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Innovative Practice and Research Trends in Identity, Citizenship and Education
Selected papers from the sixteenth Conference of the Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe Academic Network

London: CiCe 2014

**edited by Peter Cunningham and Nathan Fretwell, published in London by CiCe,
ISBN 978-1-907675-21-8**

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Pratas, H. (2014) 'Innovative practices of global education in a changing world', in P. Cunningham & N. Fretwell (eds.) *Innovative Practice and Research Trends in Identity, Citizenship and Education*. London: CiCe, pp. 237 – 245.

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This paper does not necessarily represent the views of the CiCe Network.



Lifelong Learning Programme

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Acknowledgements:

This is taken from the book that is a selection of papers given at the annual CiCe Conference indicated. The CiCe Steering Group and the editor would like to thank

- All those who contributed to the Conference
- The CiCe administrative team at London Metropolitan University
- London Metropolitan University, for financial and other support for the programme, conference and publication
- The Lifelong Learning Programme and the personnel of the Education and Culture DG of the European Commission for their support and encouragement.

Innovative practices of global education in a changing world

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Abstract

This paper considers the North-South Centre (NSC) and other stakeholders' efforts and strategies to promote global education since the Maastricht Congress Declaration in 2002, which established a European strategy framework for improving and increasing global education in Europe to the year 2015 and several achievements regards global education made, over the past twelve years. This paper also describes the author's experience of an on-line training course about the intercultural dimension of Global Education.

Keywords: *global education; North-South Centre; intercultural dimension*

Introduction

The degree of diversity in contemporary societies is ever growing. There is an increasing interaction of people, institutions and markets worldwide, and of their respective values, attitudes and interests. This increased interdependence is also referred to as the process of globalisation. The actions of others, living on the other side of the planet, can affect people in very direct ways. Traditional policies, programs and even educational approaches have been challenged by this complex and fast-changing reality. The speed of information and communication technologies reduced national barriers, increased interdependence between financial markets, ongoing population flows across the world. Patterns of world development have been changed by these phenomena. These have naturally impacted on needs for and in education. Globalisation poses new challenges for national education systems, training structures and the ways in which education is conceived. In contemporary societies, new knowledge, skills and attitudes, in other words, new competencies, are required to engage effectively with increased access to ICT, and the increased variety of languages, cultures, goods and economies that we come into contact with on a daily basis. As the world comes to be interconnected in ways that were unthinkable previously, the need for understanding different cultures, languages, ways of thinking and communicating, ways of life and social realities has become stronger. Around the world, there exist many ways of defining and of practising global education. Some definitions emphasise the qualities needed to become a global citizen, being aware of the world and taking responsibility for action, whether individual or collective. Others focus on respect for diversity, human rights, social justice and sustainability, and on valuing them. In some sense, many consider that global education encompasses those all types of education that encourage social change at local and global levels, that educate for justice and that promote commitment to building a more equitable world. These different types of education have emerged in response to global challenges, but they vary from country to country. Another aspect of global education refers to the fact that many countries accept the need to consider global realities within

education: formal, non formal and informal. Various international documents are related to the development of the concept of global education. For example, the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948); the UNESCO (1974) *Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*; the UNESCO (1995) *Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy*, the United Nations (2000) *Millennium Declaration* and the United Nations (2005) *Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014*. We will consider Global Education as it is considered by the North-South Center of the Council of Europe.

Global education in Europe

The experts at the Maastricht Congress 2002 elaborated the following definition of Global Education, adopted by the North South-Center of the Council of Europe (NSC):

Education that opens people's eyes and minds to the realities of the world, and awakens them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights for all (Silva, 2010, p. 66).

This definition emerged from policy and practice and is linked to development education, which has a longer tradition and was developed to address the need to inform the public about development cooperation issues. Global Education is understood to encompass Development Education, Human Rights Education, Education for Sustainability, Education for Peace and Conflict Prevention and Intercultural Education; being the global dimensions of Education for Citizenship (Silva, 2010). Global education has been characterised in the Global Education Guidelines by a diversity of educational approaches that promote values, shape attitudes, develop skills and enhance knowledge (Silva, 2010).

The North-South Centre of the Council of Europe

The North-South Centre (NSC) - officially named the 'European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity' - is an autonomous institution of the Council of Europe. Created in 1989, currently it has 22 member States. It is an intergovernmental organisation run on the basis of a 'quadrilogue': governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities and NGOs. This system helps build bridges between players with different approaches, viewpoints and priorities, generating constructive synergies (NSC, 2012).

The North-South Centre (NSC) objective as regards global education (GE) is to develop, enhance and sustain strategies and capacity-building for global education, targeting institutions and practitioners from the formal and non-formal educational sector. Global Education is understood as a holistic education dealing with the growing interconnectedness between local and global realities. It aims at developing learning communities in which practitioners are encouraged to work cooperatively and develop

skills for a participatory global citizenship (NSC, 2012). The work of the NSC consists in policy development and advocacy, training and capacity building, raising public awareness/understanding and disseminating global education practices. In this regard the NSC, in cooperation with its partners, has delivered GE policy reference documents such as the GE charter (1997), the Maastricht GE declaration (an European strategy for improving and increasing GE in Europe to the year 2015-2022) and the recommendation on education for global interdependence and solidarity (2011), while offering pedagogical support through a handbook for educators to understand and implement GE (the Global Education Guidelines, 2008, re-edition 2010), an e-learning training scheme and networking global education practices through the Global Education Week and its network focal points.

All these activities are facilitated through the North-South Centre Global Education website. In 2009-2011, the North-South Centre co-organised with local partners national and regional seminars on global/development education in the twelve new members States of the European Union, with the financial support of the European Commission. These seminars brought together stakeholders (government representatives, civil society) with the aim to discuss the present situation of global/development co-operation in the respective country and promote national policy recommendations and practices (NSC, 2012, p. 9).

There is increasing recognition in the policy making community that the global dimension of the educational process is essential to its relevance and that issues of global development, interdependence and solidarity are inherent to any curriculum for citizenship education in a global society. This recognition is gaining ground, but requires strengthening, as do mechanisms for supporting global education. International organisations, governments and civil society all have a role to play, particularly ministries responsible for education, development, environment; development agencies and development Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs); national curriculum development bodies, teacher support structures, teachers and educators; and various kinds of NGOs.

Given the fact that global education emerged from policy and practice, it is important to understand its implicit link to development education, which has a longer tradition and was developed to address the need to inform the public about development cooperation issues. There are institutions and even countries that consider development education to be the core of global education. This position relates to their national interests and their perception of the need for education about development assistance and humanitarian aid. Development education, focusing understanding relationships between the global 'North' and the global 'South', is not only an integral part of global education, but also of development cooperation. As a result, in many countries the agendas of global and development education are intertwined. But, development education is not the only influence that can be found. In different contexts, other traditions pre-dominate, such as education for sustainable development in the Czech Republic or humanitarian education in Poland. So, even in Europe, Global education has different meanings: sometimes it is referred to as global development education or even considered synonymous with development education, or education for sustainable development.

Although in content and definition seemingly the same, these concepts are different – they have different political and educational traditions, and they express different perceptions about where the focus of global education should be placed. Illustrative of this is also that in many countries, ‘global education’ only came into usage very recently – often the term in the local language is simply a translation of the English ‘global education’, for example in *éducation à la citoyenneté mondiale* in French or *Globales Lernen* in German. In Europe, global education at the national level is usually promoted by the Ministries of Education, which are responsible for the development of education policies and eventually for curriculum reform, and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, which are responsible for development cooperation policies, of which global education is an integral part. Increasingly, other ministries have become involved in the policy development related to global education, such as, among others, ministries of the environment or sustainable development, finance, interior affairs, culture, sports and youth. Furthermore, departments within ministries responsible for gender equality and human rights are also increasingly engaging with global education and related issues. Other governmental agencies and civil society organisations, such as unions of teachers, methodological centres and educational institutes, development Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) dealing with diverse global themes, social and trade unions, teachers and trainers in formal and non-formal education, youth and community leaders, churches and interfaith organisations – in brief all those involved in education and learning – are also engaging in global education and with its issues. At the international level, there are several inter-governmental and international nongovernmental institutions that are involved in the design and support for global education. Among them you may find: Global Education Network Europe (GENE) is the European network of Ministries, Agencies, and other national bodies, responsible for support, funding, and policy making, in the field of Global Education in Europe.

GENE has worked over the past decade to support the strengthening of Global Education in Europe. This has included through regular multilateral roundtables, bi-lateral processes, policy learning and research, enhancing quality, supporting the development of quality national strategies and supporting emerging structures (NSC, 2012, p. 10). The European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development is called CONCORD and it represents more than 1600 NGOs all over the European Union. It includes Development education and public awareness raising (DEAR) which is an important element of its organisational strategy in order to empower Europeans to play an active role in shaping a more just and sustainable world. It also includes a Forum on Development Awareness Raising and Education (DARE) which works on capacity development for DEAR, advocacy and pan-European networking and peer learning. In 2003, it created DEEEP - Developing Europeans Engagement for the Eradication of Global Poverty –, which acts as a support structure to the working group and organises a yearly development education summer school with participants from all over the world. Furthermore, CONCORD co-chairs the European Development Education Multi Stakeholder Process since its creation in 2006, which unites a broad range of state- and non-state actors interested in development education. Its main achievements are the European Development Education Consensus (2007) and the first European Development Education Monitoring Report ‘DE Watch’ (2010). Other agents are Trialog and Euforic, the Social Network in International Cooperation and Development (NSC, 2012, p. 10).

Framework documents on global education

In 1997, the Council of Europe adopted a Global Education Charter. In 2000 the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted to be achieved by 2015; they are a framework for the entire international community to work together towards environmental sustainability, in particular through the integration of principles of sustainable development into country policies and measures, including into educational measures. In 2002 the Maastricht Congress defined global education and established a European strategy framework for improving and increasing global education in Europe to the year 2015 by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe (NSC, 2012, p. 4). In 2005 there was a joint Statement by the Council and the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on European Union Development Policy, called 'The European Consensus'. In 2007 a new document was published, called 'Contribution of Development Education and Awareness Raising'; it was offered as a contribution to the implementation of the European Consensus on Development, with particular reference to the declaration that 'the EU will pay particular attention to development education and raising awareness among EU citizens' (NSC, 2012, p. 4). In 2008 the Global Education Guidelines were developed and published. The year 2009 was the time to publish the Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue 'Living together as equals in dignity'. In 2010 the Recommendation of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers to member states on education for democratic citizenship and human rights education (EDC-HRE) appeared. In 2011 different documents were published: the European DEAR Study on development education with recommendations for future interventions by the European Commission; the Espoo Finland Conclusions on Global Education in Curriculum Change (GENE/FNBE) and the Recommendation CM/Rec (2011) 4 of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers to member states on education for global interdependence and solidarity (NSC, 2012, p. 4).

A course on the intercultural dimension of global education

I would like to describe my own experience of an online Training Course called *Global Education: The Intercultural Dimension* developed by the Network University in close collaboration with and with the support of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, as part of its Global Education Programme, from 15th November to 20th December 2011. This course looked at the intercultural dimension of global education and the challenges it presents given different local realities; in it, we explored ways of including and interpreting global aspects of society, culture, economics and political systems in our educational work (TNU, 2011). Each start of a module (or week), participants received an email with information on the schedule of that week including activities and proposed assignments. The course developed for a period of around 7 weeks. At the beginning, we received a self-assessment questionnaire on Intercultural Competences. This self-assessment questionnaire meant to help us clarify our learning needs and support our learning process. The scale on Intercultural Competences included fifteen items: Respect for otherness - the capacity to respect the other and the right of the other to have different values, attitudes and beliefs-; acknowledging the identities of

others; empathy; the capacity to see issues from different perspectives-; tolerance of ambiguity, the capacity to deal constructively with the insecurity and uncertainty and capacity for dialogue with different people; knowledge and awareness about the plurality of human societies; 'Democratization of democracy', meaning the understanding of democracy as a work in progress that requires daily attention and rethinking; learning to learn; social analysis; political literacy; interpreting and relating skills; communicative awareness; critical literacy; cognitive and behavioral flexibility and action orientation (TNU, 2011).

Participants, methodology and contents

The group was diverse but well balanced, especially regarding geographical background. In this Course there were 55 participants from almost all over the world...working together! The methodology encouraged reflection, analysis and critical thinking, as well as non-hierarchical, democratic, collaborative learning environments and recognition of a variety of points of view. It promoted personal enrichment, self-esteem and respect for the individual and emphasised on skill building and practical application of learning. The overall educational approach of this course was developed on the basis of the principles of global education practice. It aimed to use our previous experiences and knowledge to explore contents and inspire new insights. Our reflection, and the exchange with other participants, was an important input for the development of our and other participants' deeper theoretical and practical understanding of the intercultural dimension of global education. The course was designed as a space to express our ideas and to develop our understanding in an autonomous as well as collaborative way. The course was built around interactive contents using both individual and collective reflections and a series of exercises to facilitate our learning process. It aimed at contributing to our understanding of the issues, and at facilitating interaction among course participants (TNU, 2011).

The first module of the course was about the intercultural dimension of global education. It explored the concept of global education, and its importance in contemporary society, increased our knowledge about its different dimensions and approaches, and helped us to debate the challenges and opportunities that global education offers. This module guided us through a reflection on the intercultural dimension of global education, concepts and critiques related to this dimension of global education and knowledge of organisations and movements that work with global education from all over the world, such as: the North South Centre of the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the Global Education Network Europe, DEEEP – Developing Europeans Engagement for the Eradication of Global Poverty, Concord – the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development and Euforic, the Social Network in International Cooperation and Development. We acknowledged that some institutions and countries consider Development Education the core of global education. We had the opportunity to become acquainted with the different terms and concepts relevant to intercultural education, intercultural learning and intercultural dialogue, as well as to reflect on the real need for intercultural global education in the realities in which we live. Furthermore, the course offered the opportunity to contextualise the debate about the historical development and usage of these terms and concepts within the international institutions. As a result we

were in a position to define global education and the different aspects of its intercultural dimension, become familiar with the notions of intercultural education, intercultural learning and intercultural dialogue, as well as to contextualise these notions in the real needs of our local reality.

The second module was about 'Intercultural Learning as an Educational Practice' and also included two discussion forums: we shared the main issues, a mapping exercise of our social analysis, how to apply Global and Intercultural Education in our educational practice and we formulated objectives for intercultural learning in our context. We had the opportunity to learn more about the different approaches to intercultural learning as an educational practice around the world and to identify the main issues and analyse our socio-political context as a basis for formulating specific objectives for this kind of intercultural learning in our habitat. This module offered the opportunity to get to know inspiring intercultural learning practices around the world as well as how to apply them. We developed an educational activity on which we received personalised feedback and we explored our own intercultural learning competences.

The third module was called 'Intercultural Dialogue and Policy-Making'. It had also two discussion forums, examining possible levels of interventions and developing strategies for action, analysis of policy-making processes and a simulation exercise about visioning intercultural global education till 2022. We shared our main insights and learned about policy-making in education and other related fields. We had the opportunity to develop our capacity for the elaboration of strategies and developed our own individual strategic plan for the future. Finally, the fourth module was about Intercultural Global Education and Social and Political Action and it also included two discussion forums. It was focused on the practical aspects of intercultural education, activities design and action planning in the different spheres of action in formal and informal education, advocacy and or policy development and included the final evaluation and debate on the follow up to the course (TNU, 2011).

Conclusions

The actual European context of international financial crisis, with increasing national austerity measures create a negative social impact with increased xenophobic reactions and nationalistic attitudes; therefore, a new attention is required on Education, Interdependence and Solidarity in this Changing World (European Congress on Global Education, 2012). The course described facilitated exchange of ideas and practices of global education, pedagogical support and training, discussing synergy potentials, pedagogical support and awareness on the importance of global education for global interdependence and solidarity. Through the networking, the course material and the case studies, we gained a deeper understanding of the complexity of developing and practising global education with an intercultural dimension and it inspired us to develop meaningful educational activities leading to social and political action. In brief, we had the opportunity to learn about each other and about different views on global education and to explore its intercultural dimension. The course developed a basic understanding of the complexities related to global education and to intercultural education in the world today and allowed us to revise our practice. Global education is something of a 'work in

progress', a process under construction: its theoretical conceptualisation is still evolving through ongoing discourse and the compilation of good practice.

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