

Revisioning Education In Today's World

(Plenary Session 1: Global Citizenship in the post 2015 Education Agenda)

Peter Ronald deSouza

Centre For the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi. INDIA

2nd UNESCO Forum on Global Citizenship Education (GCED)

Building Peaceful and sustainable societies: Preparing for post 2015

28-30 January, 2015, UNESCO, HQ, Paris

Global Citizenship Education: An Inspirational frame...

- ▶ We live in fluid times marked by an uncertainty of beliefs, aspirations and commitment. In such times a firmness of direction is required to lead us towards a more just, peaceful, tolerant and sustainable world.
- ▶ In the field of education UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education (GCED) initiative provides this firmness of direction by envisioning principles, processes, policies, and institutions to help us achieve these goals.
- ▶ If wars and violence are made in the minds of people then peace must be achieved in these minds as well. It is here that the GCED framework must be firmly placed.
- ▶ GCED proposes universals that, although contested, must be campaigned for.

GCED: A collective purpose of education

(S.Tawil: Education for 'Global Citizenship': A Framework for Discussion' and UNESCO 'Global Citizenship Education')

- ▶ **The frame**: 'GCED is a framing paradigm which encapsulates how education can develop the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes learners need for securing a just and sustainable world.'
- ▶ **The function**: Concerned with the civic, social and political socialization function of education.
- ▶ **The aspiration**: GCED encourages people to:
 - ▶ Be aware of the wider world and their rights and responsibilities as citizens to it.
 - ▶ Value the diversity of cultures and see this plurality as the common heritage of humanity.
 - ▶ Commit to sustainable development and environmental responsibility.
 - ▶ Promote social justice.
 - ▶ Be willing to challenge injustice, discrimination, inequality and exclusion at both national and global levels.

... but there is resistance and subversion of this aspiration both internationally and nationally

▶ Internationally:

- the existence of a **global elite that does not share these altruistic goals**
- this global elite has created a global discourse which sees the policies coming out of the 'Davos Discourse' as the only way forward. A **capture of 'mindspace'**.
- **Cosmologies in contest**, because of cultural chauvinism, leaving little scope for developing an overlapping consensus.

➤ Nationally (illustrations from India using keywords)

- Seen through a social lens i.e, **discrimination**
- Seen through a development lens i.e., **disempowerment**
- Seen through a political- economic lens i.e., **differentiation**

Rethinking education and learning in a changing world

- ▶ There is the need for a big picture analysis. A report on 'Rethinking education and learning in a changing world' is under preparation by UNESCO.
- ▶ Builds on the principles enunciated by the Faure/ Delors reports (i) Lifelong learning (ii) Learning to know, to do, to live together, and to be.
- ▶ The report has 4 sections.
 - ▶ It looks at the challenges faced by the goal of **sustainable development**
 - ▶ It reaffirms an **Humanistic approach to education**.
 - ▶ It examines the difficulties of **global and local policy making in a complex world**.
 - ▶ It re-contextualizes knowledge and education as common goods. The report proposes that both **knowledge and education be considered as *common goods***.

Persistence of 'discrimination'

(Ref: Geetha Nambissan, 'Exclusion and Discrimination in Schools : Experiences of Dalit children',)

- ▶ The persistence of 'discrimination' against marginal groups such as minorities, women, tribal communities, migrants, etc. is a problem of all societies.
- ▶ Here I will focus on 'Dalit' children in India with respect to their experiences in schools.
The school as an oppressive not an emancipatory site for some groups in rural India.
 - ▶ **Attitude of teachers:** name calling, menial not status jobs in the school, seating in the back, not asked questions in class, message of social inferiority conveyed.
 - ▶ **Attitude of Fellow students:** no playing together, no sharing of books and notes, discrimination in drinking water, no sharing food and snacks, no invitations to homes.
 - ▶ **Support system:** drop out because of low self esteem, no help with home work, books, financial resources, etc.
 - ▶ **Reproducing low self-esteem:** harassment when walking to school, cultural capital absent.

Disempowerment of Adivasis

(Ref: P. Veerbhadranaika, et al: The Education Question from the Perspective of Adivasis: Conditions, Policies, and structures)

- ▶ The largest **burden of the 'development'** has fallen on tribal communities in India resulting in displacement, loss of traditional livelihood practices, and the imposition of the modern state framework on communities that have alternative cosmologies.
- ▶ The education system:
 - ▶ Results in '**systemic marginalization and invisibilisation** of Adivasi interests account for the failure to provide adequate, relevant and quality education at all levels'.
 - ▶ '... has been deployed in a **mode of assimilation and domination** which only reproduces the range of inequalities and disadvantages'.
 - ▶ Produces a '**neglect of Adivasi knowledge forms**, languages and cultural practices which has been detrimental to the cultural core of Adivasis'.
 - ▶ Is challenged in 'retaining the positive ethos of Adivasi life-worlds **while also enabling them to engage with the larger world**'

School differentiation

(Ref: A.R.Vasavi, 'School Differentiation: Pluralism and Separatism in India's Schooling System?')

- ▶ 9 types of schools in India ranging from government schools especially for the rural poor to International schools for the elite. The government schools are in a pitiable state wrt both infrastructure and resources while the Intl schools offer the IB syllabus.
- ▶ 'Differentiated schools in India act as **filters, separating, segregating, and marking children** with differences'.
- ▶ 'In a differentiated schooling system the possibility of children engaging in a **collective shaping of their society is challenged** and leads to the loss of generating a democratic culture'.
- ▶ 'A highly differentiated schooling system is responsible for the **persistence of inequities** and the widespread and complex problems of denying equality of educational opportunity to all'.
- ▶ 'The children in each of these schools occupy **different and graded positions as citizens.**'
- ▶ 'The state is **abdicating its primary role in fostering education for democracy** and in realizing a democratic society.'

Responding to Challenges

- ▶ GCED a normative framework against global trends.
- ▶ Universals to be campaigned for. Education as a common good.
- ▶ Recognition of plurality. Building and expanding the overlapping consensus
- ▶ New imaginations required to harness technologies such as those of the digital world
- ▶ Produce innovative institutional forms which are inclusive and participatory.
- ▶ Sensibilities to be cultivated towards epistemic plurality.