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, 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, 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
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).

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
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).

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


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’.


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