Local languages for Global Citizenship: Spotlight on Science

UNESCO's position towards multilingual education is strengthened as part of its efforts to promote global citizenship education.

According to UNESCO, "Education for Global Citizenship aims to enable learners to play an active role in both the local and global levels to address global challenges and, ultimately, contribute proactively in creating a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable world."  

In connection to this, multilingual education has a role to play. "Multilingual education" refers to the use of at least three languages, the mother tongue, a regional or national language and an international language.

In the fields of education and science, much remains to be done with regard to the development and use of mother tongue in most cases a local language, while grasping global challenges begins from an understanding of international languages.

The Mother Tongue Day in 2014 will examine issues related to local languages and science. Experts will discuss the role of local languages in the promotion of traditional and indigenous knowledge and its contribution in addressing major issues related to global citizenship.

Mother tongue education

UNESCO advocates for mother tongue instruction in a bilingual or multilingual education approach in the early years because of its importance in creating a strong foundation for learning; the use mother tongue with young children at home or in pre-school prepares them for the smooth acquisition of literacy in their mother tongue and eventually, the acquisition of the second (major national) language at a later stage in their schooling.

UNESCO defines bilingual and multilingual education as "the use of three or more languages as mediums of instruction. The Organization adopted the term "multilingual education" in 1990 to refer to the use of at least three languages in education: the mother tongue, a regional or national language and an international language.

The importance of mother tongue instruction in the early years of schooling is emphasized in the findings of studies, research and reports such as the annual UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report.

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