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Vasudhaiv kutumkam: Role of NEP 2020 in Teaching and Learning

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Abstract:

This paper examines how the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 incorporates and enables Global Citizenship Education (GCED) through an Indian civilizational lens summarized by the phrase *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* — "the world is one family." It argues that NEP 2020 creates structural, curricular, and pedagogic openings to mainstream GCED while offering unique opportunities to ground global citizenship in local values, pluralistic history, and sustainable development goals. Drawing on policy texts, UNESCO frameworks for GCED and SDG Target 4.7, recent curricular translations, and selected scholarly literature, the paper builds a normative and operational framework for curriculum design, teacher preparation, assessment, and institutional internationalisation that fuses universal competencies with culturally situated values. The paper concludes with policy recommendations and practical classroom strategies to make *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*-informed GCED pedagogically robust, academically defensible, and socially transformative.

Keywords:Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam; NEP 2020; Global Citizenship Education (GCED); SDG 4.7; curriculum design; teacher education; India; internationalisation.

Introduction :

Global Citizenship Education (GCED) has become a central policy priority globally as education systems attempt to prepare learners for interconnected economic, environmental, and social challenges. The UNESCO definition frames GCED as empowering learners to assume active roles in creating more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, and sustainable societies. SDG Target 4.7 further requires that education provide the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed to promote sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, and cultural diversity.

In India, the 2020 National Education Policy (NEP 2020) explicitly identifies Global Citizenship Education (GCED) alongside environmental education and other contemporary

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subjects as curricular priorities, thus institutionalising the state's commitment to preparing learners for global responsibilities and local belonging. The NEP emphasises curricular flexibility, multidisciplinary learning, experiential pedagogy, and teacher capacity-building — all features that create fertile ground for purposeful GCED integration.

At the same time, India's civilizational idiom of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*—the Mahā Upaniṣad verse meaning "the world is one family"—provides a culturally resonant conceptual resource for reimagining GCED in ways that avoid simplistic Western-liberal templates while preserving universal commitments to human dignity and sustainable development. Recent curriculum moves and policy documents indicate that Indian educational actors are beginning to operationalise this synthesis. This paper proposes an interpretive and practical framework for embedding *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* within NEP 2020's GCED agenda and outlines curriculum design, teacher education, assessment, and institutional strategies to do so.

Literature Review and Theoretical Frame

GCED and SDG 4.7: Global Policy Architecture: GCED has been articulated through multilateral frameworks—most notably UNESCO's GCED concept documents and SDG Target 4.7—which define content areas (human rights, gender equality, cultural diversity), pedagogical aims (critical thinking, empathy, collaboration), and monitoring metrics related to policy, curricula, teacher education and assessment. Mission 4.7 and associated initiatives further translate GCED into capacity-building programs and curricular resources. These global instruments provide normative anchors that national policies can adapt to local socio-cultural contexts.

Indian Policy Scholarship on NEP 2020 and Internationalisation: Scholarly and policy-oriented analyses of NEP 2020 highlight its dual emphasis on internationalisation (mobility, partnerships, research collaboration) and rootedness (local knowledge, Indian languages, indigenous knowledge systems). Researchers have argued that NEP's design creates space for GCED that combines global competencies with India-specific ethical vocabularies (e.g., Tagore's cosmopolitan humanism, Gandhian ethics, and classical Upanishadic values). This scholarship offers three relevant insights for this paper: (1) NEP's structural reforms (e.g., multidisciplinary higher education, flexible curricula) are enabling conditions for GCED; (2) contextualisation is necessary to avoid neo-colonial or tokenistic GCED; and (3) teacher education is the critical bottleneck.

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Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam as an Educational Principle: Interpretations of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* in contemporary educational discourse position it as a normative principle that emphasises interdependence, hospitality, ethical cosmopolitanism, and a responsibility for planetary well-being. Recent pedagogic work suggests that such civilisational idioms can serve as culturally legitimate entry points for fostering empathy, historical perspective, and moral reasoning—provided they are taught critically, historically, and in dialogue with multiple worldviews. Care must be taken to prevent cultural essentialism or exclusionary nationalism when invoking foundational texts.

Methodology: This paper is a policy-analytic synthesis that triangulates primary policy documents (NEP 2020), international frameworks (UNESCO GCED materials; SDG metadata), government guidance on higher education internationalisation, and a purposive sample of recent scholarly and practitioner literature on GCED and Indian curriculum change. The approach is interpretive: (1) identify NEP provisions that directly or indirectly enable GCED; (2) map principles of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* onto GCED competencies; (3) propose curricular, pedagogical, and assessment strategies aligned with both NEP design and international benchmarks; and (4) derive policy recommendations to support implementation at systemic and classroom levels. Sources include government PDFs, UNESCO texts, peer-reviewed and policy papers, and recent credible press reports documenting curricular changes illustrating the idea's uptake.

Analysis and Main Body

NEP 2020: Openings for GCED Implementation: NEP 2020 advances multiple provisions that concretely support the integration of GCED:

Curricular inclusion: The policy explicitly lists Global Citizenship Education alongside Environmental Education, character education, and health as curricular interventions to be mainstreamed at appropriate stages. This gives policymakers and curriculum framers a mandate to design subject modules, project-based learning units, and co-curricular pathways for GCED.

Multidisciplinary and flexible curricula: The school and higher-education architecture in NEP encourages multidisciplinary programmes, credit-based mobility, and elective choices—mechanisms through which GCED themes (global issues, comparative history, sustainable development) can be embedded across disciplines rather than confined to one subject silo.

Teacher education and capacity building: NEP emphasises upskilling teachers through continuous professional development and revamped teacher education institutions — a

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necessary condition for GCED because GCED requires teachers who can facilitate critical dialogue, manage contested histories, and use participatory pedagogies.

Internationalisation and research linkages: NEP's push for internationalisation of higher education (mobility, partnerships, global centres of excellence) provides institutional architecture to exchange pedagogies and co-develop GCED resources, while also allowing India to export its own interpretive resources such as *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*.

Taken together, these provisions show that NEP 2020 operates as both an enabling policy and a regulatory frame for implementing GCED at scale — if, and only if, detailed curricula, teacher programs, and assessment frameworks are designed and resourced.

Mapping *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* onto GCED competencies: GCED competencies commonly include cognitive (knowledge of global issues), socio-emotional (empathy, appreciation of diversity), and behavioral (participation, civic engagement). *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* contributes to each domain as follows:

Cognitive: Historical and philosophical study of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* grounds learners in Indian intellectual traditions that have engaged with cosmopolitan ethics. Teaching the phrase in historical context enables comparative reflection (e.g., comparing Upanishadic cosmopolitanism with other humaneist traditions).

Socio-emotional: The phrase, when taught reflectively, can nurture empathy, hospitality, and recognition of shared humanity—key affective capacities targeted by GCED. Classroom activities that pair literary and historical sources with contemporary case studies (refugee reception, diaspora experiences, climate migrants) allow these dispositions to be practiced.

Behavioral: *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* can inspire civic action oriented toward solidarity—volunteering, translocal collaborations, and sustainability projects—that translate empathetic dispositions into collective action. NEP's emphasis on experiential learning and community engagement offers institutional routes for such behavioural activation.

Caveat: the pedagogic use of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* must be critical and pluralistic rather than prescriptive. GCED grounded in any single civilisational idiom must still require learners to examine power relations, competing narratives, and global inequalities.

Curriculum design: principles and illustrative modules: Drawing on NEP's curricular architecture and UNESCO's GCED recommendations, the following design principles are proposed:

Integrated and spiral curriculum: Introduce GCED concepts in early grades (age-appropriate stories and activities), revisit in increasing complexity through middle and

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secondary school, and offer specialised multidisciplinary electives at higher secondary and tertiary levels. NEP's 5+3+3+4 structure lends itself to this spiral articulation.

Contextualised content: Balance global themes (climate change, migration, human rights) with local case studies and India's plural histories. For example, a middle-school unit entitled *"Home and the World: Stories of Welcome"* could combine local refugee histories, diaspora narratives, and the Upanishadic verse to foster comparative reflection. Recent NCERT curricular shifts show that inclusion of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* in Class VII materials is feasible and already being piloted in curricular texts.

Competency-based learning outcomes: Specify knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions. Example outcomes: "Students will explain the normative claims of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* and compare them with other cosmopolitan philosophies; practice structured dialogue with peers from diverse backgrounds; design and implement a local sustainability action project." Align these outcomes to SDG 4.7 indicators for monitoring.

Active and participatory pedagogy: Use project-based learning, simulations (e.g., Model UN styled but adapted for local contexts), service-learning, and arts-based methods. NEP's emphasis on experiential learning provides support for resourcing such modalities.

Teacher education and professional development: Teachers are the linchpin. The following components are essential:

Foundational GCED modules in pre-service programs: Teacher-training curricula should include theoretical grounding (GCED frameworks, SDG 4.7), pedagogical methods (dialogic pedagogy, conflict-sensitive approaches), and content knowledge (global issues, plural histories, critical civics). NEP's recommendation to revamp teacher education institutions provides a timely policy lever.

In-service cascaded training and communities of practice: Continuous professional development must be scaffolded through regional resource centres and online modules, with mentoring and classroom demonstration schools to model practice. UNESCO and regional bodies (APCEIU) have developed teacher handbooks and training models that may be adapted for India's multilingual context.

Assessment literacy for teachers: Teachers must be able to assess affective and civic competencies (e.g., reflective journals, portfolios, community project evaluations) that do not reduce learning to rote recall. This requires explicit training and assessment rubrics aligned to NEP competency frameworks.

Assessment and monitoring: Monitoring GCED effectiveness requires a mixed-methods approach:

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Policy-level indicators: Use the SDG 4.7 metadata framework to report mainstreaming of GCED in national curricula, teacher education, and assessments. This provides comparability across jurisdictions.

School-level assessment: Employ performance tasks, portfolios, community project reports, peer assessment, and reflective narratives. Use rubrics that operationalise empathy, perspective-taking, civic engagement, and ethical reasoning.

Institutional reporting and research: Universities and education departments should support longitudinal research on attitudinal change, civic participation rates among alumni, and community impact metrics. NEP's emphasis on research and innovation funding can be leveraged to support evaluative studies.

Institutionalisation and internationalisation: NEP's internationalisation goals can be made coherent with *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* when institutional strategies emphasise reciprocal partnerships (co-created curricula, joint research on sustainability and migration, faculty exchanges that include teacher trainers) rather than one-way export models. Guidance documents on internationalisation under NEP provide operational roadmaps for mobility and joint programs.

Challenges and risks

Instrumentalisation and politicisation: Cultural idioms can be co-opted for nationalistic or exclusionary ends. Safeguards include pluralist pedagogy, critical humanities, and institutional oversight.

Resource and capacity constraints: Effective GCED requires teacher time, professional development budgets, and supportive curricular materials—areas where state-level disparities may impede uniform rollout. NEP's funding commitments must prioritise inclusive capacity-building.

Assessment difficulties: Evaluating socio-emotional outcomes is complex and may be resisted by examination-driven cultures. Policy must create incentives for formative assessment and recognise non-exam achievements.

Global-local tensions: Balancing international standards with local relevance requires careful curricular translation and stakeholder engagement (parents, communities, faith leaders). Participatory curriculum development processes can mitigate tensions.

Practical Classroom Strategies

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Narrative Exchange: Pair a local folktale about hospitality with a case study of refugee integration. Students map common themes and present a joint "solidarity charter." (Primary–Middle)

Action Project: Neighborhood Climate Resilience: Students audit local climate vulnerabilities and design low-cost solutions (community gardens, water-harvesting) with written reflections linking action to *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* and global climate ethics. (Secondary)

Comparative Ideas Seminar: Senior secondary classes read excerpts from the Mahā Upaniṣad alongside selections from other cosmopolitan thinkers (e.g., Tagore, Martha Nussbaum). Students lead seminars and assess each other on critical engagement and dialogic civility. (Higher secondary)

E-Twinning and Virtual Exchange: Use technology to pair classes across borders for collaborative projects on Sustainable Development Goals. NEP's push for digital infrastructure supports such initiatives. (All levels)

Policy Recommendations

National GCED Implementation Roadmap: The Ministry of Education should commission a GCED roadmap aligned with NEP timelines, specifying curricular standards, teacher education modules, resource allocations, and monitoring indicators anchored to SDG 4.7.

GCED Resource Repository and Open Educational Resources (OER): Create an open repository of context-sensitive GCED modules, multilingual resources, and teacher demonstration videos that integrate *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* critically and pluralistically.

Funding for Teacher Educator Hubs: Allocate targeted funding for regional teacher educator hubs to develop GCED pedagogies and mentor in-service teachers, with emphasis on rural and marginalised regions.

Incentivise Experiential Assessment: Reform school assessment frameworks to recognise community projects and portfolios as creditable components of progression, thereby aligning incentives with GCED learning.

Research Grants for GCED Impact Studies: Encourage universities to undertake longitudinal studies on the impact of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*-infused GCED on civic attitudes, intergroup trust, and pro-sustainability behaviour. NEP research priorities can fund such work.

Conclusion:NEP 2020 provides a pragmatic and permissive policy architecture to mainstream Global Citizenship Education in India. The civilisational idea of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* offers a culturally resonant yet cosmopolitan vocabulary to localise GCED

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without forfeiting universal commitments to human rights and sustainability. Realising the promise described in this paper requires coherent curriculum design, substantial investment in teacher education, innovative assessment practices, and protective measures that preserve pluralism and critical inquiry. With careful implementation, India can model a contextually rooted GCED that prepares learners to act as responsible global citizens while remaining rooted in local knowledge and ethical traditions.

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