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A Situational Analysis for the GCED Curriculum Development & Integration (CDI) Project in **Bhutan**

**GCED CDI PROJECT
ROUND 4**



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Publisher



The Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) is a UNESCO Category 2 Centre established in 2000 according to the Agreement between UNESCO and the Government of the Republic of Korea, with the mandate to promote Education for International Understanding (EIU) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED) toward a Culture of Peace. APCEIU has been at the forefront of promoting GCED and thereby supporting UNESCO Member states to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 4.7 in particular.

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Project Introduction

This situational analysis was commissioned by APCEIU and conducted by the UNESCO International Bureau of Education (UNESCO-IBE) as a background paper to inform key issues and strategies for its GCED Curriculum Development and Integration (GCED CDI) Project in Bhutan (2022-2024).

Global Citizenship Education Curriculum Development and Integration Project (GCED CDI)

In the face of the global challenges of the 21st century, the need for global citizenship education became ever more evident and increasing, eventually leading to the integration of GCED into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 4.7) in 2015. To effectively respond to such growing needs, APCEIU launched the GCED Curriculum Development and Integration Project (GCED CDI) in 2016, with the support of the government of the Republic of Korea. Designed as a three-year project for each round, the GCED CDI aims to support the participating countries with mainstreaming GCED into their educational system specifically by embedding GCED into their curricular materials and/or enhancing the capacity to integrate GCED into curricular implementation. Starting from the 1st Round (Cambodia, Mongolia, Uganda, and Colombia, 2016-2018), APCEIU completed the 2nd Round (Kenya, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines, 2019-2021) of the Project and is currently operating the 3rd Round (Georgia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, and Rwanda, 2021-2023) and the 4th Round (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Ghana, and Malaysia, 2022-2024).

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Acronyms

APCEIU	Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding under the auspices of UNESCO
BCMD	Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy
EGNH	Educating for Gross National Happiness
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GCED	Global Citizenship Education
GNH	Gross National Happiness
MOE	Ministry of Education (prior to 2023)
MoESD	Ministry of Education and Skills Development (2023 onwards)
NSB	National Statistical Bureau
PD	Professional Development
PHCB	Public Housing and Census Bhutan
REC	Royal Education Council
RENEW	Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women
RUB	Royal University of Bhutan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNESCO-IBE	UNESCO International Bureau of Education
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

1. Introduction

Global Citizenship Education (GCED) is UNESCO's response to the myriad of challenges the world faces, which threatens peace and sustainability. It is a strategic area of UNESCO's Education Sector programme with the aim to instill in learners the values, attitudes, and behaviors that support responsible global citizenship, such as, creativity, innovation, and commitment to peace, human rights, and sustainable development. It works by empowering learners of all ages to understand that these are global, not local issues and to become active promoters of more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure, and sustainable societies.

GCED is key to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 agenda. Accordingly, UNESCO's work on GCED is guided by the Education 2030 Agenda and Framework for Action, notably Target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4 on Education), which calls on countries to ensure that all learners are made conversant with GCED concepts, values, and skills (UNESCO, 2015).

Responding to the growing need for GCED and in order to contribute to SDG 4.7, the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding under the auspices of UNESCO (APCEIU), a UNESCO Category 2 Centre, launched the GCED Curriculum Development and Integration Project in 2016, with an aim to support UNESCO member states with their mainstreaming of GCED into their respective education systems, especially into their national curricula either by enhancing its embeddedness into written curricula or facilitating the curricular implementation. This situational analysis is conducted mainly to provide, in its first project year, an evidence-based analysis of the current situations of GCED and strategic suggestions for the partner country of this project.

Since the introduction of the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH) in the early 1970s, Bhutan has progressively and consciously worked toward the goals of GNH. The development philosophy of GNH shares similarities and aligns well with the concepts and principles of GCED. The GNH framework focuses on health, education, community vitality, cultural diversity and resilience, time use, and ecological diversity, which are considered vital for creating the conditions for human well-being and happiness (Ahonen et al., 2013; Sherab, 2013). His Majesty, the King of Bhutan, succinctly captures the essence of GNH in stating, 'GNH acts as a national conscience guiding us towards making wise decisions for a better tomorrow' (cited in Sherab, 2013, p. 20).

As a consequence of its efforts to transform the country's development in line with GNH values and principles, Bhutan is in many ways leading the global discourse for a more holistic development paradigm and its implementation (Ahonen et al., 2013). In the educational context,

the concept of Educating for Gross National Happiness (EGNH), an important aspect of the Bhutanese education system, was initiated in schools to produce youths who will be globally competent and nationally rooted, without compromising the developmental philosophy of GNH (which does not deviate far from the principles of GCED). Thus, GCED concepts and values are found to be relevant to EGNH and included in the school curriculum.

1.1 Objectives

This situational analysis of GCED in Bhutan is focused on the following:

- a. Review of policy documents related to GCED;
- b. Review of the overall structure of the national school curriculum framework 2021;
- c. Identification of sociocultural and educational issues that impact the understanding and development of GCED;
- d. Identification of key stakeholders to support the development and implementation of GCED; and
- e. Provide recommendations for improvement of GCED in the country.

1.2 Methodology

Given the multiple dimensions, this GCED situation analysis in Bhutan employed a mixed-methods approach. Data were mainly gathered through the following processes:

- i. Review of the national policy documents in terms of GCED-related policies and practices;
- ii. Content review and analysis of the national school education curriculum framework 2021;
- iii. Desk review of the sociocultural and educational issues that impact the understanding and development of GCED-related policies and practices; and
- iv. Stakeholder focus group discussion to identify potential gaps and factors associated with the implementation of GCED-related policies and practices in schools [Focus group discussions (FGDs) with Curriculum Developers (n=7), school principals (n=3), teachers (n=5), and teacher educators (n= 6)].

The contents of the national school curriculum framework 2021 were reviewed to examine the level of presence or absence of GCED. The contents framework was divided into five sections; *Preliminary Section* - the introduction, vision, mission, and goals; *Core Competency Section* - seven areas of competencies; *Learning Areas* - six essential areas; *Pedagogy and Assessments*;

and *Enabling Conditions*. Each of the sequential sections was mapped and analyzed to record the presence of the GCED goals and areas, key learner attributes, thematic topics, pedagogies, and assessments (Tenzin et al., 2019). The section *Enabling Conditions* was reviewed to analyze the type and extent to which policies facilitate the practical implementation of GCED in schools.

The key stages identified for the review of the curriculum contents were: I (grades PP-III); II (grades IV-VI); III (grades VII-VIII); IV (grades IX-X); and V (grades XI-XII). The key stages constitute the critical transitional levels of learning in school education. These are when the national standardized assessments and examinations are conducted to evaluate the health and quality of Bhutanese school education. Therefore, the results of this GCED situation analysis for the identified grades would provide insights for enhancing policy and GCED practices in Bhutanese schools.

The content analysis technique was used for examining the presence or absence of the GCED goals and key concepts, GCED pedagogy, and assessments in the preliminary sections of the framework. Descriptive statistics (frequency) were used for analyzing the presence or absence of the GCED key learner attributes and learning areas in the content description for different key stages. The coding scheme for the descriptive part was adapted from past similar GCED studies (UNESCO-IBE, 2016; UNESCO-Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development, 2019) and the Training Tool for Curriculum Development: A Resource Pack for Global Citizenship Education (UNESCO & APCEIU, 2018). These studies either used or recommended a score of 0 and 1; 1 if GCED is present and 0 if absent. A similar scoring scheme for the subject-level GCED situation analysis was used in the Bhutanese context (Dorji et al., 2019).

However, for this study, scores of 0 and 1 were found inadequate to record those GCED concepts, which were either implied in the essence of a curriculum statement or synonymous terms used in the Bhutanese context. Therefore, the contents in each of the five sections identified were mapped and scored from 0 to 2; 0 if the GCED element is not addressed, 1 if addressed implicitly or partially, and 2 if the GCED element is addressed clearly. The use of 0 to 2 scores was useful to qualitatively record and analyze the GCED elements present in the forms of statements or synonyms, besides directly mapping and analyzing the frequency of the occurrence of GCED terms and phrases in the framework.

The review of the contents in the preliminary section is analyzed and presented in the form of GCED themes, and the data from the GCED content mapping for different grades were analyzed in terms of frequencies. The GCED frequencies indicate the presence, partial presence,

or absence of GCED elements in the curriculum content descriptions for different grade levels. The GCED key learner attributes, thematic topics, pedagogies, and assessments were analyzed to examine potential gaps and opportunities for strengthening GCED at different grade levels.

2. Review of Policy Documents

2.1 The Constitution of Bhutan, 2008

In the past, education in Bhutan was aimed at human capital development and less personal development as a human being. The 2008 constitution of Bhutan mandates that the state will provide free education to all children of school-going age with a focus on values and skills required to develop each child into full humanity (point 16 of Article 12). This policy ensures that all children receive free education irrespective of their background, socio-economic development, abilities, and differences. The constitution of Bhutan, on which GNH pillars and indicators are nested, ensures free and quality education encompassing areas and domains of GCED, which is a concept centering on educating individuals in areas of sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, and inclusion among others. This is a primary stepping-stone to ensure that GCED can be achieved in the country.

2.2 Bhutan Education Blue-Print, 2014-2024

The Education Blueprint 2014-2024 (Ministry of Education (MOE), 2014) has guided Bhutan's great progress in all spheres of policies and development in education over the past decade. It initiated reform interventions (MOE, 2014, p.43) such as 'Fostering a healthy, safe and supportive learning environment' to strengthen the school agriculture program to supplement the feeding program. Of particular significance is that by recognising the rampant existence of some myths and misconceptions about gender inequality and gender-based violence, this policy highlights gender equality, non-violence, and respect for each other as another quality individuals must possess, which are key aspects of GCED.

2.3 National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, 2019

The policy promotes and advocates the rights of individuals with disabilities in access to education, health, economic security, access to justice, and social inclusion in the country. The policy also identified the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders to provide quality services and support for them. This policy addresses the issue faced by the most vulnerable section of the population to increase equality and harmony in society.

Disability education and inclusion for persons with disabilities started quite late and is a new concept for the Bhutanese. GCED has highlighted inclusion and respect for diversity; one way to achieve it is by having educational policies on such issues to minimize discrimination and promote acceptance for a just and harmonious society.

2.4 Standards for Inclusive Education, 2017

The Early Childhood Care and Development and Special Educational Needs divisions under the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD), formerly the Ministry of Education, have published a framework for inclusive schools, especially for schools that support Special Educational Needs programmes in Bhutan. The framework has three major categories—Inclusive Culture, Inclusive Policy, and Inclusive Practice—highlighting the value of diversity, gender equality, and human rights, and also going beyond the national borders and reaching the global community in promoting these issues, which aligns well with the principles of GCED.

2.5 National Youth Policy, 2011

The National Youth Policy was developed in line with the guiding principles of GNH. The policy states that all young children are educated in line with the philosophy in order to be at peace with themselves and society. The policy aspires to make young individuals not only nationally aware and competent, but globally as well. Tackling national environmental concerns, maintaining the culture and tradition of the country, and doing away with gender discrimination all align well with the principles of GCED.

2.6 Educating for GNH Initiative, 2010

In 2010, the then MOE launched a nationwide reform initiative called Educating for Gross National Happiness to infuse the GNH values and principles into the school curriculum (see Sherab, 2013). The emphasis was made on critical and creative thinking, holistic understanding of the world, practice of the country's tradition and culture, genuine care for nature and others, and competency to deal effectively with the modern world, among others (Drukpa & Brien, n.d.; Sherab, 2013).

As a part of EGNH, teachers were trained to infuse the contents of the four GNH pillars and the nine domains in the different subjects they teach in different classes. The broader learning environment emphasizes the role of family, community, and media as important contexts for learning about culture and society (Ahonen et al., 2013). The essential idea was to make the teachers GNH-minded by infusing GNH values into their everyday teaching and, even more importantly, create a GNH-inspired learning environment for the students (Lhamo et al., 2020). The EGNH programme also promoted the concept of 'Green Schools for Green Bhutan'. Green schools were formed to foster and nurture a child's development in the school system through

eight green dimensions: environmental, intellectual, academic, social, cultural, spiritual, aesthetic, and moral (Sherab, 2013). Inclusive education is another area of focus for a green school as it ensures that all the children in the community receive equal educational opportunities and are treated fairly (Drukpa & Brien, n.d).

As observed by Bhutanese educators, as the concepts and principles of GCED align well with the philosophy of GNH, the EGNH initiated in schools facilitates producing youths who will be globally competent and nationally rooted, which is consistent with the principles of GCED.

3. Review of the National School Curriculum Framework 2021

3.1 Introduction to the curriculum framework

The recent development in the school curriculum in Bhutan is defined as a paradigmatic shift in the curriculum philosophy, principles, and values orientation towards preparing 'nationally rooted and globally competent citizens' for the 21st century and beyond. With the ongoing educational reforms, the earlier conventional content-mastery design of school curricula is being transformed into competency-based curricula.

The national school curriculum framework (Royal Education Council (REC), 2021) is a vital curriculum document that highlights the underpinning prospects of school education in Bhutan. The framework captures nationally consolidated aspirations for the actualisation of the curriculum transformation initiatives. The framework reflects the aspired education outcomes of extensive stakeholder consultations, deliberations of the national curriculum conference, and a review of a wide range of national and international documents. It incorporates educational aspirations of national and international importance, especially the attributes concerning sustainable development, health, well-being, environment conservation, transversal skills, emotional intelligence, and technology. The educational philosophy, principles, and learning areas are drawn from widely referred national documents: the Bhutan National Education Framework (REC, 2012), Bhutan Education Blueprint 2012-24 (MOE, 2014), and the Purpose of School Education (Department of Curriculum Research and Development, Reprint 2009). Further, the design of the framework is informed by international education practices, National Curriculum Frameworks (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2000, 2005), and the Prototype of a National Curriculum Framework (UNESCO, 2017), to mention a few.

The framework records the vision, goal, purpose, new educational approaches, and principles that guide the alignment of the school curriculum design, implementation, and assessment toward realizing the goals of school education. Besides, it includes in detail the enabling conditions that are necessary for the effective implementation of the intentions of the school curricula. Notably important to this study, the framework contains aspired core education competencies, essential learning areas, and learning outcomes for different grade levels, including a separate chapter on education for learners with special educational needs.

4. Results and Findings of the Curriculum Framework Review

4.1 Goals and concepts

The analysis of introductory, vision, goal, and purpose contents in the preliminary section of the curriculum framework 2021 indicated the inclusion of fundamental concepts and goals of GCED. With the national vision of creating 'an educated and enlightened society of Gross National Happiness (GNH)' as the backdrop, the curriculum framework envisions fostering excellence and empowering 'the Bhutanese to be responsible citizens who are caring and successful lifelong learners, driven by a spirit of innovation, creativity, and enterprise to uphold the happiness of the living world and protect the organic ecosystem and the non-living environment' (REC, p.32). Important for GCED contextualisation, the curriculum framework is designed based on the unique Bhutanese values of *Tha Damtshig* [honor and sacred commitment between various pairs of relationships such as parent and child, teacher and pupil, husband and wife] and *Ley Gyu-drey* [cause and effect – the individual's present action will determine the future outcomes – otherwise known as *karma*]; the principal values for developing morality and humane characteristics in learners. These values are integral parts of Bhutanese society that govern one's actions (Sherab, 2013).

The framework is designed based on the humanistic model with an emphasis on the development of competencies of 21st-century learners. It is unequivocally grounded on value-driven quality education for transforming learners into productive and contributing citizens. Resonating the fundamental essence of GCED for global peace and sustainability education, the purpose and goals of the framework underscore the national aspirations of building the learners' competencies and human qualities for a better nation and the world:

'Nurture citizens that value Bhutan's national identities, ancient wisdom, and culture, practice contemplative learning, and are well prepared for right livelihood. It is to develop individuals who are lifelong learners, locally rooted and globally competent, who have a holistic understanding of the world, and genuine care for others and the natural environment' (REC, 2021, p.31).

The design of the curriculum framework defines *18 educational outcome attributes or capabilities* to be developed in a learner at the end of school education. The attributes are directly related to the GCED learner qualities. The most important attributes of a learner include being mindful, caring, reflective, disciplined, active and informed, communicative, spiritually sound with strong character, physically and mentally fit, and thus, world-ready with a strong sense of family, community, and national values. Other attributes include a learner being

knowledgeable, creative, industrious, intellectually competent, skillful and productive, as well as being a self-directed, lifelong, individually confident, and competent leader.

The preliminary section of the curriculum framework also addresses other key specific GCED-related values and skills. The skills and values include: showing tolerance to other cultures; respecting diversity; being a global citizen; having a holistic understanding of the world; valuing teamwork and collaboration; caring for and loving one's family, peers, and community; respecting diversity; being driven by a spirit of innovation; being creative and enterprising to uphold the happiness of the living world; and protecting the organic ecosystem and the non-living environment.

Although much of the GCED essence and attributes are adequately integrated and addressed in the curriculum framework, this study noticed limited use of terms and terminologies explicit to GCED and its categorisation of learning themes and topics. The GCED curriculum framework developed for Bhutan could include domain-specific descriptions and policy statements zooming into GCED goals. The UNESCO technical guidelines and GCED nomenclature (UNESCO & APCEIU, 2018) could be a good reference for integrating GCED into the national school curriculum framework.

4.2 Key learner attributes

The curriculum framework outlines core learning outcomes and competencies expected to be achieved by learners at the end of 13 years of school education. The six core competency areas are *values education and spirituality, language and communication, transversal competencies, enterprising and industriousness, sustainable living, and health and well-being*. Each core competency area consists of attributes or capabilities to be developed in a learner upon completion of high school (grade 12). Overall, the core competency areas and learners' capabilities in the curriculum framework address most of the GCED learner attributes. Of the six learning areas, five areas are directly related to the GCED learning experience.

Further, the core competencies and attributes were mapped and analyzed to examine if and to what extent the GCED learner attributes were addressed at different key stages.

The nine GCED indicators under the three domains (UNESCO-APCEIU, 2018, p.70) were analyzed in the study.

Cognitive: Informed and Critically Literate

- Know about local, national and global issues, governance systems and structures;
- Understand the interdependence and connections of global and local concerns; and
- Develop skills for critical inquiry and analysis.

Socio-Emotional: Socially Connected and Respectful of Diversity

- Cultivate and manage identities, relationships, and feelings of belonging;
- Share values and responsibilities based on human rights; and
- Develop attitudes to appreciate and respect differences and diversity.

Behavioural: Ethically Responsible and Engaged

- Cultivate appropriate skills, values, beliefs, and attitudes;
- Demonstrate personal and social responsibility for a peaceful and sustainable world; and
- Develop motivation and willingness to care for the common good.

4.3 GCED learning domains and attributes in the Framework

The curriculum framework contains competency statements for all three GCED domains of learning. The overall number of competency statements explicit to GCED learner attributes is limited, especially for the socio-emotional and behavioral learning domains (see Figure 1). This indicates that the curriculum framework provides more focus on acquiring new knowledge and cognitive abilities compared to socio-emotional development (values, attitudes, social skills) and behavioral attributes (conduct, performance, and practical application and engagement).

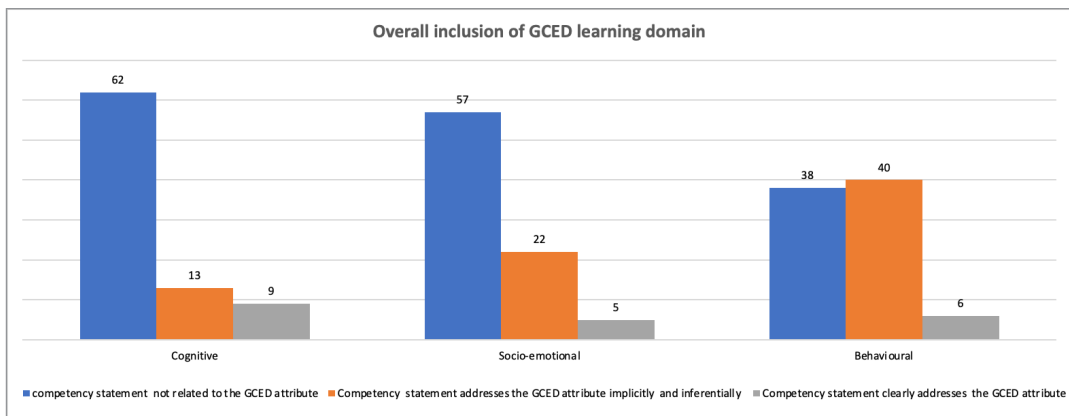


Figure 1: Overall inclusion of GCED learning domains

The behavioral domain of GCED learning is addressed more frequently than other domains in all five key stages (see Figures 2-5). This suggests that the curriculum provides more emphasis on behavioral attributes, though they are not explicitly included. Therefore, this may lead to potential gaps between the intended and the implemented.

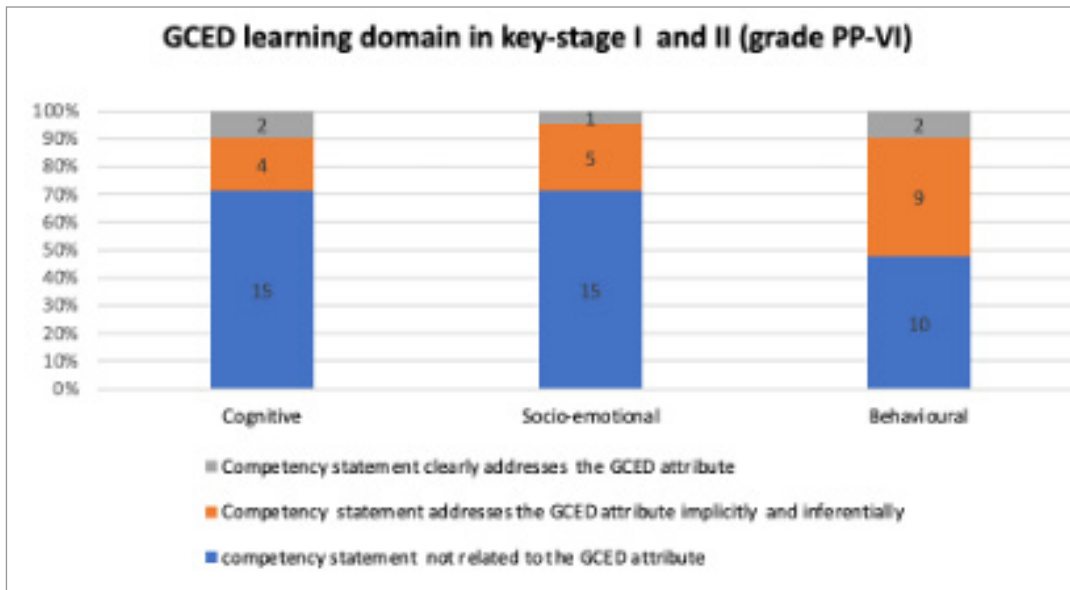


Figure 2: GCED learning domains in key stages I and II

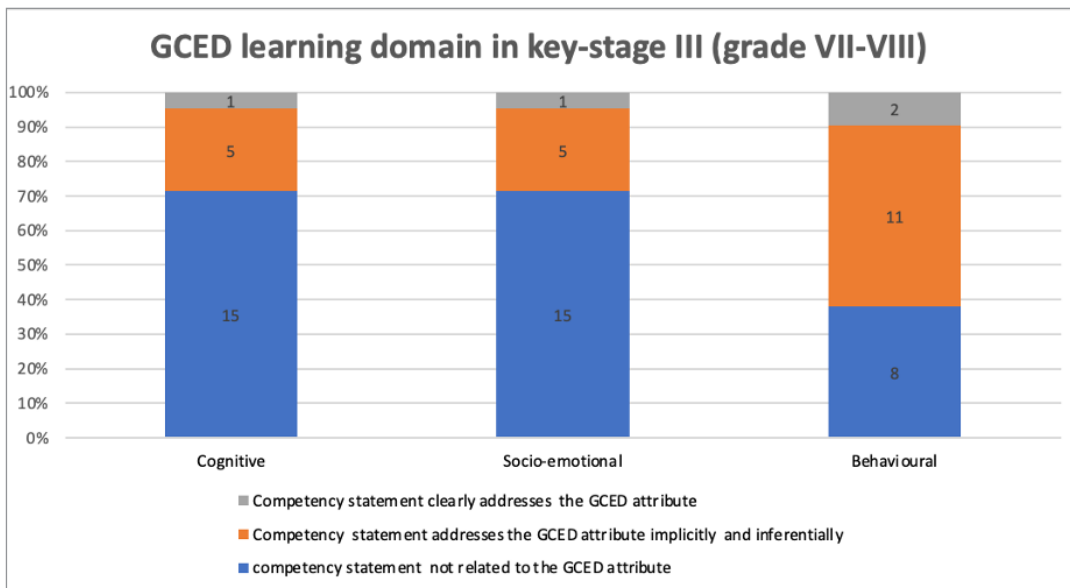


Figure 3: GCED learning domains in key stage III

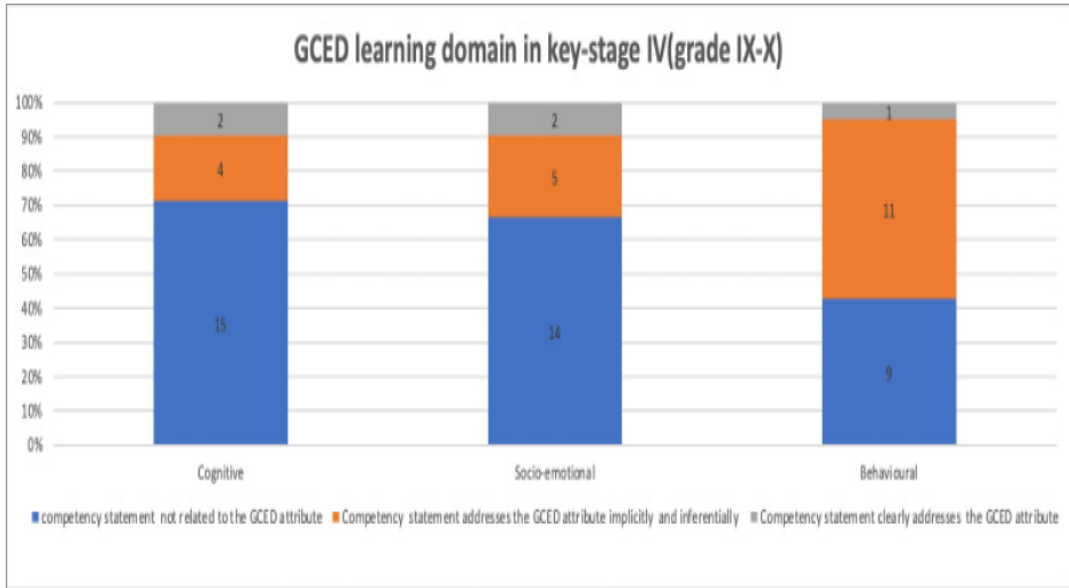


Figure 4: GCED learning domains in key stage IV

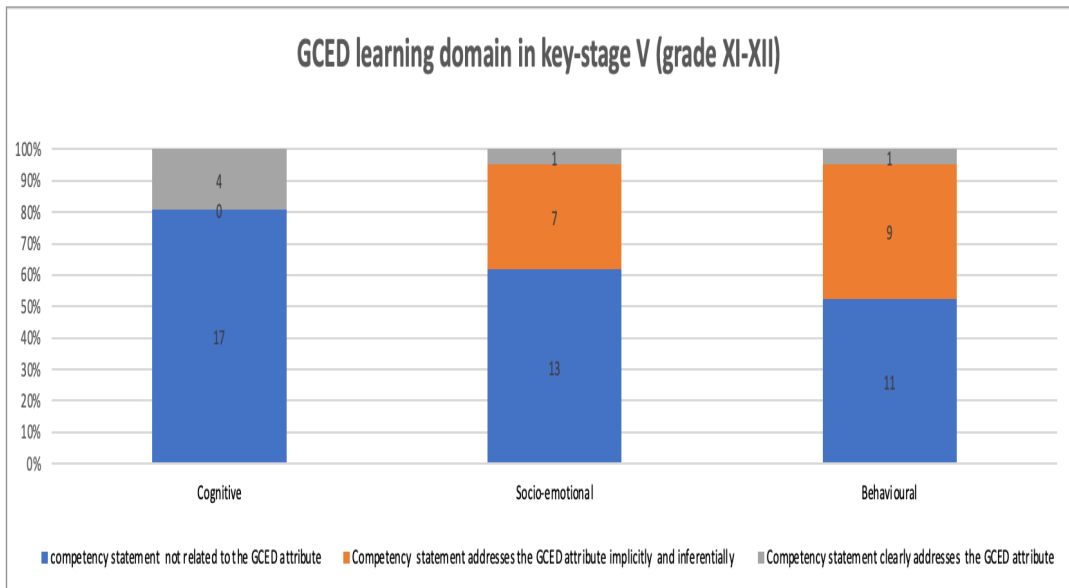


Figure 5: GCED learning domains in key stage V

The curriculum framework includes all nine GCED learner attributes. However, the attributes are mostly implicit in the learning-outcome competency statements (see Figure 6). This finding suggests that the learner attributes must be explicitly mentioned. Otherwise, there is a risk of becoming informal and being sidelined.

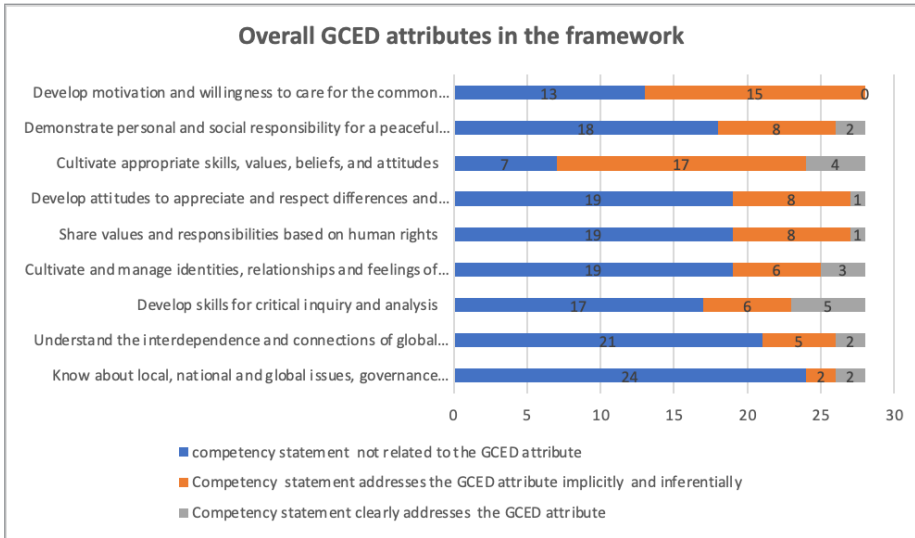


Figure 6: Overall GCED attributes in the framework

The GCED key learner attributes are present at different key stages with varying frequencies of competency statements. However, the attributes included are mostly implicit. As expressed above, anything that remains implicit can be overlooked and neglected without much-needed emphasis. Figures 7-10 indicate the frequencies of the competency statements related to GCED key learner attributes for key-stages I-V.

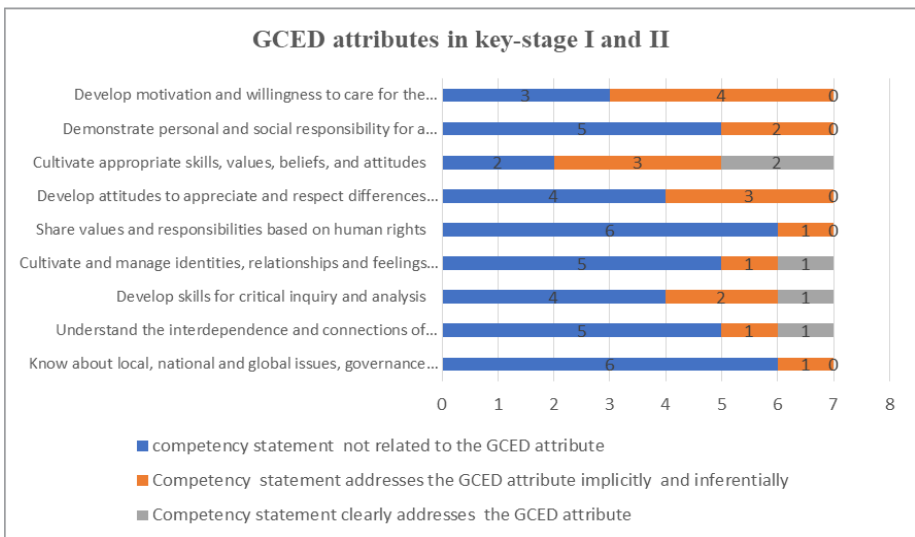


Figure 7: GCED attributes in key-stage I and II

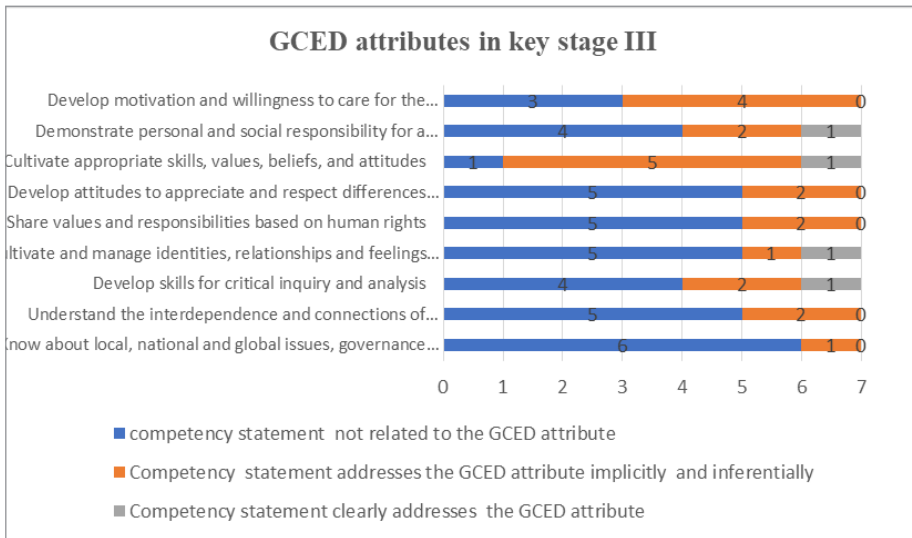


Figure 8: GCED attributes in key-stage III

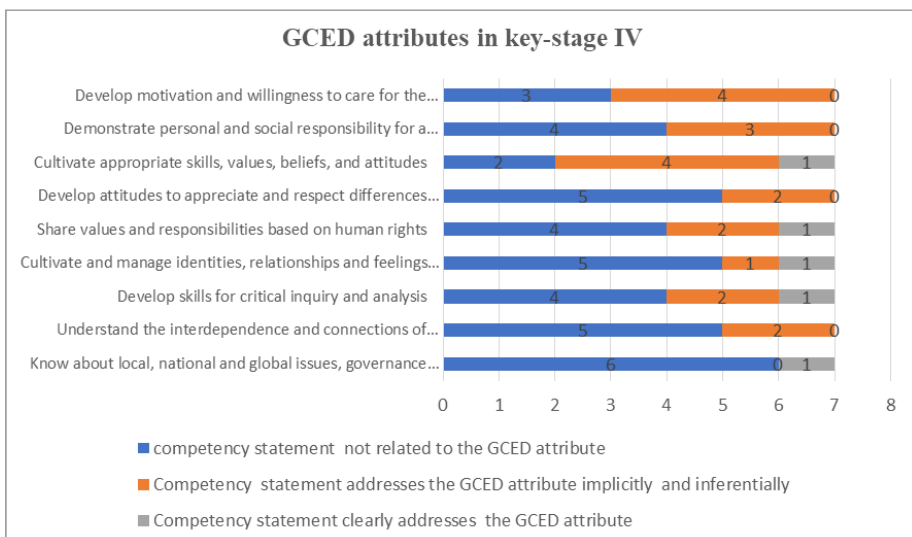


Figure 9: GCED attributes in key-stage IV

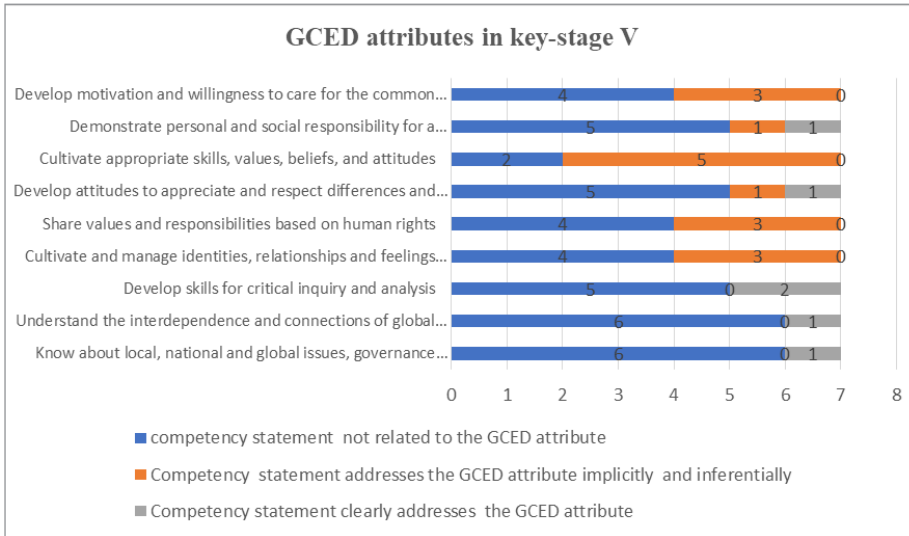


Figure 10: GCED attributes in key-stage V

4.4 The overall GCED key learner attributes in each of the six core competency areas

The GCED key learner attributes are included mostly in the competency area of ‘values and spirituality’ (see Figure 11), ‘enterprising and industrious’ (see Figure 12), and ‘sustainable living’ (see Figure 13). The inclusion of attributes is limited in the other four (language and communication, transversal skills, health and well-being, and digital) competency areas (see Figures 14-17). This suggests that there is a lack of uniformity in the GCED learner attributes in all the seven competency areas, which are critical for promoting GCED in school education.

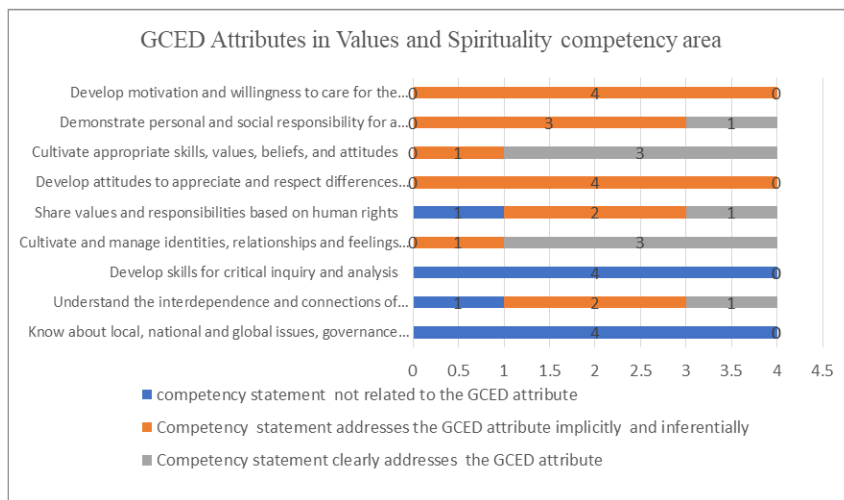


Figure 11: GCED attributes in values and spirituality competency area

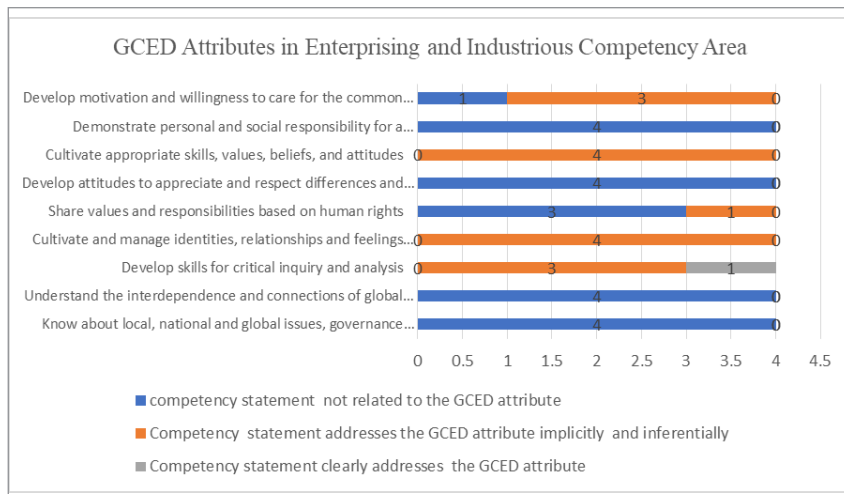


Figure 12: GCED attributes in the enterprising and industrious competency area

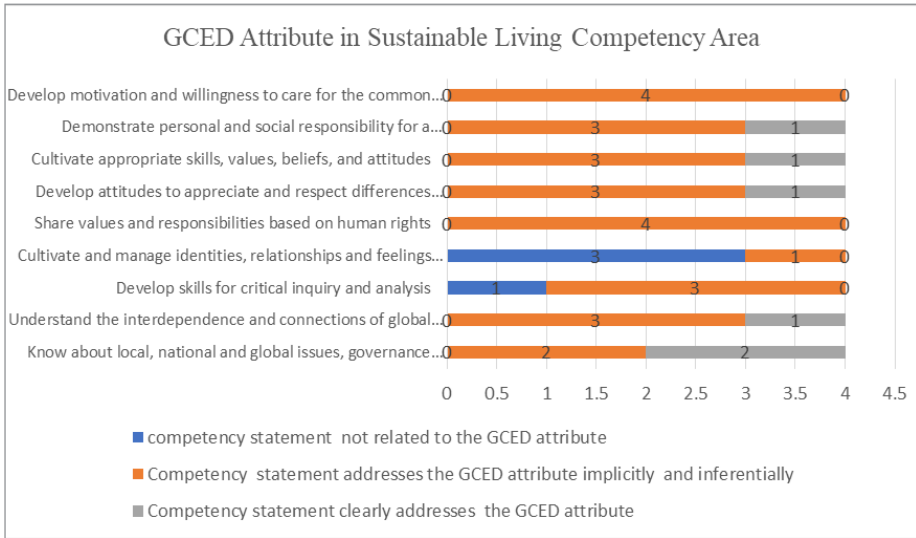


Figure 13: GCED attributes in the sustainable living competency area

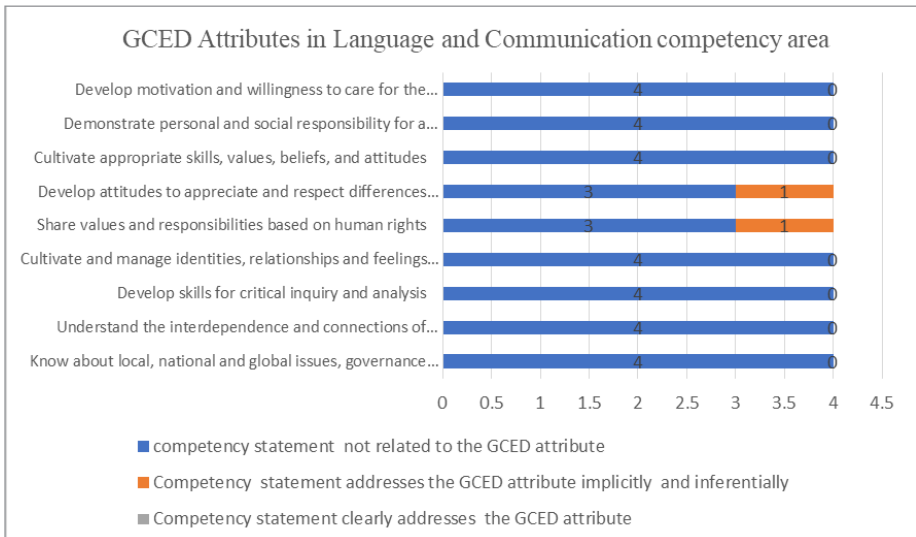


Figure 14: GCED attributes in language and communication competency area

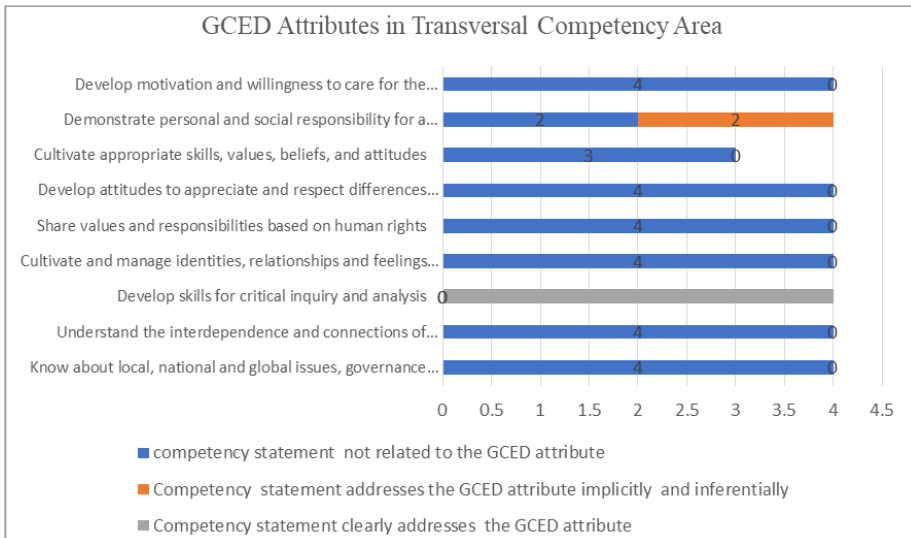


Figure 15: GCED attributes in the transversal competency area

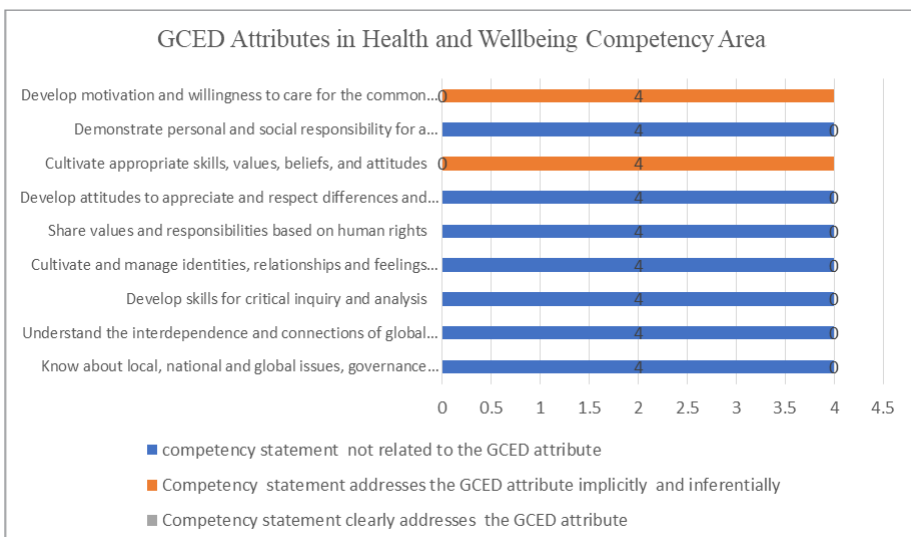


Figure 16: GCED attributes in health and wellbeing competency area

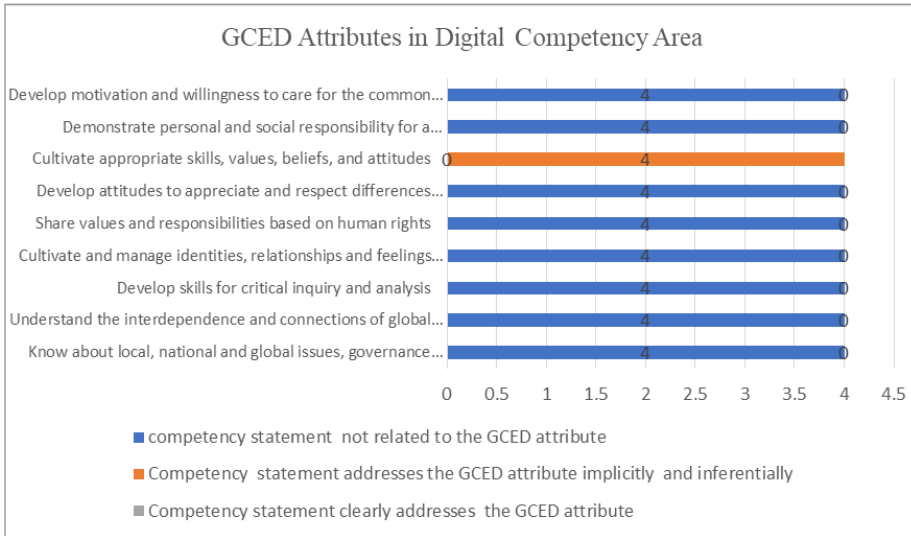


Figure 17: GCED attributes in the digital competency area

4.5 Thematic area and specific GCED topics

Overall, all six thematic GCED topics are covered in the framework, with sustainable development topping the list. The framework includes a limited number of topics on human rights, gender equality, peace, non-violence, and human security, compared to other GCED topics (see Figure 18). This finding suggests that most of the topics are academic-oriented and include a limited number of topics to promote GCED-related concepts and skills.

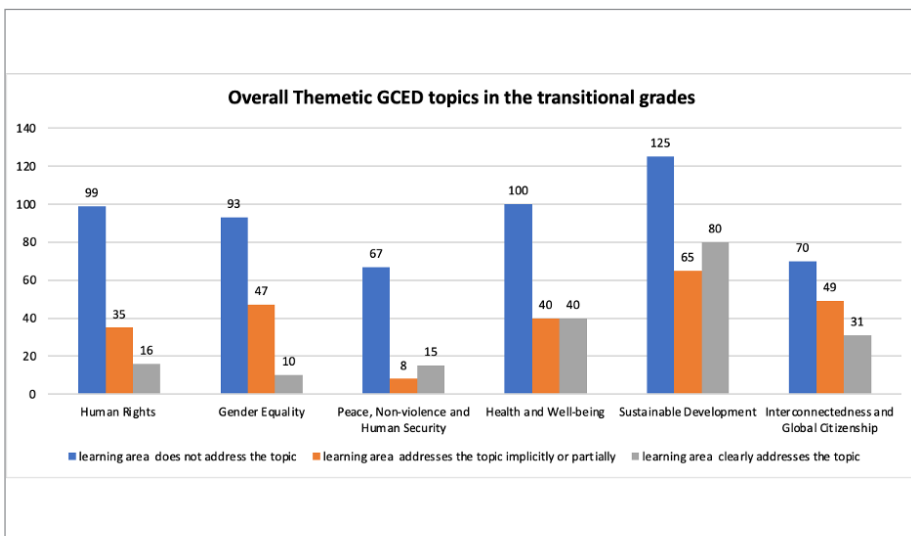


Figure 18: Overall GCED thematic topics in the transitional grades

Figures 19-24 show the frequencies of specific topics under thematic GCED topics covered in the framework. The findings indicate that the coverage of six GCED thematic topics in the framework is imbalanced and some topics are limited (human rights, gender equality, peace, non-violence, and human security).

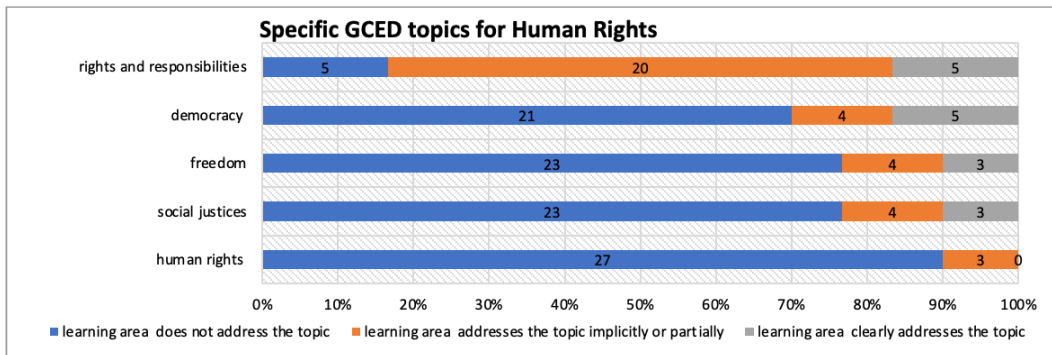


Figure 19: Specific GCED-related topics on human rights

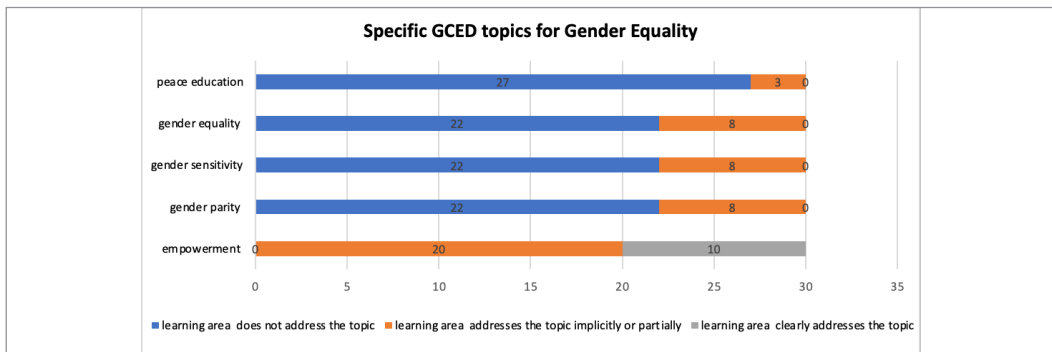


Figure 20: Specific GCED-related topics on gender equality

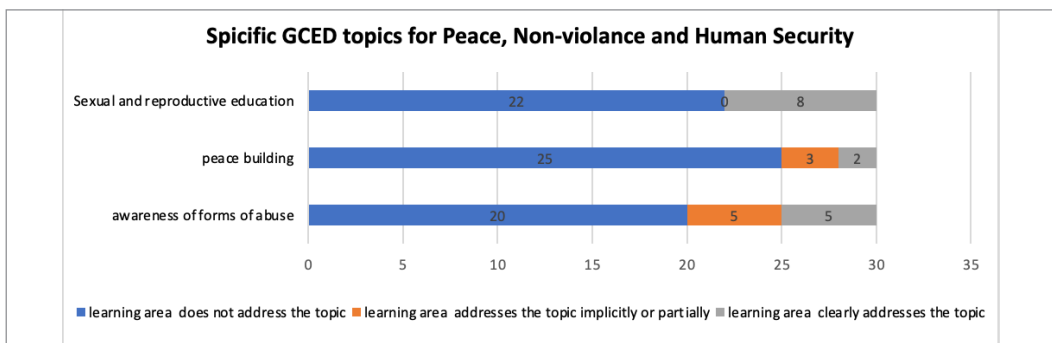


Figure 21: Specific GCED-related topics on peace, non-violence, and human security

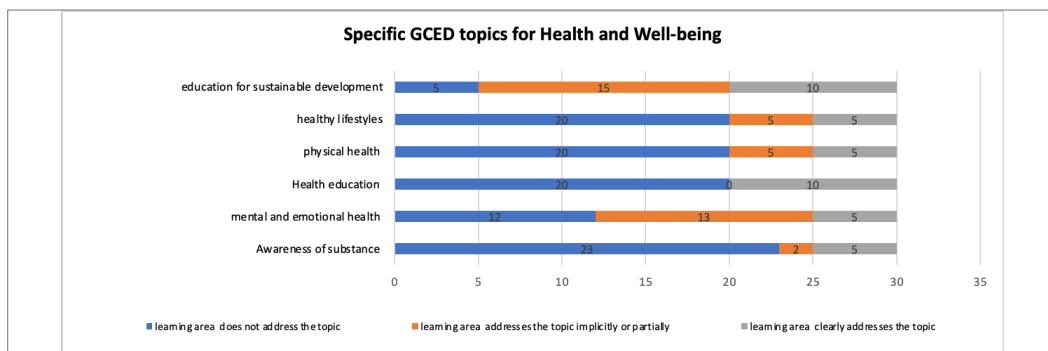


Figure 22: Specific GCED-related topics on health and well-being

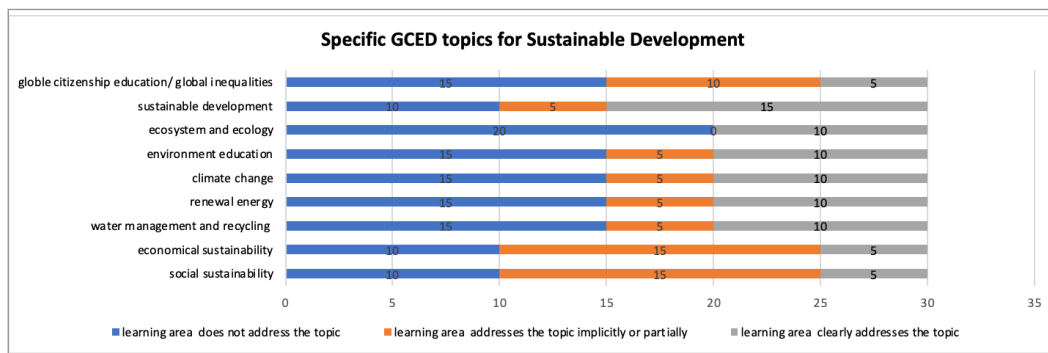


Figure 23: Specific GCED-related topics on sustainable development

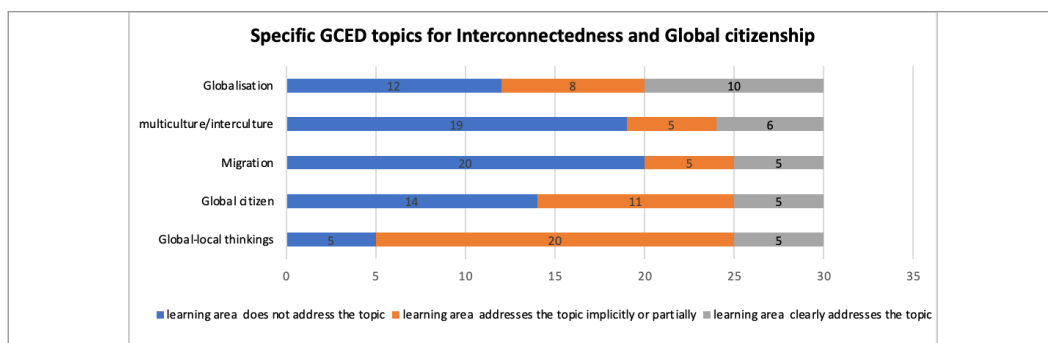


Figure 24: Specific GCED-related topics on interconnectedness and global citizenship

4.6 Thematic topics at different key-stages

Figures 25-29 show specific topics under the thematic GCED topics for key-stages I-V. Interestingly, the results show that peace, non-violence, and human security is the least covered topic across all key stages, and sustainable development is the most highly covered topic. Such findings are an indication that these crucial GCED thematic topics need to be addressed across all key stages.

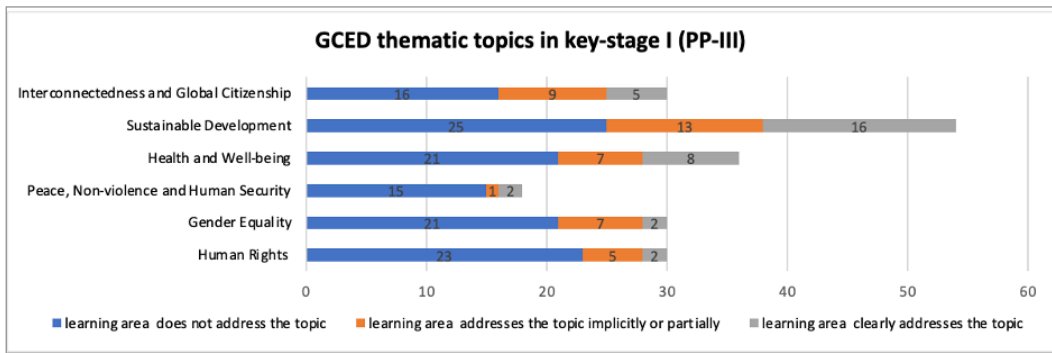


Figure 25: GCED thematic topics in key-stage I (PP-III)

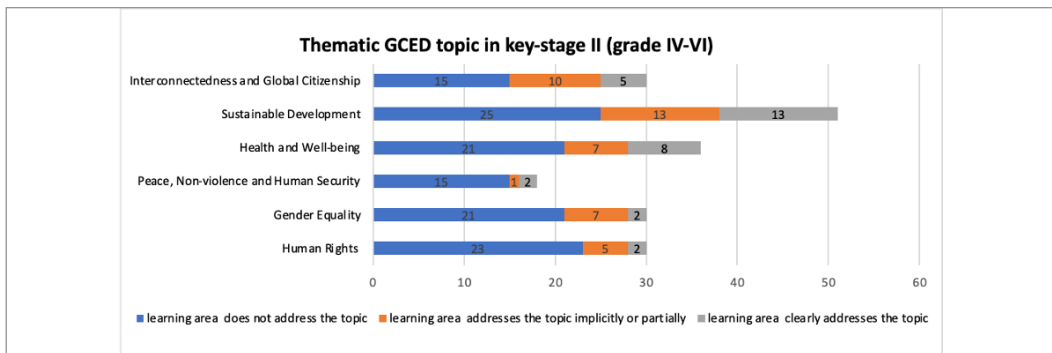


Figure 26: GCED thematic topics in key-stage II (grade IV-VI)

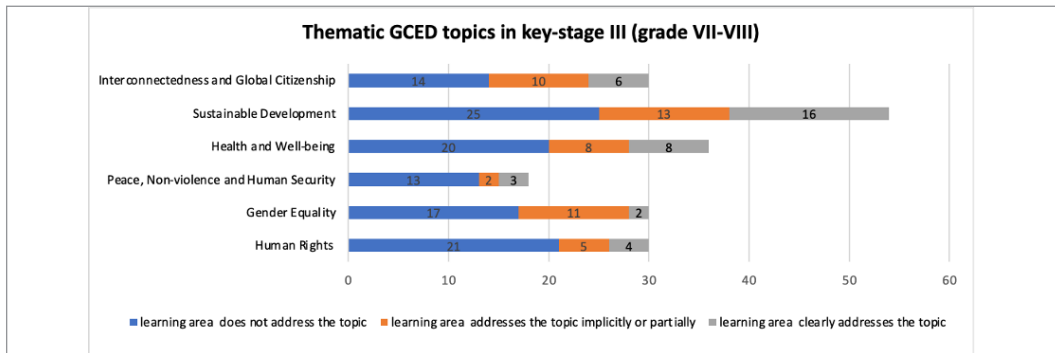


Figure 27: GCED thematic topics in key-stage III (grade VII-VIII)

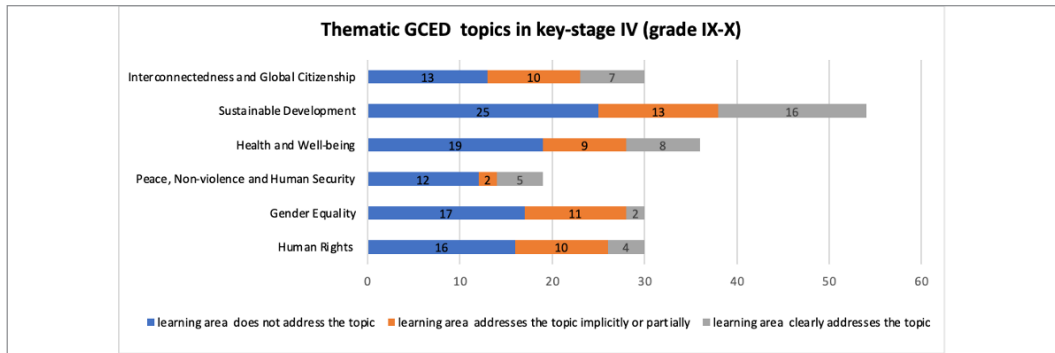


Figure 28: GCED thematic topics in key-stage IV (grade IX-X)

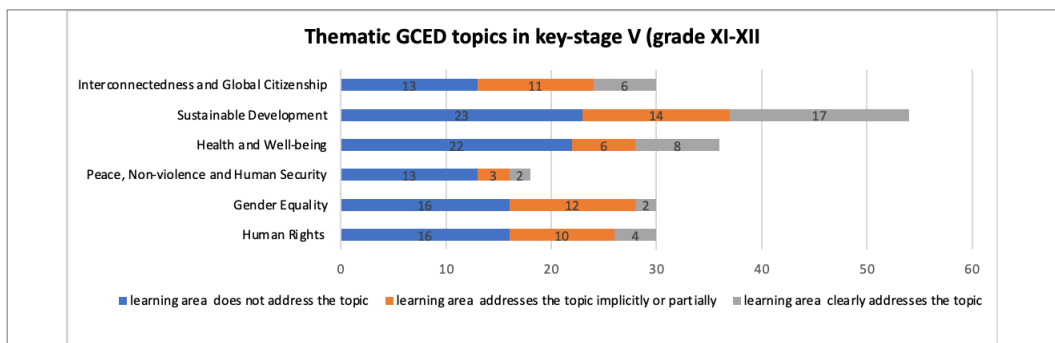


Figure 29: GCED thematic topics in key-stage V (grade XI-XII)

4.7 Pedagogy

The curriculum framework includes adequate teaching-learning pedagogies related to GCED pedagogies. The pedagogies emphasize individualized and authentic learning strategies based on place-based and competency-based education. The pedagogical aspects of the framework focus on creating an enabling and conducive learning environment, making learning relevant and meaningful, fostering reflective practices, promoting inquisitiveness, providing autonomy and flexibility, and promoting holistic education. While the framework is very well written, the Curriculum Developers emphasized that the teachers must be adequately trained to achieve the GCED goals (Curriculum Developers, FGD). Otherwise, there is a risk of GCED concepts and competencies being sidelined as currently practiced (Sherab & Schuelka, 2023). These pedagogical aspects of the framework are inclusive of the GCED PEACE pedagogy.

Specifically, the following pedagogical descriptions are inclusive of the GCED pedagogies.

- There is a clear entry point to the lesson, and the teacher clearly communicates the learning outcomes of the class that is understood by the students.
- The lesson involves a learning task (problem/ activity) that allows students to understand the core concept and test the application of the concept.
- The teacher ensures that all children are engaged in the learning process.
- The teacher ensures that all children achieve the learning objective through the use of evidence-based teaching methods (REC, 2021, p. 18).

The framework supports teaching-learning processes that are physically and emotionally healthy and engaging for learners. The facilitation of teaching-learning experiences ensures that students:

- Are interested in coming to school and attending school regularly
- Show responsibility for their learning
- Take the initiative and interest in the teaching and learning process
- Are clear about the specific learning outcomes expected from them
- Are capable of learning on their own
- Can speak about the quality of their work and what they must do to improve it
- Aspire for holistic achievement
- Have clear and high career aspirations
- Make schooling relevant to their goals (REC, 2021, p. 19)

4.8 Assessment

The curriculum framework emphasizes authentic assessments that facilitate practical learning improvements for learners. Therefore, the assessment practices described in the framework promote adequate opportunities for the development of GCED skills, values, and behaviors in learners through more emphasis on formative assessment (Curriculum Developers, FGD). Perhaps, positive reform in the assessment is one area that is worth to be noted in the revised curriculum framework. How this is being translated into field realities is something that must be studied in the future. The assessment practices in schools are expected to be meaningful for every learner by emphasizing the following:

- Assessments are designed with the core competencies in mind;
- Assessment items measure students' grasp of concepts and ability to apply them;
- Assessments include actual performances of students' understanding through tasks and projects – not just cognitive tests;
- Assessment items provide students the opportunity to explain their understanding;
- Assessments are comprehensive and continuous;
- Assessment data are utilized for performance improvement; and
- Assessment is holistic – there is a school-wide assessment to measure and improve the performance of the whole school (REC, 2021, pp. 19-20).

4.9 GCED enabling conditions

The enabling conditions for the curriculum implementation are aimed at supporting the overall learning outcomes in learners. Aligned with the GCED's holistic approach, the framework has a provision for a wide range of support and facilitation needed for the effective education of learners. The framework highlights a multi-sectoral approach to ensuring effective pedagogies, relevant teaching-learning resources, effective school leadership and management, engagement of parents and communities, and inclusive infrastructure and environments. In the FGDs, the Curriculum Developers shared evidential citations to express their confidence that the revised curriculum framework will adequately take care of GCED values and principles. For instance, the home-school partnership mechanisms for the involvement of parents to support the implementation of quality education (REC, 2021, p. 24) and, therefore, GCED in schools have been clearly laid out (see Appendix A).

5. Sociocultural and Educational Issues that Impact upon the Understanding and Development of GCED

5.1 Social factors

A social problem is a concern within society that creates difficulty for people to realize their full potential. Relevant social issues are elaborated on in the following subsections.

5.2 Inequality

In spite of free health and education and almost all the other public services, there are still some sections of people who fall through the system, leading to inequality. According to the National Statistical Bureau (NSB) (2018), the inequality trend is higher in urban areas than in rural areas. A 2015 GNH survey showed that rural people are less happy than urban people (Palden, 2017). Poverty is still widespread in Bhutan, with a third of its population classified as poor. This classification is mainly confined to the rural area where close to 70% of the population resides. The main causes of poverty in Bhutan are unequal access to health and education (NSB, 2018). Individuals with disabilities and their families are strapped with a lack of amenities. With the mindset of disabilities being a consequence of past karma, they are looked at with pity, discriminated against, and forced to retreat with negative prejudice and mindset (Sherab et al., 2015; Schuelka, 2013, 2014, 2018; UNICEF, 2013). In modern Bhutan, education, training institutions, public services, transportation, and commercial spaces do not make provisions for individuals with disabilities (Dorji, 2021). Public Housing and Census Bhutan (NSB, 2018) recorded more than 16,000 cases of disability, the majority being in rural areas.

The emerging community of LGBTQI in the country faced legal challenges until only recently when same-sex sexual activity was decriminalized in Bhutan on 17 February 2021 as an amendment to the Bhutanese Penal Code Act. Before the amendment of the Penal Code Act in 2021, consensual sexual activity between same-sex adults was considered a petty misdemeanor (Tsheten, 2021). Rejection, isolation, bullying, and other safety issues were reported as challenges faced by the LGBTQI community.

Inequality in society is a threat to social and political stability. There is growing recognition, however, that it can also threaten the sustained growth of a country (Carpentier et al., n.d). It reduces investments and discourages economic activities (The World Bank, 2012).

However, inequality can be reversed with policies and reforms, and to have good policies in place, society needs competent individuals with the skills required for this century. This is the reason why it is crucial for a small nation like Bhutan to have GCED-related concepts incorporated across the school curriculum to keep up with the rapidly evolving world.

5.3 Rural-urban migration

In the last few decades, Bhutan has seen demographic and socioeconomic change. Due to the major government offices being in Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan, and opportunities brought by urbanization, rural-urban migration has been seen as another issue that Bhutan has to tackle. As per the data from NSB (2018), the annual growth rate of Thimphu town (3.27%) has outpaced the national population growth rate (1.3%).

Due to this trend, people move to urban areas in search of better opportunities and livelihood, whereas only children and the elderly remain in rural areas. According to the PHCB report 2017, 21.7% of people have migrated to urban areas, resulting in around 4800 empty households (NSB, 2018). Surprisingly, over the recent years, there have been more Bhutanese immigrating to other countries like Australia, the United States, and Canada.

With the rising issues of migration, such as pressure on services, overcrowding, pollution, and inequality among few, there are also negative impacts on the place of origin, such as brain drain, smaller working population, economic development, and fewer skilled individuals (Vazir Group, 2022; International Organization for Migration, 2020). The challenges associated with the migration on both the place of origin and place of destination call for GCED-related policies and systems in place.

5.4 Sexual and gender-based violence/stereotypes

Bhutan has made a significant move in socio-economic development and other areas in the last decade, but gender-based violence against women remains a massive public health and social issue (Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women (RENEW), 2021). The Bhutan National Health survey (2012) revealed that there is prevalent physical, sexual, and psychological violence committed by intimate partners and that there is widespread acceptance of violence by female victims. Women who stay at home and those married to men with lower educational attainment are likely to experience intimate partner violence. A survey done by the National Commission for Women and Children (2008) discovered that there is still a pervasive belief that women are inferior to men. The same study also found that the number of women at the top decision-making level in the civil service is also very low. Another study done by the Royal Civil Service Commission in 2013 also found that there are more males in the civil service than females and Nidup (2016) found that women are 4.8% more likely to be unemployed than men. Recent findings from a survey on the labor force found that more female youths are unemployed, with a rate of 61.3% higher than male youth, with a rate of 38.7% (NSB, 2020). Judging from

how rampant it is in Bhutan for women to take sole responsibility in taking care of household chores, rearing children, and other issues, it is not novel to learn that women are either not having a chance to excel in career prospects, or they choose not to because of other personal responsibilities.

The number of sexual crimes committed against women and children has been on the rise in recent years. In 2021 alone, 55 cases of rape of minors were reported (The Bhutanese, 2021). Records maintained by agencies and organizations working on behalf of women and children have shown an increase in cases of violence against women and children over the years. Studies indicate 40 to 60% of working women experienced sexual harassment in their workplace (Kuensel, 2022), and there seems to be an increasing trend in recent years of sexual violence and harassment among women in the workplace and higher education institutions. Gender-based violence is not only a violation of individual women's and girls' rights. To experience harassment, inequality, discrimination, and violence against one's gender is a grave issue that Bhutan must address with policies and aids put in place, to ensure equality for all. This pertinent issue shows that the country is in need of GCED-embedded values, concepts, and practices in the school curriculum so that the children grow up and become responsible adults. To ensure a better and more sustainable future for all, it is crucial to kick-start transformational progress by strengthening policies, organizations, networks, and education (United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Bhutan, 2022).

5.5 Youth-related issues

Perhaps the most significant social factor that probes for GCED in the country is the ever-increasing youth-related issues such as crime, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, suicide, mental health, sexual abuse and harassment, and alcohol. According to Sherab et al. (2017), 'exposure to other lifestyles and values have been embraced by many young Bhutanese, creating tension with traditional culture and values, much of these associated with concerns about substance abuse, sexual behavior, and mental health' (p. 3). Mental health is one of the nine domains of GNH, but it is surprising to note that more than 4,200 cases related to mental and behavioral disorders were registered in 2017, rising to 6,858 cases in 2020 (Parks, 2021) and these are only reported cases. This is a huge number for a small nation like Bhutan. The top three cases reported are anxiety disorder, substance abuse, and depression. Mental health issues are increasing, and the number of suicide cases is increasing among the Bhutanese population, especially among youth (Sherab et al., 2017; Yangchen et al., 2016). In the last few years, Bhutan has lost several lives to suicide, and it has increased during the pandemic. Tackling mental health issues requires the government and society, collective communication, and actions

that are sustainable (Parks, 2021), as it affects how individuals feel, think, and act, their personal productivity, and quality of life (Mental Health Foundation, 2022). Therefore, it is crucial for the nation to address youth-related issues through a more proactive approach to GCED-related competencies and practices right from the primary school system.

5.6 Youth unemployment

Bhutan has seen rising challenges of youth unemployment in the last few years. In the year 2020, Bhutan's youth unemployment rose to 23% from 12% in the previous year (Norbu, 2021). The general view of Bhutanese youths on employment increasingly points towards disempowerment and discouragement. This is the motive for many young Bhutanese to leave the country overseas, seeking more appealing job opportunities and incentives. According to the 2020 labor force survey report, out of 332,222 persons classified as economically active, 16,660 were without work (NSB, 2020), with the majority being in the capital of Bhutan.

Employers look for graduates with technical and theoretical skills in their respective disciplines, but they also expect the graduates to possess broader skills such as critical thinking, management skills, problem-solving, leadership skills, interpersonal skills, and ICT skills, which are not taught in educational institutions. Norbu (2021) in a survey, found that most youths feel that there is a disjunction between the education they receive and the demands of the labor market.

Unemployment is undesirable in many ways and has negative repercussions on the country's economy as well (Nidup, 2016), as unemployed youths are likely to indulge in personal and socially destructive behaviors.

A skilled and educated workforce is the key resource for a vibrant and competitive economy. Employability skills are a critical issue for both government and higher education institutions across the globe, and Bhutan is no exception (Jafri, 2016). This calls for the development of GCED-related concepts in education to prepare young children and youths to face the real world with relevant knowledge and skills suitable for changing times that go beyond national borders.

5.7 Educational factors

Prior to the 1960s, the Bhutanese education system was mainly monastic education. However, in the 1960s, the Third King, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, decided to come out of the intentional self-

isolation era. One of the foremost transformations that took place was the opening of modern schools with a borrowed British system from post-colonial India (Sherab, 2013), which led to youth-related issues (discussed above). This was also confirmed by the focus group discussion consisting of officials from the MoESD:

'For a long time, I think, sometime in 1999, the government prioritized that values need to be taught in schools, and that was the time when 'learning to be' and 'learning to know' books on values education were produced. So again, that was the priority of the government. The government realized that there was a decline in the values of our children. Values education has been initiated in schools under political instruction.'

His Majesty the King addressed the nation on the need for education reform in his speech during the 113th National Day celebration on 17th December 2020, emphasizing producing globally competent citizens (Kuensel, 2021). An excerpt from His Majesty's *Kasho (Decree)* cites:

'Our generation has the sacred responsibility of radically rethinking our education system and transforming curriculum, infrastructure, classroom spaces, and examination structures. Educationists and experts have identified what twenty-first-century competencies mean for children everywhere. By developing their abilities for critical thinking, creative thinking, and learning to be life-long learners, we have to prepare them to be inquisitive, to be problem-solvers, to be interactive, and collaborative, using information and media literacy as well as technological skills. We must prioritize self-discovery and exploration and involve learners in the creation of knowledge rather than making them mere consumers of it. We must make STEM subjects part of their everyday language.'

The Royal *Kasho* clearly alludes to GCED-related values and concepts as the foundations of the transformation of the country's education system. According to the focus group discussion with officials from the MoESD:

'Many parents and teachers are of the view that the values education must be taught and some of the reasons they gave were the increasing social problems that we are facing. This was our reason to strengthen values education in the schools to prevent future youth-related issues.'

In the social domain, at this point in time, there is a decline in social values and let aside the society, in many cases, even within the family. And if we are not attentive to these, there will

be a time when humans become other animals. And in that perspective, I think GCED and values education can be seen as a powerful programme to curb all those issues.'

Education is responsible for shaping young children and youths into future citizens of the country and the world. To have an education system that shapes young minds with relevant skills of the current times with their root intact is indispensable. For this matter, educational policies and practices must have GCED-related values and concepts embedded in the curriculum. A recent study has shown that there is limited civic knowledge among both students and teachers and that schools do not promote democratic values and principles (Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy, 2020).

Currently, Bhutan is witnessing a significant education reform through the revitalisation of the national school curriculum framework based on His Majesty's vision of quality education. The new curriculum framework, as seen from the earlier discussions, is firmly grounded on the humanistic curriculum model focusing on value-driven quality education for transforming learners into productive and contributing citizens. It is hopeful that this reform initiative will holistically address the GCED-related competencies and skills in every individual child. Furthermore, the focus group discussion emphasized that the concept of GCED has always been there in the 'education policy and curriculum but in other forms such as the Educating for GNH, which was introduced by the first democratic government.'

6. Key Stakeholders to Support the Development and Implementation of GCED

Some of the key stakeholders that would play a crucial role in the development and implementation of GCED in Bhutan are the MoESD, The Royal University of Bhutan, the Central Monastic Body, United Nations (UN) agencies (such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNFPA), and civil society organizations (such as Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD), RENEW, Disabled Persons' Association of Bhutan, Bhutan Youth Development Fund, Draktsho Vocational Training Centre for Special Children and Youth, to name a few). How each of the potential stakeholders could contribute is discussed in the following section.

First, the MoESD is considered to be the key stakeholder in promoting GCED-related competencies and skills. Such learning must happen right from primary to secondary schools. Key GCED-related policies and initiatives, professional development (PD) for teachers, allocation of budgets, and ensuring the needs of the schools are met are required. The Bhutan National Commission for UNESCO's involvement is critical in ensuring that the school children learn and cherish GCED values, attitudes, and behaviors that support responsible global citizenship and promote creativity, innovation, and commitment to peace, human rights, and sustainable development.

Secondly, the MoESD needs to partner with higher learning institutions, such as the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB), for teacher training. The University's role in supporting the development of GCED in the country falls on the two teacher education colleges in preparing teachers with knowledge and skills to explicitly as well as implicitly teach GCED-related concepts and skills. Without quality teachers, not much will be achieved in the schools.

Third, the Central Monastic Body needs to continuously support both the MoESD and RUB to organize religious discourse (*Choeshed*) that helps youth learn Bhutanese culture and tradition, an important aspect of a Bhutanese citizen.

Fourth, UN agencies play a crucial role in supporting such programmes. UNICEF and UNFPA Bhutan could continue to provide funding support for schools and universities to achieve their goals and outcomes.

Fifth, civil society organizations such as the BCMD have been playing an active role in inculcating a civic mindset and civic action in the youth.

7. Opportunities and Limitations/Gaps

7.1 Policy and practice levels

The findings from this situational analysis indicate that the principles and practices of GCED have been integrated into the revised curriculum framework 2021 and augmented by national policies. There are a variety of programmes within both formal curricula and informal extra curricula that are implemented by both the government as well as NGOs, such as values education, EGNH, Civics education, clubs, Educating for Citizenship, life skills education, and the *Mikhung* project (Citizenship education and democratic culture). However, the effort to integrate GCED into the Bhutanese education system is not without issues and challenges. Lessons learned from these issues would help in the way forward. The following describes the issues, challenges, and lessons learnt at each level.

7.2 National policy level

The complex socio-cultural and educational issues discussed in the report were further exacerbated by the pandemic with unprecedented challenges and uncharted paths. There were widening gaps in society with issues such as unemployment, poverty, and mental health, amongst others accelerating the problems. The issues and challenges mainly emerged from social factors such as inequality, rural-urban migration, sexual and gender-based violence and stereotypes, quality health care service, and youth employment, as mentioned above. These are mainly people from sections of the country who fall through the system, as currently, there is no system to cater to people who are left out of the government's social policies (Ugyel, 2018). To cite a few pressing examples: (a) Unemployment affects not only the prospect of secure jobs and quality of life, but it also affects the self-esteem of individuals as their future becomes uncertain and unemployed youth are likely to indulge in personal and socially destructive behaviors; (b) Gender-based violence against women and children remains a massive public health and social issue (RENEW, 2021) which needs to be addressed. During the second national lockdown in Bhutan (19th December 2020-7th January 2021), 77 cases of violence against women and 16 cases of violence against children were reported (National Commission for Women and Children, 2021); (c) The demographic and socio-economic change associated with the rural-urban migration is another issue that Bhutan has to tackle. Due to this trend, only children and the elderly remain in the rural areas as the economically active population moves to urban areas in search of better opportunities and livelihood. The challenges associated with the social issues, therefore, call for GCED-related policies and systems in place in the country as well as GCED-embedded values and concepts in the system and development of GCED-related concepts in education. Bhutan has several GCED-related policies, frameworks, and guidelines instituted, such as the Constitution

of Bhutan, the National Youth Policy (2011), the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2019), Bhutan Education Blue-Print 2014-2024. Organizations such as the National Commission for Women and Children and RENEW address the socio-cultural, and economic issues in the country. Although much progress has been made in improving and mitigating the problems cited above, much still needs to be done in terms of action at the ground level.

7.3 Practice at the school level

The goals and objectives of school education in Bhutan have a positive relationship with the vision of GCED and have instituted various programmes and activities. They have been incorporated into the academic curriculum as well as in co-curricular activities, bringing in a diverse range of learning experiences of GCED-related concepts and principles for not only students but also for teachers and school leaders, making the endeavor inclusive.

The transition from a monastic form of education to modern secular education has been successful, but not without trial and error. The major shifts in the paradigm of teaching-learning started in the mid-1990s, and student-centered education was gradually introduced, replacing the earlier conventional approaches of memorisation, note-taking, and lectures. The Department of School Education advocates active learning through effective pedagogies to build interdisciplinary and cross-curricular skills, concepts, knowledge, and values while facilitating the integration of knowledge, skills, and values within and across the disciplines, thereby promoting enduring understanding and deeper learning. The STEM Centres at Paro and Samtse Colleges of Education promote pedagogy for teaching science emphasizing innovation, problem-solving, and critical thinking with advanced science content and research. The focus of teaching-learning in the country's curriculum documents clearly stated shifting from a cognitive domain emphasis to including psychomotor and affective domains with teacher-centered approaches being replaced by active learning to build collaboration, cooperation, and shared learning (REC, 2021).

Despite the efforts to bring about changes in teaching and learning approaches, conventional teaching dominated by lecture methods and too much emphasis on content learning still persist in schools and higher education institutions, as observed by Sherab and Schuelka (2023) in a recent study. When the focus is on content learning and performance in the examination, GCED-related values and skills are sidelined. According to the GCED pilot school (Nobding School), the practice of different pedagogy and teaching of core competencies of Global Citizens are impeded due to a 'lack of resources' and 'challenges in the use of ICT' in the lesson. Lack of resources such as GCED-related books and learning materials, limited accessibility and network

connection, technical support, lack of effective ICT training, and lack of teachers' competency in using ICT skills were often cited by the Curriculum Developers and teachers during the FGD. This is despite teachers being assigned at least two hours for the purpose, indicating that providing time alone is not adequate for the successful implementation of GCED in school. Access to relevant resources and competency in the use of ICT is critical.

The principles and values of EGNH are closely aligned with GCED, and several activities carried out in the schools come under the umbrella of the EGNH initiative. Although EGNH and GCED complement each other, the overlaps and overspills at times may be confusing to both the teachers and students, and the initiative could lose its significance and value with repetition of activities. Thus, while GCED integration into the curriculum should be viewed as complementary to EGNH and other similar programmes in the schools, it may lead to these problems. Therefore, teacher preparation (both in-service and pre-service) is crucial for the effective integration of GCED into their discipline-specific teaching (Curriculum Developers, FGD).

Further, it is observed that in schools where GCED does not feature prominently, the majority of the content is better interpreted as part of the more traditional civics or citizenship education. For example, in some higher secondary schools, as part of the pastoral care sessions, students are sensitized to citizenship education, given the close links GCED has with traditional civics and citizenship education.

As a part of curriculum reform, the national school curriculum framework 2021 emphasized the development of transversal competencies and 21st century skills to facilitate deep learning and prepare them to be lifelong learners (REC, 2021). This paradigm shift from an academic knowledge-based 'factory model' of education to a 'humanism model' lends itself well to integrating and implementing GCED in the curriculum (Curriculum Developers, FGD). According to the Curriculum Developers, the revised school curriculum has almost 70-80% of the content related to GCED. However, there are issues and challenges, which are further elaborated on in the following subsections.

7.4 Curriculum, teaching, and learning

There may be a lack of knowledge and skills among teachers to effectively integrate and teach GCED, especially since the pedagogical methods may require more training and dissemination of strategies country-wide. Recent research in the Bhutanese context has also shown that there is too much focus on cognitive aspects and performance in the examination, which directly or

indirectly forces teachers to neglect the teaching of GCED-related values and skills (Sherab & Schuelka, 2023; Sherab & Schuelka, 2021) although there is a requirement for them to be infused in each of the teaching subjects as well as other school programmes (National Project Team for GCED, FGD). However, the Curriculum Developers reconfirmed that the revised curriculum provides more focus on continuous formative assessment, which is an indication that teachers will now have more autonomy and flexibility to spend time teaching GCED-related concepts and skills. It is hopeful that the revised curriculum will address the current issue of rigidity with more emphasis on examination and academic performance (Sherab, 2013) and that well-being and happiness of the students will not be sidelined as currently found (Sherab & Schuelka, 2023). This suggests that the school environment will become conducive for children to learn the values and skills required in the 21st century. All these developments indicate that the education system is moving ahead toward fulfilling its well-thought-out vision.

It has also been observed that although Bhutan has made substantial achievements in establishing systemic and institutional changes that enable equitable and inclusive education, there are, however, still significant gaps between the idealized inclusive policies and the material, curricular, and personnel capacity to implement them in the schools (Schuelka, 2014; Sherab, et al., 2015). The issues and challenges would be that although much success has been experienced in integrating GCED in schools, the integration has not been uniform and equitable for the diversity of learners. For instance, there were no separate curricula developed for people with disabilities though there were several schools designed for people with disability. It was only in 2019 the REC developed a separate curriculum for people with disabilities that 'focus mainly on literacy and numeracy, life skills and other daily living skills' (REC, 2021, p.8). The implementation and the impact of the curriculum are yet to be seen as it has only recently been implemented.

7.5 Engagement of pupils

While there is some emphasis on the engagement of pupils in GCED-related activities and programmes in the schools, the evidence suggests that there has to be better coordination amongst relevant stakeholders. Coordinated efforts are likely to bring in more impact rather than isolated efforts (Teacher Educators, FGD). Such important programmes should be a nationwide effort to engage all pupils in experiential learning right from their primary school days and have the potential to curb many of the youth-related issues that Bhutan is facing.

Furthermore, evidence also indicates that such programmes seem to change with the change in the government. For instance, the first elected government introduced a nationwide EGNH

programme to promote GCED-related values and skills, but during the second government, this programme was neglected and instead came up with a different programme called values education (National GCED Project Team, FGD). The only engagement is during the extra-curricular activities, but most often, these programmes are only for selected students as it is beyond the scope of mass inclusion.

7.6 Engagement of parents and a wider community

The Bhutanese education system has not been able to provide much-needed importance to the role of parents and a wider community in promoting GCED-related values and skills to the students. While there are some isolated examples of a local leader or a parent providing talks on values and culture, there is no nationwide approach to the engagement of parents and a wider community in the educational process. However, as shared above, it is encouraging to note that the revised curriculum framework provides much-needed importance to the community-school partnership.

8. Recommendations to Improve GCED

8.1 Synergy of efforts of the MoESD and RUB

The MoESD and teacher training colleges work in silos – not supplementing the efforts of the other. Examples are observed in the modules, which are developed in 'semi-isolation' by the Colleges of Education and the programmes conducted by the MoESD for school education. There needs to be a synergy that will help in the integration and promotion of GCED in both systems so that there will be a collaborative and harmonizing impact on the education system on the whole. The following section provides recommendations to further improve GCED.

8.2 Equal emphasis on GCED learning domains

Findings from this study showed that there is much more emphasis on only the cognitive domain and not much-required emphasis on the behavioral and socio-emotional domains. The existing literature suggests that there must be equal emphasis on all three domains (Bercasio & Perez, 2020). The socio-emotional and behavior domains are critical for the holistic development of the learner desired in the context of GNH. To be able to develop socio-emotional and behavioral attributes, these three domains should be interlinked and integrated into the learning process. Similarly, the neglected GCED topics such as peace, non-violence, and human security can be included across key stages in the curriculum framework.

8.3 Curriculum, teaching, and learning

Strengthening GCED links in curricula is important. It is observed that the GCED-related topics inter alia democracy, citizenship education, equality, justice, and fairness, together with an emphasis on the teaching-learning process and 'Enabling Conditions' grounded on the principles and practices of Competency-Based Education, are incorporated in the curriculum framework 2021. They endeavor to integrate the principles and practices of GCED into the schools with more emphasis given to actualising the potential of learners. The revised curriculum, which provides more emphasis on the formative assessment, brings in some hope for a positive change as it is likely to shift the focus away from content learning and examination (Sherab, 2013; Sherab & Schuelka, 2023).

A recent study by the BCMD has shown there is limited civic knowledge among both students and teachers and that schools do not promote democratic values and principles (BCMD, 2020). This is a clear indication that the students in Bhutan need more exposure to GCED. Therefore, educational policies need to vigorously embed GCED-related values and concepts in the curriculum.

The need to integrate GCED transversally across the curriculum and not tied to a particular subject/s is particularly desirable as it will lend itself well to implementing and reinforcing the transferable skills and competencies that are an integral part of GCED. Again, this issue is likely to be addressed if the revised curriculum framework is implemented accordingly (Curriculum Developers, FGD). Future studies on how the revised curriculum is being implemented to integrate GCED concepts and competencies would be useful.

Perhaps as the country is currently undergoing a significant education reform through the introduction of the revised curriculum framework, which envisages actualising the potential of every individual student and ultimately aiming for a just and harmonious society, this framework will holistically address the GCED-related competencies and skills in every individual child. As planned in the curriculum framework, more emphasis will be provided to the students to undergo experiential learning (Curriculum Developers, FGD).

8.4 GCED Pedagogy

Implementation and inculcation of GCED core competencies through GCED pedagogies such as PEACE, Project-based learning, Design Thinking, Storytelling, and Event-Based learning are evident in the curriculum framework and are being implemented by teachers with some success in the GCED pilot schools (e.g., Nobding Lower Secondary School and Daleythang Lower Secondary School). The Curriculum Developers reiterated this during the focus group discussion that GCED pedagogies are incorporated into the subject curriculum framework. However, the field realities in the implementation of the pedagogies need to be studied.

8.5 Hidden and extended curriculum

Besides focusing on the formal academic curriculum, teachers need to productively harness the potential of GCED concepts and principles present in the 'hidden' and 'extended' curriculum during both formal instruction and other extra-curricular activities/programmes. Past studies have shown that Bhutanese teachers modeled negative values to students, which are against GCED (see Sherab, 2013; Sherab & Schuelka, 2021 for more details). Existing literature argues that many of the GCED-related values and principles could be effectively promoted in the form of a hidden curriculum (Sherab, 2013). Therefore, teachers need to be aware of this.

8.6 PD support for leaders

The curriculum framework clearly identifies the enablers for the effective implementation of the intended curriculum, including GCED components. However, it became evident from the FGD (Curriculum Developers, Teachers) that there was a gap in terms of school leadership capacity and teaching and learning materials. To build a school campus that embraces and encourages GCED from a holistic approach would be to provide comprehensive GCED training for school principals, Dzongkhag Education Officers, and associated leaders so that they become cognisant of GCED concepts, principles, and pedagogy. Research has shown that if leaders are not convinced, they are unlikely to support such activities (Sherab, 2013). When leaders become aware of the significance of GCED, they will understandably provide the necessary support and guidance in the overall human resource and financial management and management in schools. Specific suggestions such as the creation of inclusive human resource management and inclusive, nurturing school environments together with initiatives to mobilize funds through whole school activities such as school fairs/fetes, cultural programmes, street plays, and art exhibitions would be useful.

8.7 Community engagement

The world is becoming increasingly complex, and humans have never been more connected or interdependent, especially as shown during the COVID pandemic and the recent world crises. Thus, it is important to broaden students' schooling experiences and make them holistic rather than providing emphasis on the academic aspects; involvement of the students' families and the wider local community must be included to facilitate GCED. Specific ways the families and wider communities can be engaged in GCED: Extending school and family partnerships through school-based GCED projects such as green school, kitchen gardens, agriculture activities, family bonding, cultural activities, camps conducted for families and students, etc. For instance, the *Mi-Khung* (Citizenship Education) project initiated by BCMD brought together school students and many community members to constructively address local issues. As a result, these students, as well as people in the community, learnt all about civic mindset and civic action.

Schools could also strengthen the existing co-curricular activities and organize GCED-themed activities to involve the whole school and the wider local community. Concurrently, school leaders can network with the local leaders and communities and get them involved in the activities. They can also organize district-level events to showcase their schools in GCED-related activities.

8.8 Teacher preparation

PD for in-service teachers

Teachers play a critical role in transferring GCED knowledge content to learners, creating an environment that is conducive to learning, and preparing students to be productive, ethical, moral, and responsible citizens in a rapidly changing and interconnected world. However, it is not so much a lack of interest or motivation which prevents teachers from fulfilling the above; rather, it is the need for quality and consistent capacity building to meet the challenges of GCED to be established. Training programmes need to ensure deepening their knowledge base and pedagogic and ICT skills in response to new demands and changing curricula and GCED issues through high-quality training and continuous learning programmes (Curriculum Developers, Teachers, Principals, FGD). PD on GCED themes can be organized for teachers on a regular basis, and refresher courses can be offered to upgrade and update the teachers' knowledge and skills. The PD can also be used as a professional platform to share good practices and share challenges, issues, and solutions. As mentioned earlier, the workshops should not be one-shot workshops but should allow the teachers to carry out follow-up activities in their schools. Additionally, a professional GCED community of teachers could be formed across the schools in the country for them to have a common platform to share and exchange ideas and skills. Annual conferences or professional gatherings should be organized for the teachers as well as school leaders to regroup and energize themselves, providing a place of belongingness and solidarity for the team to draw up plans of action and strategies for the progress of GCED activities and programmes.

Pre-service teacher training

The student teachers in the Colleges should be better prepared by the two Colleges in being offered modules that are well-defined with GCED concepts and practices so that they can apply them to their practices later. A study on the Situational Analysis of Global Citizenship Education in the Curricula of Bhutan conducted in 2019 (Wangchuk et al., 2019) recommends that GCED training and content need not be administered separately but be integrated into all aspects of teacher training programmes from pre- to post-qualification. Initial teacher preparation should be considered a critical component of the GCED programme in schools. If pre-service teachers are prepared well, the implementation of GCED in schools would be much easier and more sustainable.

To provide specific strategies to help student teachers gain a deeper and actionable understanding of their critical role in promoting GCED concepts and values, the two Colleges of Education should collaborate and develop two standalone modules for consistency and uniform

application. The modules should be offered to all the student teachers across the courses and levels so that all become cognizant of GCED concepts and practices. The first module could be based on the vision, concept, and competencies of GCED, mainly focused on the theoretical aspects of GCED to provide awareness and a strong grounding. The second module could be based on the integration of GCED within classroom pedagogy and whole school activities to provide practical experiences with examples from other countries, ultimately directing student teachers to design projects on implementing GCED. The modules could be credited and included in the programmes in the two colleges.

The other alternative could be for the two Colleges to conduct annual college activities such as GCED Fair, Street Plays, and exhibitions based on GCED themes, thus reaching out to the student teachers in the Colleges.

PD for teacher educators

The successful preparation of pre-service teachers in terms of GCED-related competencies and skills would largely depend on the knowledge and skills of teacher educators. Relevant stakeholders, including the UNESCO project, should not ignore this reality. For the teacher educators, capacity-building activities could be developed to train them in pedagogical methods, knowledge, and skills to effectively integrate and teach GCED in their respective modules (Teacher Educators, FGD). This is with the understanding that the potential of GCED concepts and values cut across all disciplines and courses. Another recommendation could be for the exchange of experts from other countries where GCED is well developed and implemented and for Bhutanese counterparts to visit the countries to experience the implementation of GCED in teacher education colleges and schools across curriculum areas. In-country training workshops, seminars, and refresher courses need to be instituted on a regular basis for an enhanced understanding of the role of teacher educators in implementing GCED into the school curriculum. It is important that the workshops are not one-shot workshops but have follow-up activities to ensure that what is learnt in the workshops is actually carried out in the colleges. These could be used as platforms for teacher educators to share their successes and challenges of applying GCED in their colleges.

9. Conclusion

GCED is timely and significant against the backdrop of emerging sociocultural and educational concerns and issues. The revised school curriculum framework 2021 appears to be promising in terms of promoting GCED nationwide. With more focus on formative assessment and less on the end-of-the-year examination (as practiced in the past), it is hopeful that the Bhutanese education system is moving ahead toward preparing future citizens for a more productive world. This is an indication that relevant stakeholders understand that 21st-century education is much more than content learning and examination. The curriculum framework is well-planned to provide much-needed emphasis. This is likely to bring positive change to GCED-related programmes such as EGNH, which currently has a marginalized place in the education system. It is crucial to understand that GCED is all about educating the youth holistically with a vision to produce 'A GNH Graduate' in the context of Bhutan.

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Appendix 1: Home-school partnership mechanisms in the revised curriculum framework

1. Engaged parent community - a home-school partnership to better students' chances of success

- There is a written School Policy to involve parents
- Teachers meet parents on a regular basis to discuss the progress of children
- Teachers provide actionable feedback on how parents can support children at home
- Parents feel that they are heard and their concerns are effectively addressed in school

2. Clear roles and expectations from the parents

- Parents collaborate with the school and support the learning process.
- Parents participate in their children's efforts to achieve learning outcomes across the curriculum.
- Parents accept a shared responsibility to work with the school in the learning process.
- Parents ensure that their children are adequately nourished, acquire adequate sleep and rest, and are fully equipped for school.
- Parents create a home environment that supports learning.

3. Strong community linkages - participation of the community in the education and learning of children

- Communities transfer oral history (dealing with folklore, migration, environmental degradation, traders, settlers, etc.) and traditional knowledge (agriculture, music, arts and crafts, etc.) to children while the school encourages critical reflection wherever it is required.
- Communities contribute ideas to enrich the content of subjects and add local, practical, and appropriate examples.
- Communities support children in their exploration and creation of knowledge and information
- Communities support children in their practice of democracy through their participation in information generation, planning, monitoring, and evaluation with local governments and schools
- Communities monitor the realization of children's rights as well as violations of these rights
- Communities participate in addressing the constraints faced by children in school
- Communities participate in vocational training and other programs.
- Communities enable the village to become a learning environment for children using a place-based education approach.

