Global Citizenship Education Tips

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Introduction

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) has been interpreted in different ways. Overall, it should prepare students for the global challenges, opportunities and responsibilities that they are likely to face in the 21st century. It can be seen as an approach to teaching and learning which opens students' eyes to the world around them, both on a local and global level, and empowers them, through knowledge gained and skills practised, to make positive changes within their families, schools and local communities. For more theory behind GCE, see our previous article in the series. Here we will look at some practical ways to implement Global Citizenship at both an institutional level and integrated within the English curriculum.

Implementing GCE at an institutional level

An effective way of guiding students towards becoming global citizen is to actively model Global Citizenship in the educational institution.

In practical terms, this could mean:

- An acknowledgement and appreciation of different languages and cultures within the student and staff body (if relevant) through Culture Days, celebration of significant festivals, noticing and acknowledging the linguistic diversity of the students and staff.

- Wall displays and resources (e.g. library books) reflecting key issues such as diversity and gender equality.

- Promoting environmental awareness (e.g. encouraging students and staff to walk or cycle to school; setting aside an outdoor space where students can grow plants and learn about sustainability).

- A focus on healthy habits (e.g. ensuring that vending machines stock healthy snacks and drinks, and that the school canteen serves healthy, well-balanced meals).

- Conserving energy (signage for encouraging the switching off of lights and air-conditioning).

- Ensuring diversity in the choice of assembly topics, guest speakers or school trips.

Implementing GCE in the English classroom

Global Citizenship can also be modelled in the classroom, and English lessons prove particularly effective. Teachers can integrate these themes through the classroom management and learning environment in the following ways:

- encouraging the sharing of resources

- ensuring fairness in interactions and turn-taking

- minimizing waste and promoting a tidy, clean classroom

- setting up collaborative tasks (pair work and grou pwork) that demonstrate the importance of cooperation and showing respect for the input of others

- respecting personal boundaries tead preferences of work dynamics (e.g. acknowledge students who prefer to work individually)

- encouraging students not only to voice their own opinions but also to actively listen to the opinions of others without rushing to judgement, e.g. through developing active listening skills

- planning opportunities for students to both question themselves (e.g. self-evaluation tasks) and learn from those around them (e.g. peer teaching, peer assessment)

- using visuals that normalise Global Citizenship concepts with inclusive imagery (showing the diversity of people), challenging stereotypes, and addressing biased viewpoints

Global Citizenship can also provide the context for the teaching of both language and skills in a broad English curriculum. Possible Global Citizenship themes for the English classroom are:

- examining one's own behaviour

- making positive health choices

- learning about global institutions (including the United Nations) that promote peace and Human Rights

- gaining exposure to global cultures in order to foster tolerance, intercultural understanding and a healthy respect for diversity

- encountering the concept of global interdependence

- exploring the concepts of identity and citizenship

- analysing the nature of power relations

- uncovering stereotypes and seeing the roots of commonly accepted truths

- discovering one's own bias

- gaining exposure to contrary perspectives and views in order to debate and accept difference

- questioning societal and government priorities

- exercising personal responsibility as a global citizen

Planning for Global Citizenship

When choosing a topic, consider:

- the age group of students and their level

- the appropriacy of the topic for the local teaching environment

- the possibility of making slight adjustments to current teaching content

- current interests of students

Complex concepts can often be dealt with at a basic level, building the foundations of knowledge. These can then be revisited and explored in greater depth at higher levels.

When planning for the lesson and activities, consider 3 core elements: Knowledge, Attitudes and Action.

Knowledge

This means providing input on Global Citizenship and making students aware of its key principles. In essence, this is asking yourself:

- What do my students need to know about the topic?

- Where is this information going to come from?

Some useful detailed questions to consider are:

- How will I present this information?

- Will I present it through a reading text or a listening text or teacher presentation? Or will students discover the content/message for themselves?

- What language support will students need to access the content?

- What skills will students need? (e.g. to skim-read, listen for detail, or use technology to access a website)

- What will students do with this content knowledge? (e.g. write about it or give an oral presentation)

- What will I assess?

- How will I assess their knowledge?

Attitudes

It is important to help students explore how they feel about these issues and to be aware of how others feel. When planning for this, we can ask:

- How can I help them to explore their own attitudes to the subject?

- How can I expose them to the attitudes of others?

- How can I encourage them to display more empathy? (especially if they do not have personal experience of an issue)

A simple but effective activity is to get students to role play a scenario, freeze-frame the action and then discuss with students how individuals at that moment in the scene might feel. Make sure students understand that not all situations can be relatable, as we might lack experiences to fully empathise. You can achieve this by modelling the right attitude by saying 'This seems difficult, but I have never been in such a situation, I'm not sure how I'd feel'.

When we challenge misinformation and stereotyped views about other people, cultures and countries, we help to counter ignorance, intolerance, prejudice and discrimination. Ultimately this leads students to recognise their responsibilities towards each other in an interdependent world.

Action

This final element is perhaps the most important for Global Citizenship to have real meaning. It is to help students engage in actions with the aim of promoting social justice and transforming the world for the better of all.

In planning for this, ask yourself:

- Are my students aware of what they do in a particular situation?

- How could I help them to act differently?

- How can I make a global issue meaningful and accessible to my students?

- How can I break down this global issue into smaller actions that my students can then undertake? (e.g. plastic pollution is a global issue; possible action could be students cleaning a local park or beach)

This vital stage allows students to realise that, as global citizens, they can make the world around them fairer and more sustainable. They can change their behaviour and make a positive difference, no matter how small.

Skills

Finally, when we plan a Global Citizenship activity or lesson, we also need to take into account the skills that students will require to gain this new knowledge, examine attitudes and ultimately take action. It may be helpful in planning to consider them as:

- Collaborative skills - the ability to cooperate and work collectively to reach a common goal

- Communicative skills - the ability to understand and deliver a message effectively, using first and other languages

- Creative skills - the ability to think and express oneself in an original way

- Questioning skills - the ability to deploy critical thinking skills, questioning oneself and the world at large

These skills, along with digital skills, can be integrated within every activity. Particularly effective activities are collaborative tasks such as group presentations in which an issue is researched (each student having a specific role in the project) and virtual classroom exchanges. Check our Digital Skills For Teens series for practical suggestions on digital tools for classroom use.

Conclusion

With any new initiative or programme, the challenge is always translating theory into classroom practice. We hope that the practical tips, steps and reflective questions given here will support you to develop and deliver stimulating and forward-thinking materials and activities that will engage your students in real-world issues and equip them with the knowledge, skills and attitude that they will need to face a challenging world as active global citizens.

Remember, GCE is not about imposing anything on teachers or students. As the teacher, you select what is right for your context. Explore our new section on GCE for more ideas!

Further reading

Bowkett, Stephen, *100+ Ideas for Teaching Thinking Skills*, 2nd Edition (Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007)

Cottrell, Stella, *Critical Thinking Skills* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)

Matthews, Ruth and Jo Lally, *The Thinking Teacher's Toolkit* (Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010)

Trilling, Bernie and Charles Fadel, *21st Century Skills: Learning for life in our times* (Jossey-Bass, 2009), Chapter 3