

**HOT TOPICS FROM HARVARD THINK TANK ON GLOBAL
EDUCATION-AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE****DR. SHAHANA NAZNEEN**

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Abstract

Education is for everyone but everyone is not for education. The field of education must be regarded as a battleground where a teacher is a strategist. If the strategy is strong then half the battle is won. Previously, teachers were revered as masters of knowledge, teachers were the light that showed the path and teachers were apolitical. Cut to the present time, I say a teacher has to be a strategist because our job is not limited to the boundaries of our class. It has now moved from the confines of a classroom into the limitlessness of the human race. The question faced by the teaching community across the world is how to make our students ready to face the battles of the real world where the biggest ghost is Ignorance. It is this ignorance of people, ignorance of need for tolerance, ignorance towards rights of all people and ignorance towards need to treat people with dignity, ignorance regarding abuse of nature. Global education is not a new development, rather global problems are now unique and this requires better solutions. To quote Reimers, the co-chair of Harvard think tank conference held from 17th May to 18th May 2018, no government or agency has the power or the resources to address all of the issues in the world. This is why we must work together. If we don't, it's like "moving the chairs around on the Titanic." The conference focused on what we need to invest in our students and into our classrooms to make them global students.

This paper focuses on what makes a global learner. What defines global student?

Keywords: Global learner, global prospective, Harvard think tank, Indian prospective, global issues, knowledge providers, education

Introduction:

Education is for everyone but everyone is not for education. The field of education must be regarded as a battleground where a teacher is a strategist. If the strategy is strong then half the battle is won. Previously, teachers were revered as masters of knowledge, teachers were the light that showed the path and teachers were apolitical. Cut to the present time, I say a teacher has to be a strategist because our job is not limited to the boundaries of our class. It has now moved from the confines of a classroom into the limitlessness of the human race. The question faced by the teaching community across the world is how to make our students ready to face the battles of the real world where the biggest ghost is Ignorance. It is this ignorance of people, ignorance of need for tolerance, ignorance towards rights of all people and ignorance towards need to treat people with dignity and ignorance regarding abuse of nature. Global education is not a new development, rather global problems are now unique and this requires better solutions. To quote Reimers, the co-chair of Harvard think tank conference held from 17th May to 18th May 2018, no government or agency has the power or the resources to address all of the issues in the world. This is why we must work together. If we don't, it's like "moving the chairs around on the Titanic." The conference focused on what we need to invest in our students and into our classrooms to make them global students.



Definition:

What defines global student?

According to Global Competence Task Force—a group of state education agency leaders, education scholars, and practitioners—under the auspices of the Council of Chief State School Officers EdSteps initiative (CCSSO-EdSteps) and the Asia Society Partnership for Global Learning

“Global competence is the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance”.

According to the Harvard Think tank, a global student should have global competence. You may think competence for what? The answer is, competence for sustained global development. The important point here is ‘sustained global development’. The young today are so vulnerable to anything even remotely against their perception no doubt today we witness highest number of suicide amongst young people. It is we teachers who have to teach the next generation to navigate across all such social evils. A single teacher silently bringing about change is good but not good enough. Therefore we teachers across the globe need to collaborate and devise an approach to peacefully deal with our issues.

What are the aspects of sustained development?

The United Nations Organization has identified seventeen global issues that need to be urgently worked upon and it has made a blue print of goals to be achieved by 2030 for sustained global development. The following are the goals to be achieved

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean water and Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
10. Reduced Inequality
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
12. Responsible Production and Consumption
13. Climate Action
14. Life Below Water
15. Life on Land
16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institution

17. Partnerships for Goals



The UNO logo for Sustained Global Development

Steps for Improvement:

The Harvard Think Tank conference has been devising ways in which the above goals can be achieved to the maximum extend. The conference zeroed it on how teachers can have maximum impact and lead the development process. It recognized two intimidating barriers that teachers face: firstly the capacity and willingness of a teacher and easy availability of quality resources for achieving the results. We now have to find ways to overcome these barriers and reach out to student community. In order to be a global student one has to be a an earnest learner.

Let us discuss how we can make a global student who can work for sustained global development. In order to make global students we have to start early. I propose training learners in four stages: school education level, undergraduate level, university level and society level.

A. School Education Level: The primary education structure should be such that the motto One for all and All for one should become embedded into their systems. This can be achieved by:

1. Decolonize the classroom: A classroom is the alternate for mother's lap. A child's journey from mother's lap into a teacher's hand is close and quick. It is proven that children learn through imitation. A child learns much faster from people around who influence him/her. Classroom interactions form the mindset and a positive mind set at an early stage of development can go a long way in forming a strong bond between people of diverse backgrounds. A teacher ought to keep the classroom free from clutter of prejudice. Intellectually we have to decolonize the thought process by molding the young minds towards acceptance of variety in the society. Therefore it is our primary responsibility to keep the classrooms energized, positive and impartial.



2. **Humanizing Education:** Education should not become a process for one-upmanship rather it should be a source for homogenization. During the formative years the sense of competition is very intense and it is here we can introduce the concept of fair game and sportsmanship thereby taking education beyond competition. In this way children learn to appreciate each other and promote harmony even with competitors. The humanizing approach is critical for the survival of value based education.

3. **Collective Leadership and Collaboration:** As students move from primary education towards higher education they must be ready to understand the power of collective leadership and collaboration. Teachers must create awareness in the students that no person is self sufficient, we all need help and co-operation from each other. Students must be included in active participation towards using resources collectively and avoiding wastage.

4. **Fairness and Dignity of the Individual:** The experience at this level of learning must involve the learners in the process of decision making and critical thinking. How can we achieve this? We should help the global learners foster spirit of innovation. Reimer, in his book *Empowering Students to Improve the World in Sixty Days* says "Sophistication and competency is especially important to address global challenges because the institutional frame work to address them is limited" Global learners must develop the capacity to understand others perspectives too. Therefore young people must be encouraged to treat everyone around with dignity and respect. Respect is not a sweet to be shared when you are in a celebratory mood, rather it is like oxygen-essential for survival of even the meekest and the weakest.

5. **Gender Equality:** Every individual is unique. God made us different and put us together on the same ship. Perhaps this is God's way of showing us that we are all tied up with each others fate. We can survive the harsh storm only if we are united and stop ridiculing and taking undue advantage of those who seem different from us or different from the majority. Here I would like to emphasis that more than equality I would insist on absolute gender safety, especially in our country keeping in view the most inhumane treatment meted out to women and young girls.

To sum up, at school education level the student community must be strongly trained for accepting others perspectives, sharing knowledge and resources, treating people with dignity and healthy competition.

B. The next stage of a student after schooling is +2 and under-graduation. This is a crucial period of growth and development. The teachers at this stage have to bring about the import of following through their interactions and encouragement

1. **Sharing of ideas:** Adolescence is an age where appreciation improves performance ten folds. Therefore group activities must be encouraged in such a way that fosters sharing of ideas and working together on each others' ideas. Students must be encouraged to work upon



ideas that are related to global betterment. For example, finding solution to overcome poverty, once students realize that it is in their power to solve a complex problem impacting everyone, they take their responsibility very seriously and do arrive at conclusive solutions. Here as a teacher our job is to show faith in the young minds and approve of their ideas.

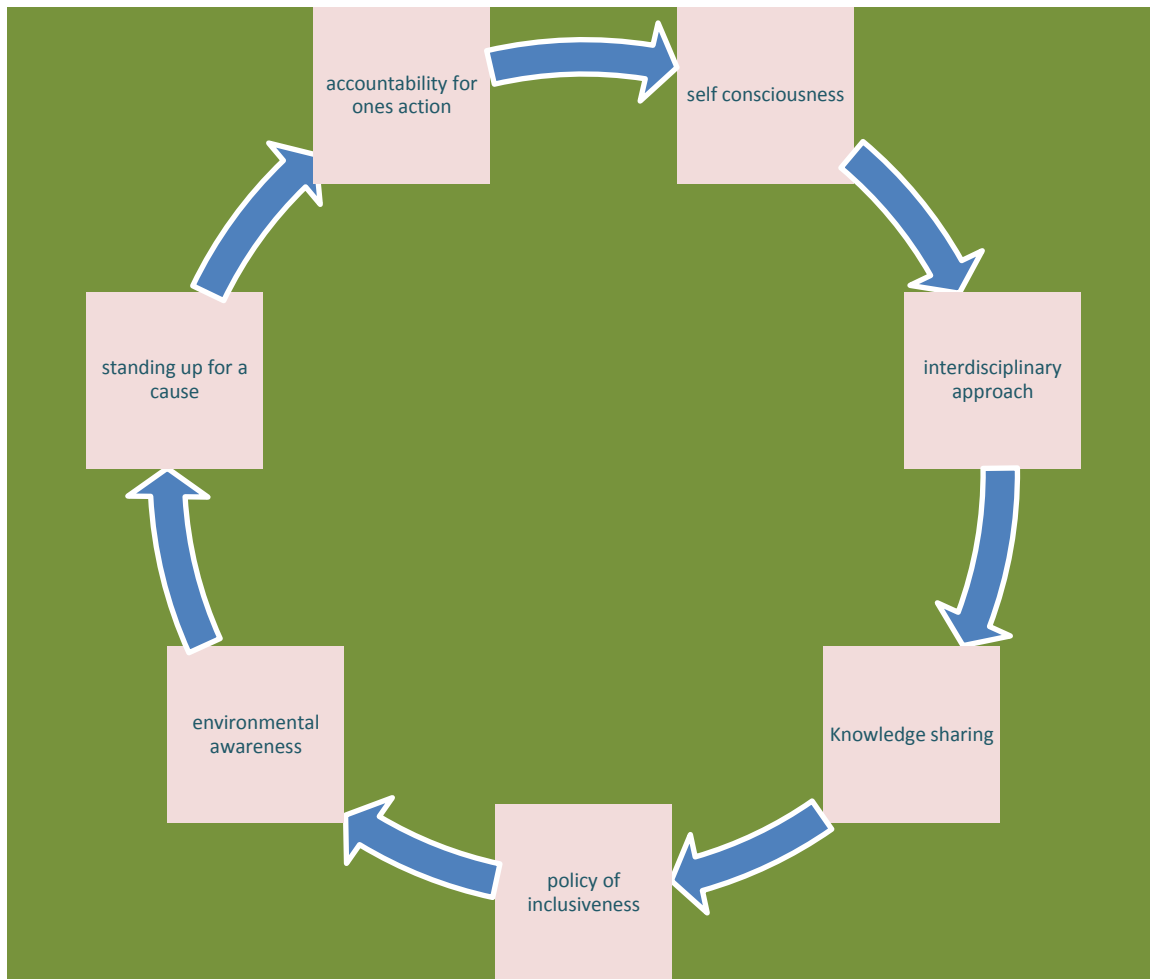
2. Investigative nature and scientific temperament: Why? and How? Global students ought to be curious about everything around them. Teachers should encourage students to investigate and analyze all process around them. Scientific temperament should not be treated as outcome of an eccentric mind on the contrary it must be encouraged even in the most mundane tasks of the day.

3. Integrity and Commitment: Students mostly are unable to understand the difference between honesty and integrity. While a majority of them may profess honesty and practice it too, integrity is not understood. It is for the teachers to show them the difference between honesty and integrity and explain how honesty without integrity is lame. Global learners must not just show integrity by themselves but also make people around them practice integrity. Once a young person in a family understands develops integrity of character he/she will become an agent of change in their own homes and neighborhood. This will help in restructuring our society on the right principles.

4. Value Global History and Global Contribution towards Human Improvement: Teachers must expose students to world history and its impact on the immediate local culture. All positive global influences in fields such as art, culture, medicine, science, literature, architecture, education, language, cuisine, must be highlighted through talks, media, movies, art, music, literature, visit to museums and documentary evidence. Now, history is a delicate subject and by wrongful or immature projection we will inadvertently be creating a wider schism. Therefore teachers need to be of very high ideals to shape global student

5. Appreciation and participation in world art and literature: Very often appreciation for art and literature is confined to leisure times but this is a harmful process. By limiting appreciation for arts in this way we make students believe that art and literature can be pursued only by those who can afford leisure. Global students must be exposed to world art and literature at young age when appreciation for art comes naturally. As we know, 'Art imitates life' and exposure to great ideals may influence life principles of the young. Therefore art and literature are to be actively encouraged.

C. University Level: Once a student reaches university he/she must have become a global student in action. At this level, the learners should practice higher goals. An advanced learner must now be able to analyze, assimilate, understand and respond to global issues such as education, poverty, hunger, discrimination, exploitation, depletion of resources etc. This should be a recurring process to bring about change. The expected qualities of a global student at an advanced level are represented below in a cycle.



1. **Accountability for ones Action:** Global students come from different cultural and historical background but the future binds all together. No matter where we come from because we all share the same future. Every action of ours has a direct consequence on mankind. Hence the global learners must have realization of accountability.
2. **Self Consciousness:** Educators at higher level must cater not just to the skills set but towards the improvement of soul too. A self conscious global student would reconsider every step in relation to its impact on the fellow creatures. Therefore educators here perform the role of a philosopher who provides food for the soul by challenging and channelizing their inner voice.
3. **Interdisciplinary Approach:** At higher level education must be multi faceted and interdisciplinary. Every learner must get an opportunity to look at an issue in multiple ways. Science, commerce, management, sociology, literature, mathematics, technology and politics every field is essential for the improvement of human life. Therefore students in all these fields must collaborate and come up with real time solutions for core issues of sustainability.
4. **Knowledge sharing:** As different fields collaborate the resulting knowledge is bound to be huge and exhaustive. This knowledge must be shared and put to good use.
5. **Policy of Inclusiveness:** A self conscious and accountable person is bound to feel for the good of everyone and will therefore practice policy of inclusivity. A global learner thus



should now display sensitivity towards all life that inhabits earth. This list includes gender equality and safety and respect towards wildlife.

6. Environmental Awareness: All knowledge sharing would result in exposure to serious issues of sustainability. Global students should take measures to arrest the pressing problems that crowd the Earth such as global warming, polluting of oceans and seas, unscientific farming, overexploitation of resources, endangered wildlife, plastic menace, rising sea levels and more. As a global student is interdisciplinary and accountable he/she would now become more responsible users of the nature. It is already believed that what resources we are using now are on loan from the future generations. Therefore global students must not devise ways through their collective leadership and knowledge.

7. Standing up for a Cause: As a learner who is self aware, believes in inclusivity and environmentally conscious a global learner must display courage to stand up for any cause that is close to his/her heart. No issue is big or small. Every issue is equally pressing, whether it is standing up against sick policies or protecting life form. This sense of correcting every wrong is a true measure of a global student.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm my introductory point that a teacher is no longer apolitical and reverend but a good strategist and executioner of ideas. It is a teacher at every level of education who can reach maximum number of young minds and only a teacher can mould. It was a teacher who made Ashoka, a teacher who made Alexander and a teacher who made Plato and Aristotle. Therefore let us join hands and consciously design our classes in such a way that there is always a trickle of empathy with education that reach our students continually. After all, we have to begin somewhere.

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