

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN PAKISTAN:

Tehmina Shabih^{*1}, Salman Ashiq², Asad Shabih³, Areeba Shabih⁴

^{*1}M. Phil Scholar, Institute of Business Management, Pakistan

²Senior Lecturer, Institute of Business Management, Pakistan

³Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT), Pakistan

⁴Undergraduate, United Medical & Dental College, Pakistan

¹tehminashabih@gmail.com, ²salman.ashiq@iobm.edu.pk, ³asdshabih@gmail.com,
⁴areebashabih@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: *

Tehmina Shabih

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19328607>

Received	Accepted	Published
28 January 2026	11 March 2026	30 March 2026

ABSTRACT

This thematic research analyses the embedding of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) within Sustainable Development (SD) in Pakistan during 2020–2025. A systematic literature review was conducted through the lens of PRISMA. The research reviewed 30 peer-reviewed studies related to Pakistan. These studies focused on instructor pedagogies linking GCE with sustainability. They examined their effect in imparting knowledge, values, and behaviors to students. They also explored challenges faced by teachers while implementing this learning. The analysis considered whether private schools implement 21st century teaching strategies. It also examined whether classrooms remain characterized by conventional examination-oriented teaching practices. The study further explored whether student-centered activities enhance empathy, cultural sensitivity, and environmental awareness. The results reveal that participatory strategies result in successful learning outcomes. However, their application is uneven across educational settings. The findings show that insufficient teacher training remains a major challenge. Inflexible curriculum and cultural sensitivities also hinder successful incorporation of GCE and SD. To sum up, the research highlights the need for enhanced teacher support. It also emphasizes reflective and student-centered learning practices to improve GCE and sustainable development in Pakistan.

Keywords: Global Citizenship Education, Sustainable Development, SDG 4.7, Teaching Practices, Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) focuses on fostering fundamental human values such as equality, equity, fairness, justice, inclusion, and acceptance among learners worldwide (Bosio, 2024; Shabalala, 2025; Auh & Kim, 2025). In an increasingly interconnected global context, these values are vital for developing socially responsible and empathetic individuals who are capable of

contributing positively to a peaceful and sustainable world (Ngwacho, 2024). As the world faces shared challenges such as climate change, poverty, conflict, and inequality, GCE has emerged as a guiding educational framework of the 21st century, equipping learners with the awareness and skills to respond thoughtfully to global issues while maintaining sensitivity to local

contexts (Sexsmith, & Kiely, 2023; Nisar & Din, 2025). As expressed by (Sain, 2023), the need for such an educational approach is increasingly evident in Pakistan, where the country's diverse social, cultural, and linguistic landscape presents both opportunities and challenges in fostering unity, tolerance, and respect for diversity (Dharma et al., 2025; Mariyono et al., 2025). However, traditional education systems in Pakistan have largely focused on academic achievement and rote memorization (Lateef et al., 2024; Saeed, 2025), often leaving limited space for critical thinking, civic awareness, or intercultural understanding. In this context, integrating GCE into the curriculum provides an opportunity to bridge these gaps by inspiring students to look beyond national boundaries, recognize the connections that bind the global community, and relate their own local experiences to the wider world (Hunduma & Mekuria, 2024).

As the world confronts common challenges such as climate change, poverty, conflict, and social inequality, GCE has gained recognition as a key educational framework of the twenty-first century. It aims to equip learners with the knowledge, values, and skills needed to engage critically with global issues while remaining responsive to their local realities (Sexsmith & Kiely, 2023). The relevance of this approach is particularly pronounced in Pakistan, where a rich diversity of social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds offers both opportunities and complexities in promoting social cohesion, tolerance, and respect for difference (Sain, 2023). Despite this need, Pakistan's traditional education system has largely emphasized academic performance and memorization-based learning, often providing limited opportunities for developing critical thinking, civic responsibility, and intercultural awareness (Lateef et al., 2024). Within this context, the inclusion of GCE in the curriculum presents a valuable pathway to address these shortcomings by encouraging learners to think beyond national boundaries, understand global interdependence, and connect their local experiences with broader global perspectives (Hunduma & Mekuria, 2024).

In the aftermath of the Second World War, widespread destruction across the globe created an urgent need for a secure environment and a shift toward reconstructionist thinking in education and society (Adler, 1976; Idrees & Khan, 2024). A significant step toward promoting peace and global security was the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, followed by the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Both initiatives underscored the importance of peace, international cooperation, and shared human values. As the twentieth century progressed, the growing emphasis on development, education, and peace further reinforced the need to educate learners about global interconnectedness, social justice, equity, inclusion, and persistent inequalities (Auh & Kim, 2025).

In recent years, GCE has been increasingly associated with the broader agenda of SD, particularly through the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4.7, which emphasizes education that promotes global citizenship and sustainable ways of living (Bushra et al., 2024; Witenstein et al., 2025). This alignment underscores the shared objective of developing learners who are not only knowledgeable about pressing global issues, such as climate change, social inequality, and cultural and digital divides, but who are also encouraged to make informed, responsible decisions while considering the potential social and environmental consequences of their actions (Hunduma & Mekuria, 2024; Jamil, 2021).

Rationale for The Study

In Pakistan, the education system continues to predominantly emphasize conventional practices such as rote learning, reliance on standardized examinations, and a narrow focus on textbook material (Hassan et al., 2025). This persistent framework limits students' ability to develop essential skills like critical analysis, creativity, and an understanding of global interdependence. Consequently, learners often find themselves ill-equipped to face the challenges of a rapidly globalizing world that demands awareness, empathy, and social responsibility (Abbas et al.,

2025; Hamid, S. (2025). Therefore, conducting a systematic review of research studies from 2020 to 2025 is crucial to evaluate how GCE has been incorporated within the curriculum. This review aims to identify gaps and successes, providing valuable insights to policymakers and educators committed to fostering a more inclusive and forward-looking educational environment aligned with the principles of global citizenship. The reason of reviewing the past five years' (2020–2025) literature regarding GCE is particularly as important as the topic itself. (Wells et al, 2023) has argued that this period has witnessed the drastic global changes shaped by events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, frequent and extreme climate changes like earthquakes and urban flooding, and rapid technological advancements such as Artificial Intelligence tools like Chat GPT. These events have pushed educators and policymakers to rethink the ongoing pedagogical practices, curricular frameworks, education policies and the role of education in building global competence and responsibility (Bushra et al, 2024).

Objective

This review aimed to analyze how GCE and SD have been integrated into educational practices over the past five years. It examined the instructional approaches adopted by schools and teachers and considers how these practices shape students' knowledge, values, and everyday behaviors related to sustainability and global responsibility. In addition, the review explored the practical conditions influencing implementation, including the opportunities that facilitate GCE and the challenges that may hinder its effective adoption.

Research Questions

1. What teaching approaches have been employed to integrate GCE with SD in educational settings between 2020 and 2025?
2. How do these instructional approaches affect students' knowledge, values, and behaviors concerning sustainability and global responsibility?

3. What opportunities and challenges do teachers face when implementing GCE for sustainability in educational settings?

Significance of The Study

By synthesizing recent empirical studies and classroom-based experiences, this review aimed to provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers to strengthen the role of GCE as a means of nurturing informed, responsible, and compassionate global citizens capable of contributing to a more sustainable future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

GCE has attracted growing scholarly and policy attention in recent years as societies worldwide grapple with increasing cultural diversity, rapid globalization, and shared environmental concerns (Assefa, 2024). The integration of GCE with SD reflects a broader educational shift toward equipping learners to engage critically with issues such as environmental sustainability, social inequality, peacebuilding, and global interconnectedness (Bushra et al., 2024). Analyses of Pakistan's social development curriculum for sustainable development indicate that policy frameworks, particularly the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.7, explicitly emphasize education that fosters global citizenship and sustainable lifestyles, thereby positioning educational institutions as central spaces for developing socially responsible and environmentally aware individuals (Idrees & Khan, 2024; Lateef et al., 2024). Between 2020 and 2025, educators and researchers have examined a range of pedagogical and curricular strategies aimed at connecting GCE with sustainability, revealing both effective practices and persistent implementation challenges. This literature review brings together these recent insights to examine how educational approaches influence student learning and inform teacher practices within the evolving global sustainability agenda.

Teaching approaches employed to integrate Global Citizenship Education (GCE) with Sustainable Development (SD) in educational settings between 2020 and 2025.

Recent studies highlight that student-centered and participatory teaching methods are central to effectively integrating GCE with SD (Hong, 2023; Abbas et al., 2025). Strategies such as project-based learning, community involvement, experiential activities, and inquiry-driven instruction empower students to link classroom concepts with real-world sustainability challenges (Shabalala, 2025). These approaches encourage learners to deeply investigate global issues, collaborate with peers, and thoughtfully consider the impact of their decisions and actions.

Research across diverse educational contexts indicates that when students are prompted to engage with multiple perspectives rather than simply memorize fixed content, they develop stronger critical thinking skills and enhanced moral reasoning (Aman et al., 2024; Hanif, 2025). Educators who structure lessons around case studies on pressing global concerns, such as climate change, water scarcity, food insecurity, or refugee crises, enable students to understand how local issues are intertwined with broader global patterns. According to (Assefa, 2024), this builds awareness of global interdependence and the shared responsibility of communities around the world.

By the late 20th Century, terms such as 'global education' and 'world citizenship' emerged and started taking recognition on the world forum. With UNESCO initiating efforts to present and promote a new and improved educational structure, along with academic and policy discussions on international understanding, human rights, and peace, the world began its journey toward producing global citizens (Hartman & Kiely, 2023). According to the UN, an educational organization is not only a vehicle for the conduction and dissemination of knowledge, but it is also a sacred place and a safe haven where children learn about the society in which they are growing up, how they might engage productively, how they can fight for change when change is warranted, and how to know when it is

warranted (Westheimer, 2020). In the early 21st Century, GCE became increasingly linked with Education for Sustainable Development in order to make the world more livable as it ever have been (Yanniris, 2021). Aligning with global responsibility with environmental and social concerns, the policy makers took a great initiative. A significant milestone was achieved in 2015 when the United Nations formally acknowledged GCE through its inclusion in SDG 4.7. This recognition established GCE as a central educational priority aimed at developing responsible, informed, and socially responsive citizens capable of navigating an increasingly interconnected world (Saleem et al., 2022).

In Pakistan, efforts are made to adopt such pedagogical models (Idrees & Khan, 2024). They are emerging, but gradually. Classrooms often remain rooted in teacher-centered instruction, yet research suggests that when students are given meaningful opportunities to discuss real-world issues, they demonstrate curiosity, empathy, and willingness to consider alternative viewpoints (Munir & Zaidi, 2023). Thus, integrating GCE in the curriculum with sustainability requires pedagogical shifts that value dialogue, inquiry, and reflection (Waghid, 2023).

Instructional approaches that affect students' knowledge, values, and behaviors concerning sustainability and global responsibility.

Waghid (2023) also advocates those educational approaches that link GCE and sustainability has shown influence on students in three major areas: knowledge, values, and behavior. Students develop more informed understandings of global challenges when learning experiences emphasize interconnected systems, root causes, and ethical implications (Bourn, 2021). According to (Khan, 2024), exposure to collaborative learning environments also strengthens values such as empathy, fairness, and respect for diversity. These qualities are essential for nurturing global responsibility in students.

Behavioral outcomes, although are more difficult to be measured, they can be observed in students' willingness to engage in sustainable practices such as reducing waste, conserving resources,

supporting ethical consumption, or participating in community initiatives (Shar, 2024). However, research also indicates that lasting behavioral change is more likely when students experience ongoing, repeated engagement, not one-time lessons (Lateef et al., 2024).

In the Pakistani context, students often demonstrate strong values aligned with social responsibility when provided structured opportunities to participate in service learning or environmental awareness activities. This suggests that value formation is already culturally grounded, and schools can build on this foundation to support sustainable learning (Bano, & Jumani, 2024).

Opportunities and challenges teachers face when implementing Global Citizenship Education (GCE) for sustainability in educational settings.

Teachers play a crucial role in the effective implementation of GCE, yet they frequently encounter challenges such as curriculum constraints, insufficient training, limited resources, and sociocultural sensitivities (Khalid et al., 2022). While many educators are eager to integrate global citizenship themes into their teaching, they often feel unsure about how to translate these broad ideas into practical and engaging classroom activities.

In Pakistan, systemic issues like exam-focused education, overloaded curricula, and scarce professional development opportunities further limit the effective adoption of GCE (Lateef et al., 2024). Additionally, some teachers express apprehension about addressing sensitive social or political topics within the classroom. Nonetheless, studies indicate that when teachers receive targeted, need-based training and work within supportive school environments that foster reflective practice, their confidence grows, enabling them to facilitate open dialogue, encourage critical thinking, and promote student empowerment (Hussain et al., 2025).

Summary

The literature indicates that successfully integrating GCE with SD, necessitates deliberate pedagogical planning, ample opportunities for

student participation, and ongoing support for teachers across various subject areas, including languages (Hussain et al., 2025). Although promising practices have emerged both globally and within Pakistan, the success of GCE largely depends on fostering learning environments that encourage inquiry, dialogue, and practical application, thereby promoting lifelong learning (Waghid, 2023).

Synthesis and Gaps in the Literature

The reviewed literature demonstrates a growing global commitment to integrating GCE with SD in educational contexts, particularly following the focus on SDG 4.7. Across diverse settings, researchers emphasize that student-centered and experiential teaching methods are among the most effective in embedding GCE and sustainability principles within classrooms. Strategies such as project-based learning, community engagement, collaborative inquiry, and reflective discussions enable students to relate global issues to their personal lives and responsibilities. These approaches not only deepen students' understanding of worldwide challenges, but also foster empathy, critical thinking, and a motivation to contribute constructively to society.

However, scholars such as (Waghid, 2023) and (Idrees and Khan, 2024) highlight that the success of these initiatives largely hinges on teachers. Educators' beliefs, confidence, training, and the institutional support they receive play crucial roles in shaping how GCE is delivered and how sustainability topics are integrated into practice. When teachers benefit from professional development and flexible curricula, they are more inclined to use participatory, discussion-oriented, and inclusive pedagogies. Conversely, in environments where teachers face pressure to strictly cover the syllabus or fear repercussions for addressing sensitive social or global issues, GCE often remains superficial rather than transformative.

Specifically, in Pakistan, the literature identifies a disconnect between educational aspirations and classroom realities. Although national policies emphasize civic responsibility, cultural understanding, and moral growth, classroom

instruction is frequently dominated by rote memorization and exam-focused teaching. Consequently, students may have limited opportunities to critically explore global issues, challenge prevailing assumptions, or engage with diverse perspectives. Nevertheless, research indicates that Pakistani students respond positively when provided with chances to participate in dialogue, community service, or collaborative problem-solving, suggesting a strong inherent readiness for learning experiences grounded in GCE.

Despite progress in research over the last five years, several gaps remain:

Limited empirical evidence on long-term impact

While numerous studies explore shifts in student attitudes, fewer investigate whether these changes translate into long-term, sustained behavioral actions.

Underrepresentation of non-Western contexts

The majority of existing research originates from Europe, North America, and East Asia. Although studies from Pakistan and other Global South regions are beginning to emerge, they remain limited, which makes it challenging to fully grasp how cultural, political, and economic factors shape the implementation of GCE.

Need for teacher training research

While many studies highlight the challenges teachers face, fewer offer concrete models or frameworks for professional development that schools can implement.

Curriculum integration remains unclear

Although GCE is acknowledged in policy documents, there remains a lack of clear guidance on how to effectively integrate it into subjects such as science, language, social studies, or religious education.

These gaps show that while the importance of GCE for sustainable development is widely acknowledged, the practical tools and structural support required to make it effective are still evolving. Therefore, there is a need for more context-sensitive, practice-oriented research,

especially within Pakistan, it focused on how teachers can be supported, how curriculum can be adapted, and how sustainability learning can be sustained beyond the classroom.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Approach

This study aims to systematically examine reviewed studies conducted from 2020 to 2025, to understand how GCE has been integrated and practiced within Pakistan's education system. The goal is to gather and analyze existing findings to reveal both achievements and shortcomings in this area. By doing so, the study intends to offer well-founded insights that can assist educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders in improving educational strategies to better equip students with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for responsible and informed participation in a globally connected society. This study is completely based on a systematic literature review design. A descriptive and interpretive approach is used to analyze recent educational trends. For this purpose, a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) based on the principles of PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for

Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) is used and adapted for qualitative educational research (Parums, 2021)

Conducting a thorough literature search is fundamental to systematic reviews, yet many studies often lack clear explanations of their search procedures. Existing guidelines for reporting literature searches vary significantly, and frequently fall short of providing researchers with practical advice on how to transparently detail their search strategies (Rethlefsen et al., 2021). To address this challenge, the PRISMA Statement and its subsequent extensions were developed as evidence-based recommendations designed to help authors present their reviews comprehensively and transparently. PRISMA acts as a structured framework, guiding researchers on how to articulate their methods, findings, and planned protocols in a clear and consistent manner (Sarkis-Onofre et al., 2021). Over time, the scope of PRISMA has broadened to accommodate various forms of knowledge

synthesis—including systematic reviews, scoping reviews, and review protocols—ensuring meticulous and transparent reporting throughout the research process (Islam et al., 2025).

This methodology aligns well with the current study, which involves a systematic search of academic databases, the application of explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the selection of studies that fit these parameters for detailed analysis. Unlike statistical meta-analyses, this research synthesizes qualitative textual findings, emphasizing teaching practices, student learning experiences, and the challenges educators encounter in relation to GCE and SD. Rather than generating new data, this approach focuses on collating and interpreting existing studies from 2020 to 2025, particularly within the Pakistani context, to explore how GCE has been integrated

with SD in educational settings. Employing a systematic review enables a comprehensive and structured investigation of evolving trends in pedagogy, learner outcomes, and educator perspectives across various environments, offering a credible and current understanding of both global and local educational dynamics (Valverde-Berrococo et al., 2020).

Data Sources and Search Strategy

To identify pertinent literature, a thorough search was carried out across several reputable academic databases. These databases were chosen for their extensive collections of peer-reviewed and scholarly articles related to education, curriculum studies, sustainability education, and teacher professional development.

Table 1

Number of Articles by Database

Database	Number of Articles
Google Scholar	15
ERIC (Education Resources Information Center)	2
ResearchGate	9
SpringerLink	3
ScienceDirect	1

To search the research papers and related studies, following terms were used:

Key themes explored in this study include GCE in Pakistan, SD within the Pakistani context, pedagogical approaches to GCE and their impact locally, the integration of GCE and sustainability in the Pakistani curriculum, students' awareness of sustainability issues, and the challenges faced by

Pakistani teachers in implementing GCE in their teachings and classrooms.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The following criteria was selected to ensure the academic rigor and relevance. The studies were included based on:

Table 2
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Studies published between 2020–2025	Studies published before 2020
Peer-reviewed journal articles, academic theses, or official educational reports on the authentic search engines	Blogs, opinion pieces, or non-academic sources
Research conducted in educational settings	Research unrelated to teaching or learning
Focused on teaching practices, student outcomes, or teacher experiences related to GCE and SD	Studies discussing GCE only in theory, without educational context and experiences

Sample Size

This research employs a purposive sampling technique. For this research, about 100 reviewed articles from credible journals were reviewed and after applying the specified inclusion criteria, 30 studies were deliberately selected for in-depth analysis. The sample focuses exclusively on research conducted in Pakistan in the educational setting, ensuring the findings are relevant to the local educational context while also considering broader international perspectives.

Data Analysis

Deductive thematic analysis is a qualitative method that involves analyzing data using a predefined structure derived from research questions or existing concepts (Proudfoot, 2023). Rather than allowing themes to emerge freely from the data, this approach begins with clear analytical categories that guide the review and interpretation process. It is especially appropriate for systematic literature reviews, where the purpose is to examine how existing studies address specific research aims (Ayre, & McCaffery, 2022).

In this research, deductive thematic analysis was used to review and synthesize 30 selected studies on GCE and SD, in the context of Pakistan. The analysis was guided by the study's three research questions, which provided the main thematic framework. These themes focused on: the teaching approaches used to integrate GCE and SD, the impact of these approaches on students'

knowledge, values, and behaviors, and the opportunities and challenges teachers face when implementing GCE for sustainability.

Each selected article was examined carefully, and relevant findings were identified in relation to these predefined themes. Information from the studies was organized according to how it addressed the research questions. As the analysis progressed, recurring ideas and patterns within each theme were noted, leading to the development of more specific sub-themes. These included issues such, as the use of student-centered teaching methods, experiential-learning activities, curriculum pressure, assessment-driven instruction, result-oriented pedagogy and the availability of teacher training and institutional support.

By following this well-structured and question-driven approach, the analysis allowed for meaningful comparison across the selected studies while keeping a clear focus on the research objectives. The use of deductive thematic analysis helped ensure; consistency and clarity in synthesizing the literature, enabling the study to identify common practices, highlight challenges, and point out gaps in the implementation of GCE and SD within Pakistan's educational settings.

FINDINGS

Once the final group of studies was identified, the analysis focused on understanding how each study addressed GCE and SD within the Pakistani

context. The articles were reviewed carefully, with attention given not only to their conclusions but also to how the authors described classroom practices, student responses, and implementation challenges in Pakistani classrooms. This close reading helped ensure that the findings were grounded in the actual evidence, presented in the literature rather than treated as isolated summaries.

To organize the findings meaningfully, information from each study was examined in relation to the research questions. Relevant points were noted and compared across studies to see where ideas overlapped or differed. When similar issues appeared repeatedly, such as the use of interactive teaching strategies, students' growing awareness of local or global, social and environmental issues, or teachers' concerns about curriculum or exam pressure, these were grouped together. With time, these groupings became more clearly defined and began to form broader thematic categories.

Through this comparative process, three main themes were identified. The first theme relates to the approaches used to teach GCE and SD, highlighting a clear divide between traditional, exam-focused instruction and more participatory

methods. The second theme focuses on the effects on students, particularly how engagement in discussions, projects, and real-life examples influenced their understanding, attitudes, and sense of responsibility. The third theme addresses teachers' experiences, bringing attention to both opportunities for innovation and practical challenges such as limited training, lack of resources, and time constraints.

These themes emerged gradually through repeated review and reflection rather than through a single step or rigid procedure. Organizing the findings around these themes made it possible to present a coherent picture of current practices and gaps in GCE and SD implementation in Pakistan, while staying closely connected to the evidence reported in the reviewed studies.

To identify the trends in the methodologies of the selected studies, the population and sample characteristics of the reviewed articles were examined. Table 3 below provides a comparative analysis of the population, sample size, and sampling methods employed in the six studies. This analysis helps to identify the most prominent research designs and participant profiles in the studies of citizenship and environmental education in Pakistan.

Table 3

Consolidated Distribution of Population and Sample Characteristics Across Selected Studies

Category of Population	Number of Studies	Sample Size Pattern	Research Orientation
Teachers (school level)	8 studies	Small samples (e.g., 16 teachers; case-based; unspecified small groups)	Qualitative / Case study
University Faculty	3 study	25 faculty members	Purposive sampling
School Leaders	3 study	315 out of 432 (73% response rate)	Census sampling
Schools (Institution-level)	1 study	360 schools; 1,080 teachers; administrators	10 Mixed-methods (large-scale)
Students & Teachers (Combined)	5 studies	Not clearly specified	Survey / Qualitative
Policy Documents / Curriculum Frameworks	3 studies	Document-based (no human sample)	Document analysis
Education Sector Stakeholders	2 studies	Not specified	Qualitative / Mixed
Islamic / Multicultural Contexts	2 studies	Conceptual or literature-based	Theoretical

Category of Population	Number of Studies	Sample Size Pattern	Research Orientation
Purely Conceptual Theoretical Studies	/ 3 studies	No human participants	Conceptual analysis

Teaching Approaches Used to Integrate GCE and SD in Pakistan

The reviewed studies indicate that GCE remains in its early stages in Pakistan, with its integration heavily influenced by individual teachers' motivation, the prevailing school culture, and the flexibility of the curriculum. While policy documents emphasize global awareness and civic responsibility, classroom practices frequently continue to rely on traditional teaching methods (Hussain et al., 2025).

Most classrooms in Pakistan continue to rely on lecture-based instruction and textbook memorization, leaving limited space for digital learning, dialogic learning or real-world inquiry (Jamil, 2021). However, some schools, especially private and urban institutions are gradually introducing more student-centered approaches, including:

Table 4
Teaching Approaches

Teaching Approach	How it is Used	Source
Discussion-based learning	Used to explore cultural respect, empathy, and social issues	(Munir & Zaidi, 2023)
Teaching Approach	How it is Used	Source
Community or environment-focused projects	Students participate in cleanliness drives, plantation campaigns, water conservation awareness	(Bano, & Jumani, 2024; Dastgir et al., 2024).
Collaborative activities	Students work in groups to explore causes of social or environmental challenges	(Khan, 2024)

However, these approaches are not yet widely adopted and are primarily found in schools where teachers have greater autonomy or access to professional training.

Influence on Students' Knowledge, Values, and Behaviors in Pakistan

When students are given opportunities to participate in interactive and reflective activities, they tend to show positive shifts in attitudes and awareness (Jamil et al., 2024). Research also indicates that students develop greater empathy and respect for diversity when allowed to engage in classroom discussions on cultural differences (Munir & Zaidi, 2023). It also explains that

participation in community-based environmental activities increases awareness of sustainability and personal responsibility (Bano, & Jumani, 2024). It also indicates that exposure to real-world problems help students understand global-local interconnectedness, such as how climate change affects both Pakistan and the world (Khan, 2024; Dastgir et al., 2024).

However, such positive developments are more prevalent in schools that encourage student

expression and reflection. In contrast, many public schools, where instruction remains heavily exam-oriented, tend to shape student values through memorization rather than fostering critical thinking.

In short, students in Pakistan show readiness and openness to global citizenship values, but

meaningful engagement depends heavily on teaching strategies (Barry et al., 2024).

Challenges and Opportunities for Teachers in Pakistan

Teachers in Pakistan recognize the importance of GCE, but they face several constraints when trying to implement and integrate it:

Table 5
Challenges and Opportunities

Challenge	Explanation	Source
Exam-driven culture	teaching Teachers feel pressure to "complete the syllabus," leaving little time for discussion or critical reflection	(Khalid et al., 2022)
Lack of training	professional Most teacher training programs do not include GCE or sustainability-focused pedagogy	(Jamil, 2021)
Fear of sensitive topics	addressing Teachers may avoid discussions on identity, global politics, or inequality due to cultural sensitivity	(Munir & Zaidi, 2023)

Despite these barriers, there are also strong opportunities like teachers who receive even small-scale training workshops reported increased confidence in implementing GCE themes according to (Khan, 2024; Kosar, 2024). School-community partnerships, like environmental clubs or volunteer activities, help make GCE more

practical and meaningful (Abbas et al., 2025). Younger teachers tend to be more open to integrate GCE into their teaching and classrooms especially those who are already exposed to digital learning and global awareness platforms (Kosar, 2024).

Table 6
Summary of Findings

Key Focus	Finding Summary
Teaching Practices	GCE integration is emerging; mostly seen in private/urban schools; limited in public schools due to exam culture.
Student Impact	Students show increased empathy, awareness, and responsibility when engaged in discussion and project-based work.
Teacher Challenges	Lack of training, overloaded curriculum, and sensitivity around global issues remain major obstacles.

DISCUSSION

As countries strive to meet the targets of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 (SDG 4.7), education systems are expected to equip their learners with the knowledge, soft skills, values, and attitudes needed to promote sustainable development, human rights, global citizenship, and a culture of peace (Holst et al., 2024). For Pakistan, where environmental vulnerability, social inequality, gender inequality and civic challenges continue to intensify, achieving SDG 4.7 is not a distant aspiration but an immediate educational responsibility.

The findings of this study indicate that although the principles of GCE and SD are recognized at policy and curriculum levels, their translation into everyday classroom practice remains limited and inconsistent. This disconnect between the goals outlined in SDG 4.7 and the realities of teaching and learning has important consequences. When GCE and SD are addressed only superficially, students are less likely to develop critical awareness, ethical responsibility, or the capacity to engage constructively with complex local and global issues.

This discussion situates the study's findings within the broader SDG 4.7 framework, examining how teaching approaches, student learning experiences, and teachers' professional challenges influence the extent to which GCE and SD are meaningfully integrated into Pakistan's education system. In doing so, it highlights the urgent need for practical, context-sensitive strategies that can move SDG 4.7 from policy commitments to real classroom experiences.

The findings of this review indicate that GCE is increasingly acknowledged as important in Pakistan, yet its implementation remains inconsistent and largely influenced by the specific school context and teacher capacity. The literature highlights a growing recognition among educators that Pakistani youth require skills such as empathy, cultural awareness, critical thinking, and a sense of responsibility toward the environment (Jamil et al., 2024). These competencies align not only with global sustainable development goals but also address Pakistan's unique social challenges,

including environmental risks, cultural diversity, and social inequality.

However, the review also reveals that teaching in Pakistan continues to be dominated by traditional, lecture-based methods, particularly in public schools with exam-focused curricula (Jamil, 2021). This approach restricts students' opportunities to express opinions, challenge assumptions, or relate classroom learning to real-life community issues. Consequently, although GCE concepts may be present in textbooks or policy documents, students' actual experiences often lack meaningful engagement with global awareness and sustainability (Waqar, 2025).

In contrast, schools that foster participatory learning environments through group work, community projects, thematic discussions, and environmental initiatives, report noticeable improvements in students' values, including empathy, cooperation, and responsibility. This underscores that the success of GCE largely depends on the methods of instruction rather than merely its inclusion in the curriculum (Munir & Zaidi, 2023).

A major factor influencing implementation is the teacher's role. Teachers who feel prepared and supported are more willing to engage students in open dialogue and experiential learning (Kosar, 2024). However, the findings show that most teacher training programs in Pakistan do not include GCE or sustainability-related pedagogy, leaving them to rely on personal knowledge or interest. Additionally, cultural and political sensitivities make some topics such as global inequality, gender divide, and cultural acceptance difficult for teachers to introduce, without risking criticism or misunderstanding from the stakeholders (Khan, 2024; Mukhtar, 2025).

Therefore, the challenge in Pakistan is not a lack of recognition of the importance of GCE, but rather a lack of systemic support which is required from the stakeholders to help teachers integrate these concepts meaningfully (Waqar, 2025).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This review concludes that integrating GCE with SD in Pakistan has strong potential to shape

informed, empathetic, and responsible citizens (Hussain et al., 2025). It establishes the fact that students respond positively when given opportunities to think critically, act collaboratively, and reflect positively on real-world problems. However, the implementation of GCE in Pakistan remains limited due to traditional teaching practices, lack of teacher training, overloaded curriculum, and concerns around

addressing sensitive topics due to political bias (Khan, 2024).

According to (Jamil, 2021), or GCE to be meaningful and sustainable in Pakistan, schools and education systems must shift from rote memorization toward participatory and reflective learning, while also equipping teachers with the knowledge, confidence, and support they require to guide and facilitate students through global and local issues (Dastgir et al., 2024).

Table 7
Recommendations

Level	Recommended Action	Rationale
Curriculum Level	Integrate GCE themes directly into subjects such as Social Studies, English, Urdu, Islamic Studies, Environmental Studies, and Global Perspective.	Makes GCE part of everyday learning rather than an add-on.
Teacher Training	Provide professional development workshops for teaching staff focused on dialogue-based teaching, project-based learning, and open classroom to apply GCE into their discussions on global issues.	Teachers need confidence, need based training and practical tools to apply GCE into their classrooms.
School Environment	Encourage student clubs and community initiatives (environment clubs, debate clubs and society, recycling campaigns, resource management campaign).	These experiences build real-life experiences and civic responsibility.
Policy Level	Reduce rote learning and exam pressure and allow flexible learning activities within the curriculum.	Enable time for reflection, discussion, and problem-solving.
Classroom Practice	Use real-life case studies from Pakistan (floods, water scarcity, cultural diversity, natural disasters, terrorist attacks) to connect local experiences with global issues.	Helps students see themselves as part of a global community. In short promote empathy.

REFERENCES:

Abbas, s. G., ayaz, n., akbar, g., & batool, h. (2025). Green education in the 21st century: a systematic literature review of its implementation

Abbas, s. G., ayaz, n., akbar, g., & batool, h. (2025). Green education in the 21st century: a systematic literature review of its implementation in the pakistani school system. *Pakistan journal of social science review*, 4(4), 331-347.

- Achieving balance for meaningful social impact. *Globalisation, societies and education*, 1-13.
- Adler, s. P. (1976). *A reconstructionist approach to the teaching of*
- Aman-hunzai, n., kennedy, k. J., & zhao, z. (2024). 'good'citizens or 'faithful'muslims? Contested narratives for citizenship education in pakistan. *Journal of moral education*, 1-21.
- Assefa, e. A. (2024). From classrooms to global impact: leveraging quality education to shape a sustainable, interconnected world. *The journal of quality in education*, 14(24), 1-24.
- Auh, y., & kim, c. (2025). Navigating political ideologies in global citizenship education: toward justice, equity, and inclusion. *Journal of social and educational research*, 4(1), 25-42.
- Ayre, J., & McCaffery, K. J. (2022). Research Note: Thematic analysis in qualitative research. *Journal of Physiotherapy*, 68(1), 76-79.
- Bano, n., & jumani, n. B. (2024). School leaders' challenges in establishing green schools: a perspective study. *Journal of educational research and social sciences review (jerssr)*, 4(2), 23-33.
- Barry, m., waldron, f., & bryan, a. (2024). Understanding global citizenship education in the classroom: a case study of teaching practices. *Education, citizenship and social justice*, 17461979241278644.
- Bosio, e. T. (2024). *Ethical global citizenship education*. Cambridge university press. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009326742>
- Bourn, d. (2021). Education for sustainable development and global citizenship: a review of integration approaches. *Sustainability*, 13(24), 13829. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su132413829>
- Bourn, d., kalsoom, q., soysal, n., & ince, b. (2023). Student teachers' understanding and engagement with education for sustainable development in england, türkiye (turkey) and pakistan.
- Bushra, a., lashari, a. A., khan, a., & pervais, a. (2024). Content analysis of social development curriculum for sustainable development in pakistan. *International journal of contemporary issues in social sciences*, 3(1), 1132-1142.
- Dastgir, g., zaman, f. U., & qayyum, a. (2024). Empowering environmental stewardship: pedagogical approaches for integrating green and clean land practices in educational institutions of pakistan. *Pakistan social sciences review*, 8(1), 478-487.
- Dharma, y., seneru, w., & obi, s. N. (2025). The role of communication in building tolerance and unity in a diverse society: a systematic literature review. *Journal of communication, religious, and social sciences (jocrss)*, 3(1), 13-24.
- Hanif, s. (2025). Promoting global citizenship education through technology and sufism in pakistan. In: zajda, j., rapoport, a. (eds) discourses of globalisation and citizenship education. Globalisation, comparative education and policy research, vol 46.
- Hartman, e., & kiely, r. (2023). A critical global citizenship. In *crossing boundaries* (pp. 215-242). Routledge.
- Hassan, a., amir, r. M., raza, a., babar, m. A. H., hanif, s., riaz, m. A., & latif, s. (2025). Swot analysis of literacy and numeracy drive at primary school level in tehsil saddar faisalabad. *The critical review of social sciences studies*, 3(3), 253-263.
- Holst, J., Singer-Brodowski, M., Brock, A., & De Haan, G. (2024). Monitoring SDG 4.7: Assessing Education for Sustainable Development in policies, curricula, training of educators and student assessment (input-indicator). *Sustainable Development*, 32(4), 3908-3923.
- Hong, y. (2023). How will a conceptualized gce curriculum function within chinese secondary schools?. *Prospects*, 53(3), 443-457.
- Hussain, i., waqas, m., & miran, g. (2025). Echoing global voices: fostering global citizenship through english language teaching in

- Idrees, m., & khan, m. (2024). Evaluating the national identity in pakistan's foreign policy: post 9/11 era. In the Pakistani school system. *Pakistan journal of social science*
- Islam, m.s., al mamun, m. & hoque, i. A guide to literature reviews: a comprehensive flowchart beyond prisma for sample selection and justifications. *Manag rev q* (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-025-00528-2>
- Jamil, m., chohan, i. R., & tabassum, r. (2024). Life skills integration in pakistan studies textbook grade-xii: a qualitative content analysis. *Journal of social sciences development*, 3(3), 17-27.
- Jamil, s. (2021). From digital divide to digital inclusion: challenges for wide-ranging digitalization in pakistan. *Telecommunications policy*, 45(8), 102206.
- Khalid, t., muhammad, y., & siddiqui, m. (2022). Cultivating global citizenship among secondary school students: pre-service teachers' beliefs. *Global social sciences review*, 7(2), 326-337.
- Khan, a. (2024). Collaborative research in curriculum development: empowering teachers and students for global competence. *Multidisciplinary journal of emerging needs of curriculum*, 1(2), 85-93.
- Khan, h. M., khan, w., farooq, s., aleem, a., mann, m., & akhtar, s. (2021). The role of islamic education in moral character building of pakistani youth: an analytic study. *Multicultural education*, 7(9), 174-181.
- Khan, s. R. (2024). *The cultural politics of curriculum in pakistan: the challenges for pluralism, inclusion and the un sdgs in a post-colonial context* (doctoral dissertation, rmit university).
- Kosar, h. (2024). Exploring the theoretical framework for global citizenship education and its applicability in the context of pakistan. *International" journal of academic research for humanities"*, 4(2), 116-129.
- Lateef, a., yousaf, s., noor, k., parveen, a., & zahira, s. U. (2024). The future of education: trends to watch in the next decade in pakistan. *Journal of social signs review*, 2(6), 54-73.
- Literature. Boston university school of education.
- Mariyono, d., alifatul kamila, a. N., & alif hidayatullah, a. N. (2025). Unity in diversity: navigating global connections through cultural exchange. *Quality education for all*, 2(1), 114-137.
- Mukhtar, s. (2025). Teachers' views of cultural factors impacting secondary education for girls in punjab, pakistan.
- Munir, a. J., & zaidi, z. H. (2023). Institutionalizing civic engagement through skilled civic education: a critical analysis of youth development and education policies in punjab pakistan. *Journal of business and social review in emerging economies*, 9(4), 527-538.
- Ngwacho, g. A. (2024). Value-based education incorporation in competency-based curriculum recipe for all-inclusive education for enhanced global citizenship. *Journal of the kenya national commission for UNESCO*, 4(1), 1-13.
- Pakistan. *Journal of applied linguistics and tesol (jalt)*, 8(3), 986-995.
- Parums, d. V. (2021). Review articles, systematic reviews, meta-analysis, and the updated preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (prisma) 2020 guidelines. *Medical science monitor: international medical journal of experimental and clinical research*, 27, e934475-1.
- Proudfoot, k. (2023). Inductive/deductive hybrid thematic analysis in mixed methods research. *Journal of mixed methods research*, 17(3), 308-326.
- Rethlefsen, m. L., kirtley, s., waffenschmidt, s., ayala, a. P., moher, d., page, m. J., & koffel, j. B. (2021). Prisma-s: an extension to the prisma statement for reporting literature searches in systematic reviews. *Systematic reviews*, 10(1), 39.

- Review, 4(4), 331-347.
- Saeed, z. (2025). Bloom's taxonomy in pakistani school education: a pathway to enhance higher order thinking skills (hots). *The critical review of social sciences studies*, 3(1), 856-863.
- Sain, z. H. (2023). Revitalizing education in pakistan: challenges and recommendations. *International journal of higher education management*, 9(2).
- Saleem, a., deeba, f., & raza, m. A. (2022). Global citizenship education: a new approach to global citizenship development. *Perennial journal of history*, 3(2), 392-409.
- Sarkis-onofre, r., catalá-lópez, f., aromataris, e. Et al. How to properly use the prisma
- Sexsmith, k., & kiely, r. (2023). Toward a transformative gsl ethics: how global servicelearning faculty reconcile clashing personal and institutional values surrounding gsl. *Journal of higher education outreach and engagement*, 27(3), 5-29. *globalisation, societies and education*, 21(4), 456-472.
- Shabalala, n. P. (2025). Global citizenship education as a strategy for social, justice and identity:
- Shar, n. H. (2024). Global citizenship education: a pedagogy of peace, coexistence, acceptance and prosperity in sindh, pakistan. *International research journal of social sciences and humanities*, 3(1), 715-731.
- UNESCO. (2019). *Global education monitoring report: migration, displacement and education*. UNESCO publishing. <https://unesdoc.UNESCO.org/ark:/48223/pf0000366640>
- Valverde-berrocoso, j., garrido-arroyo, m. D. C., burgos-videla, c., & morales-cevallos, m. B. (2020). Trends in educational research about e-learning: a systematic literature review (2009-2018). *Sustainability*, 12(12), 5153.
- Waghid, z. (2023). Teacher educators' pedagogical practices in global citizenship education using the soft vs critical gce framework. *Cogent education*, 10(2), 2251757.
- Waqar, f. (2025). Evaluation of the teacher education curriculum in context of global education.
- Wells, c., petty, c., saggioro, e., & cornforth, r. J. (2023). Pakistan climate change impact storylines based on existing literature. *Zenodo*, 1-117.
- Westheimer, j. (2020). Can education transform our world? Global citizenship education and the un's 2030 agenda for sustainable development. In *grading goal four* (pp. 280-296). Brill.
- Witenstein, m. A., baxter, a., iyengar, r., schaller, e. U., & bah, s. (2025). A scoping study of education for sustainable development and global citizenship education in higher education. *Prospects*, 1-19.
- Yanniris, c. (2021). Education for sustainability, peace, and global citizenship: an integrative approach. *Education sciences*, 11(8), 430.
- Nisar, M., & Din, M. N. U. (2025). Curriculum and competence: Evaluating Pakistan's educational framework against global standards. *Journal of Religion and Society*, 3(01), 159-167.
- Hamid, S. (2025). Reforming Pakistan's Education System: Bridging the Gap for 21st-Century Skills. *transition*, 3(3).