

Global Village

A new strategic partnership for Global Citizenship Education in the primary school sector in Ireland

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) facilitates and encourages educators and learners to engage actively in critical thinking, discussion, exploration, and action on global themes such as injustice, inequality, and sustainability. This article introduces Global Village, a new programme for GCE in primary schools in Ireland.

Introduction

Global Village is the new strategic partnership for Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in the primary sector in Ireland. It is a joint effort by Irish Aid at the Department of Foreign Affairs,¹ and a consortium of Trócaire, Dublin City University (DCU), the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), and the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN).

Global Village aims to enable primary school pupils to become active global citizens committed to building a fairer and more sustainable world, by increasing the reach, quality, accessibility, and effectiveness of GCE in primary schools. The 20-month pilot programme focuses on:

1. Research: mapping GCE activity in primary education and identifying gaps, particularly around inclusivity, accessibility, and voices from the Global South,² through resource mapping; a national survey of primary school leaders and teachers conducted by DCU; and a scoping study of the early years sector by DCU.
2. Networking: engaging and promoting GCE with stakeholders from the GCE and primary school sectors.
3. Professional support: providing high-quality continuous professional development opportunities for teachers and school leaders through webinars, a tailored support programme for 15 pilot schools, and a website dedicated to GCE information and resources.
4. Measuring learning: developing, piloting, and promoting a framework and set of tools to measure GCE learning in primary schools.

What is Global Citizenship Education?

GCE has much in common with Development Education, Education for Sustainable Development, Intercultural Education, Human Rights Education, and Peace Education. Each is concerned with learning



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about, critically analysing, and responding to issues that affect communities around the world, such as poverty, systemic inequalities, discrimination, and conflict.

There are many definitions and descriptions of GCE. Global Village, drawing on the work of Trócaire (2018), views GCE as an active and creative educational process to increase awareness and understanding of the world. It should challenge perceptions and stereotypes by encouraging empathy, hope, participation, reflection, and action.

Learners are supported, in age-appropriate ways, to make connections between their own lives and international social-justice issues, to collaborate, cooperate, and be empowered to make a positive difference in the world. GCE should not reinforce stereotypes or deny differences. It facilitates critical thinking from a variety of perspectives. It is built on awareness, analysis, reflection, and action for justice and change.

Policy context

GCE is embedded in international and Irish policies. Internationally, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by the United Nations in September 2015. It sets out 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to tackle huge global challenges including poverty, hunger, gender inequality, and climate change, and to bring about a more peaceful, prosperous, just, and sustainable world for all (UN DESA, 2015).

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Target 4.7 (part of Goal 4 – Quality Education) focuses on GCE:

By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed 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. (UN DESA, 2015)

The Irish State is taking a whole-of-government approach to the SDGs, incorporating them into the work of each Department. Irish Aid, at the Department of Foreign Affairs, plays a central role in guiding, developing, and funding GCE. Its Global Citizenship Education Strategy 2021–2025 highlights Irish Aid's commitment to Global Village, a new strategic partnership to 'support Whole School Approaches, integrating GCE into all aspects of school life, including engaging school management and leadership' (DFA, 2021, p.19).

Global Village is working to consolidate and build upon prior successes of GCE at primary level, and to develop connections and partnerships with key actors working on GCE in Ireland. These include the DICE Project at

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initial teacher education level, and many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which provide resources, training, and support to educators at primary level.

Global Village is also becoming a member of the IDEA (Irish Development Education Association) Code of Good Practice for Development Education. Using the Code as a guide, Global Village is incorporating principles such as ‘use participatory, creative methodologies’ and ‘imagine and explore solutions for a better world’ (IDEA, 2019) into the design and delivery of the pilot programme.

The primary school setting and GCE

There are myriad opportunities for GCE in the primary school setting. Global Village is committed to supporting primary school leaders and teachers to embed GCE into their work, through whole-school approaches and curricular work, including the following:

- Whole-school activities: reflecting upon links between the school ethos and GCE; identifying whole-staff, school community, and classroom opportunities to incorporate GCE values and themes, e.g., student council representing children’s voices.
- Policies: analysing and adapting school policies from a diversity and inclusion perspective, e.g., how cultures, communities, and minority groups are welcomed, represented, and enabled to participate.
- Staff training: topic-specific training with NGOs, e.g., anti-racism training.
- Curriculum links: incorporating GCE thematic planning across the curriculum.
- Resources: auditing teaching and learning resources using a GCE lens, e.g., how African countries and people are represented in textbooks, picture books, and novels, and reflecting on whether these resources promote, challenge, or combat stereotypes.

Although GCE is not a discrete subject in the current Primary School Curriculum, certain aspects of GCE are reflected in curriculum aims, namely to enable children:

- ‘to come to an understanding of the world through the acquisition of knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes and the ability to think critically’
- ‘to enable children to develop a respect for cultural difference, an appreciation of civic responsibility, and an understanding of the social dimension of life, past and present’
- ‘to enable children to develop skills and understanding in order to study their world and its inhabitants and appreciate the interrelationships between them’. (DES, 1999, p.34)

GCE is most evident in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education

(SESE) and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), particularly at the senior end of the curriculum, as shown in the table. But there are many opportunities to incorporate GCE across the full curriculum.

For example, a cross-curricular, thematic approach to climate change could involve stories of climate champions from around the world (Language curriculum), analysis of statistics (Mathematics), role play of emotive and behavioural responses to climate change (Drama and SPHE), active games to explore challenges and solutions (Physical Education, SESE), and responding to or composing creative pieces on the theme of climate change (Music, Visual Arts).

Subject	Strand	Strand Unit	Class level
SESE Geography	Human environments	People and other lands	3rd–6th Class
		Trade and development issues	5th–6th Class
SESE History	Politics, conflict and society	Ireland, Europe, and the world, 1960 to the present	5th–6th Class
SESE Science	Environmental awareness and care	Environmental awareness; Science and the environment; Caring for the environment	3rd–6th Class
		Caring for my locality	Junior Infants – 2nd Class
SPHE	Myself and the wider world	Developing citizenship; Media education	Junior Infants – 6th Class

GCE in the Primary School Curriculum

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2020) identifies 'Being an Active Citizen' as one of seven Key Competencies underpinning the new curriculum. This inclusion of active citizenship is welcomed by Global Village.³ It is a positive and promising development, reflecting recognition – in Irish society and in the education sector – of our interdependence and collective responsibilities as members of the global community. Global Village advocates for GCE to be specifically referenced under the Wellbeing and/or Social and Environmental subject areas, named as essential learning, and for specific GCE learning outcomes to be included in the new curriculum.

Next steps

Through the pilot programme, running until July 2023, Global Village will be capturing what is learned about the opportunities and challenges for embedding GCE into the primary school setting. To find out more about Global Village, please contact info@globalvillageschools.ie and look out for the website, which will be launched soon: www.globalvillageschools.ie.

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ENDNOTES

1. The ideas, opinions, and comments herein are entirely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent or reflect Irish Aid policy.
2. A collective term for countries that have been and continue to be disadvantaged politically, socially, and economically through unjust and unequal global systems. Though geographically inaccurate, it is used in place of politically and historically weighted terms such as 'developing countries', 'poorer countries', and 'Third World'.
3. As noted in the Global Village written submission response to the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework, March 2022.

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