6th Consultation Report indicates that only 25% of countries fully embed GCE in pre-service teacher education, with the Asia-Pacific region having the highest percentage (23%) of countries without integration. OECD data highlights disparities in global awareness, with students from wealthier backgrounds showing greater understanding, pointing to inequities in GCE access. Additionally, many teachers lack the training and confidence to implement GCE using culturally responsive pedagogies. This paper argues that overcoming these barriers requires a multifaceted approach, including integrating GCE into curricula, enhancing teacher education, adopting inclusive teaching methods, and promoting equity-driven practices. Addressing these challenges is essential to realize the goal of nurturing critically aware, responsible global citizens.

Keywords: Global Citizenship Education (GCE), Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4.7), Curriculum Integration, Teacher Education, Pedagogical Challenges, Educational Inequities, Culturally Responsive, Equity in Education, Internationalization in Education,

Copyright © 2025 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial Use Provided the Original Author and Source Are Credited.

Introduction:

In today's interconnected world, education must go beyond traditional frameworks to prepare students for global challenges. Global Citizenship Education (GCE) has emerged as a key approach to equip learners with the values, knowledge, and skills needed to address global issues, embrace diversity, uphold human rights, and promote sustainability. Defined by UNESCO, GCE focuses on human rights, social justice, gender equality, cultural diversity, and environmental sustainability (UNESCO, 2015).

Global policy support for GCE is evident in Target 4.7 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which seeks to ensure all learners acquire competencies for promoting sustainable development, peace, and global citizenship by 2030 (UN, 2015). However, the implementation of GCE remains uneven and superficial. UNESCO's 2021 report shows that only 25% of countries fully integrate GCE into teacher education, with significant gaps in the Asia-Pacific region (UNESCO, 2021).

In India, urban areas like Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad, rich in linguistic and cultural diversity, remain underexplored in GCE research. This study explores how secondary schools in these regions interpret and implement GCE, identifying barriers and advocating for an inclusive, equity-driven approach to foster active, empathetic global citizenship among all learners.

Method:

The study employed a mixed-method research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively examine the status and implementation of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) in secondary schools across Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad. A stratified random sampling technique ensured representation from government, aided, and private schools, resulting in a sample of six schools, 24 teachers, 50 students, and 2–3 administrators. Data was collected using structured questionnaires for students and teachers, semi-structured interviews with educators and administrators, and document analysis of Maharashtra State Board curricula. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Triangulation of all data sources ensured validity and depth. This method enabled a robust investigation into how GCED is perceived, practiced, and supported within the school ecosystem, providing both empirical insights and contextual understanding.

Theoretical Framework of Study:

This study is grounded in the Global Citizenship Education (GCED) framework as defined by UNESCO (2015), which views education as a transformative tool to equip learners with the knowledge, values, and skills necessary to address global challenges and contribute to a just, peaceful, and sustainable world. The framework is structured around three interconnected domains: cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral, which guide this research.

- The cognitive domain focuses on developing critical understanding of global systems and key issues, such as human rights, sustainability, global justice, and cultural diversity (UNESCO, 2015; Reimers, 2017). It encourages intellectual engagement and analytical thinking, vital for fostering global awareness.
- The socio-emotional domain, influenced by Martha Nussbaum (2010) and Nel Noddings (2002), emphasizes empathy, respect for diversity, and a shared sense of humanity. These values promote a global consciousness that transcends national boundaries and fosters social cohesion.
- The behavioral domain, informed by Paulo Freire's (1970) concept of praxis, integrates reflection and action to encourage ethical and responsible behavior. This domain aims to develop active global citizens committed to equity, sustainability, and social transformation.

This study also aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 (United Nations, 2015), which calls for education systems to promote global citizenship, sustainability, and cultural diversity. It draws from Oxfam's Global Citizenship Framework (2006), emphasizing active participation and critical thinking. In India, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 supports the In the development of global citizenship values, scholars such as Bajaj (2011) and Tibbitts (2015) emphasize the significance of rights-based, participatory education models in the Global South.

Results and Findings:

Student Perspectives:

A significant majority (94%) of students recognize the importance of learning about global issues; however, only 28% report regular exposure to Global Citizenship Education (GCED) themes in their schools. Notably, 58% of students have never received formal instruction on critical topics such as human rights, social justice, or climate change.

Despite this lack of structured exposure, students demonstrate strong alignment with GCED values:

- 92% support equal rights across gender, race, and nationality
- 90% consider climate change a critical issue
- 82% have participated in civic activities
- 84% have engaged in peaceful conflict resolution

Additionally, 64% express interest in joining student-led clubs focused on global issues, indicating high potential for engagement if opportunities are made available. However, digital and cultural literacy remains a concern. More than half (52%) of students report experiences with cyberbullying, underscoring the urgent need for structured digital citizenship education.

Teacher Perspectives:

While 91.7% of teachers support the integration of GCED into their teaching practices, only 8.3% feel confident in their understanding of the concept. An overwhelming 95.8% of teachers have not received any formal training in GCED.

Teachers identify several key barriers to effective GCED implementation:

- 100% cite a lack of time in the curriculum
- 95.8% highlight insufficient resources and institutional support
- 91.7% observe limited student engagement

Only 21% of teachers have facilitated discussions on peace or conflict resolution more than once, reflecting a gap between intention and practice. Nevertheless, over 90% express a strong interest in professional development, collaboration, and access to relevant resources.

Curriculum Analysis:

The Maharashtra State Board textbooks do touch upon GCED-related themes; however, these themes are embedded implicitly rather than structured or explicitly articulated. While cognitive and socio-emotional domains are somewhat addressed, there is a notable absence of content that actively promotes civic engagement

and participatory learning. Moreover, the term "Global Citizenship Education" is entirely missing from the curriculum, indicating a disconnect between global educational frameworks and local curriculum priorities. This highlights the need for a more deliberate and explicit integration of GCED into both policy and pedagogy.

Discussion:

This study underscores the significant yet underutilized potential for integrating global learning frameworks within secondary education in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad. While student enthusiasm and teacher openness indicate readiness for transformation, systemic challenges continue to impede meaningful implementation. Despite global frameworks like UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.7 advocating for education that promotes sustainability, peace, and intercultural understanding, their presence in classroom practices remains fragmented.

Students exhibit a notable awareness of global issues, ranging from climate change to digital safety and equity, coupled with a strong desire to contribute meaningfully. However, such engagement is often limited to superficial encounters with global themes, typically confined to project work or occasional classroom discussions. This gap represents a missed opportunity to cultivate youth as agents of social change in an increasingly interconnected world. Dr. Pranay Pandey (2024) emphasizes that while GCED holds transformative potential, its implementation is hindered by challenges such as cultural diversity, political agendas, and resource limitations.

Teachers, though supportive in principle, face significant barriers in translating global education into practice. These challenges include inadequate training in intercultural facilitation, ethical reasoning, and global literacy, compounded by examination-driven curricula and limited institutional support. Consequently, global competencies are marginalized within conventional pedagogy. Dr. Kaurobi Ghosh (2023) highlights that while the 2020 National Education Policy (NEP) mandates the development of global competencies, many trainee teachers lack the necessary awareness and preparedness to effectively teach GCED.

The existing curriculum does contain content aligned with global values, democratic participation, environmental sustainability, and social reform movements. However, these elements remain peripheral rather than foundational. A deliberate curricular shift is essential to embed global thinking into core learning outcomes. Sunetra De (2024) suggests that integrating diverse perspectives and promoting experiential learning are effective strategies for embedding GCED in teacher education.

Given India's increasing engagement with international education and its ambition to emerge as a global knowledge leader, integrating global citizenship education is both urgent and strategic. Urban centers like Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad offer fertile ground to pilot scalable models through curriculum reform, teacher capacity-building, student-led global initiatives, and technology-enabled collaboration. Initiatives such as the PM SHRI scheme, which aims to develop exemplar schools with a focus on environmental sustainability and digital learning tools, align with the goals of GCED and present opportunities for practical implementation.

The aspiration for global education exists. To realize it, systemic alignment, policy prioritization, and targeted investment are crucial. Preparing globally competent, empathetic, and ethically grounded students must become

a central goal of 21st-century Indian education. As Dr. Gh Hassan Wani (2025) notes, contextualizing GCED within India's diverse socio-cultural landscape and addressing challenges such as curriculum rigidity and socio-economic disparities are essential steps toward this goal.

Conclusion:

This study highlights a significant gap in the integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) within Indian secondary schools, especially in urban and semi-urban regions like Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad. Despite strong student interest in global issues, systemic barriers such as a rigid curriculum, lack of teacher training, and insufficient resources prevent meaningful implementation of GCED. The Maharashtra State Board curriculum includes relevant themes but does not explicitly focus on global competencies like digital literacy, civic engagement, and global justice.

To bridge this gap, educational policy must shift from intention to implementation. This requires mandating GCED competencies in curriculum frameworks, supporting continuous professional development for educators, and allocating dedicated time for global learning. Additionally, creating platforms for collaborative local-to-global student engagement will foster greater civic responsibility.

References:

1. Andreotti, V. (2006). *Soft versus critical global citizenship education. Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, 3(Spring), 40–51.
2. Bajaj, M. (2011). *Human rights education: Ideology, location, and approaches. Human Rights Quarterly*, 33(2), 481–508.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.2011.0020>
3. Banks, J. A. (2008). *Diversity, group identity, and citizenship education in a global age. Educational Researcher*, 37(3), 129–139.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X08317501>
4. British Council India. (2018). *Teaching global citizenship: India report. British Council.*
5. González-Valencia, A., Massip Sabater, J., & Santisteban Fernández, A. (2022). *Critical global citizenship education and controversial issues in secondary school. International Journal of Social Education*, 37(1), 25–43.
6. Ibrahim, T. (2005). *Global citizenship education: Mainstreaming the curriculum? Cambridge Journal of Education*, 35(2), 177–194.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03057640500146880>
7. Kumari, N., Sharma, S., & Jyoti, R. (2018). *Perceptions of students towards global citizenship education at secondary level. Educational Research International*, 7(2), 45–52.
8. Reimers, F. M. (2017). *Empowering students to improve the world in sixty lessons: Version 1.0. CreateSpace Independent Publishing.*
9. Tata Institute of Social Sciences. (2019). *Youth and global citizenship survey. TISS Publications.*
10. Tibbitts, F. (2015). *Curriculum development and review for democratic citizenship and human rights*



education. Council of Europe Publishing.

9. UNESCO. (2015). *Global citizenship education: Topics and learning objectives*. UNESCO Publishing.
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232993>

UNESCO MGIEP. (2020). *Rethinking learning: A review of 21st-century competencies*.
<https://mgiep.unesco.org/rethinking-learning>

Cite This Article:

Mr. Pawar S., Dr. Jadhav V. & Dr. Valvi N. (2025). *Global Citizenship Education in Secondary Schools: A Critical Examination of Implementation Challenges and Curriculum Gaps*. **In Educreator Research Journal: Vol. XII (Issue II), pp. 110–115. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15705173>**