

ESD and GCED in Sikkim Textbooks

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In keeping with the evolving trends in the educational landscape, the primary-level textbooks in Sikkim have undergone significant revisions. The State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) has undertaken efforts in this direction in 2018–19, engaging in consultative processes with educators, stakeholders and external academic partners. The result is a recent series of revamped primary-level textbooks in mathematics, language and environmental studies.

In 2018, after signing the partnership with Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP), Sikkim became the only state in the country to have a school education module focusing on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED).

One of the most notable aspects of these textbooks is embedding the principles of ESD and GCED in the textbooks of all subjects

as well as incorporating learning outcomes outlined by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). Thus, the textbooks contribute towards the implementation of the UN's 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, promoting education for peace and achieving sustainable development goals. The foreword by the Director, SCERT Sikkim, states that, "From the perspective of education for sustainable development, the lessons encourage children to care for and respect the natural environment and people. It encourages children to think critically and creatively about what is happening in their local as well as the global community, connect with their community and to take action for improving it."

Moreover, the partnership between SCERT, UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) and Azim Premji University signifies

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a significant milestone in educational reform. By embedding concepts of peace, sustainable development, and global citizenship into textbooks, Sikkim has set a precedent.

Another distinctive feature of these textbooks is the incorporation of environmental studies into the language and mathematics curriculum from the early primary grades. This highlights the importance of environmental awareness and conservation from an early age. Pedagogically, this integration reflects a holistic approach to education, acknowledging the interconnectedness of subjects and real-world issues. For instance, the inclusion of themes such as human-wildlife conflict, environmental conservation and the dignity of labour demonstrates a commitment to addressing pressing societal issues within the educational framework. These themes not only enrich the academic content but also encourage critical thinking and civic engagement among students.

Furthermore, the content of the textbooks is deeply rooted in the socio-cultural context of Sikkim, ensuring that students see themselves and their culture reflected in their learning materials. The textbooks celebrate the social, cultural, and

linguistic diversity of the state, fostering a sense of inclusivity and belonging among students.

Examples inspired by local geography, such as local fruits, vegetables and landscape abound in the books. The illustrations mirror the topography, flora and fauna, and the various cultures.

The emphasis on error tolerance and multilingualism fosters a supportive learning environment where students feel empowered to express themselves freely. It prompts children to consider concepts of inclusivity, challenge gender biases and societal roles, address issues like environmental cleanliness, natural disasters, cohabitation with wildlife, the conservation of natural resources and the importance of respecting the dignity of labour.

In conclusion, the primary-level textbooks in Sikkim represent a commendable effort to provide a quality education that is relevant, inclusive and forward-thinking. By incorporating ESD principles, celebrating cultural diversity, and addressing contemporary issues, these textbooks lay a strong foundation for the holistic development of students and contribute to the realisation of sustainable development goals.