

Development Education Exchange in Europe

Public engagement with development education is one of the key objectives of the Development Education Exchange in Europe Programme. **Angelo Caserta** looks in detail at DEEEP's activities and its role within development education in Europe.

The evolution of the concept of 'development'

Until the 1980s, many supporters of development were arguing primarily from the starting point of a comparison between the economic and social conditions in the 'South' and those in the 'North'. Development and so-called under-development were firstly geographical concepts, linked to a simplified and quite imprecise representation of the world atlas. In rough terms, countries above the Tropic of Cancer (the 'North') were considered to be rich (whether belonging to the 'western' or to the 'eastern' block) and countries below that (the 'South') were considered to be poor. It was felt that countries should naturally proceed through the continuum from 'poor/underdeveloped' to 'rich/developed', and there was a sense of moral obligation of the 'more advanced' to help the 'less advanced' to achieve the same standards of living. Accordingly, the North was being called upon to come to the rescue of the South, which was generally presented in a negative and paternalistic way. The repeated appeal, launched both to public opinion and to those responsible at government level, is liable to create a feeling of superiority in the populations of the northern countries populations ('more advanced', therefore 'better') vis-à-vis the populations of the South ('less advanced', therefore 'worst'). Over the past ten or fifteen years, another vision is coming more and more clearly to the forefront, that of a global approach to world society, within which there is inequality and injustice in all countries and on all continents. Everywhere there are rich and poor. A demarcation line divides the world in a transverse fashion. This inequality and this injustice are the consequences of structural exclusion mechanisms which are inflicted upon the whole world by international economic rules and political institutions designed to keep the power in the hands of a minority. Large majorities of people in the world are excluded from a fair access to the market (economic rules dictated by the World Trade

Organisation and the International Monetary Fund), from participation in political life (autocratic regimes or dictatorship, corruption) or from the society itself (lack of ad-hoc legislations for ethnic minorities and disabled people).

These days, those who are committed to development describe the gap between the rich and the poor as a gap of exclusion. It is not a question of having more (the rich) or less (the poor) within the same society. It is a question of having a place in the society or being excluded from it. In reality, the struggle against poverty needs to be construed as the struggle against exclusion and in favour of inclusion, from the local to the global level.

This means that every citizen, wherever they may live, is part of the global society and she/he needs to know that they are jointly responsible with their fellow citizens in the struggle against exclusion which is at the root of any form of inequality and injustice. In the context of the globalisation of the world, this global approach implies that Non-Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs) should open-up to and build strong cooperation with other players of the Civil Society: community and grassroots organisations, trade unions, the media, universities, research centres, and youth organisations.

Emerging partnerships

Another element which is emerging in the last few years is the partnership between Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Europe and outside Europe. This can develop as an ad-hoc partnership, on specific issues and short/mid term objectives or a strategic partnership, with longer term objectives and a clear focus on building together a culture of solidarity. Partnership has become a key concept and tool through which NGOs in the South are increasingly included in the development processes in the South, in educational/awareness activities in the Europe and in advocacy at global level.

As happened in the last few years through the emergence of new international social movements, NGDOs are now increasingly moving from a project-approach to a partnership-approach, promoting alliances between citizens of the world (workers, consumers, investors, etc.). In that way, these networks will form a context for learning and change for development. This evolution in the perception of what development is and the changing international environment also implies a stronger link between activities carried out in Economically Less Developed Countries (ELDCs) and educational/awareness activities in Europe.

Development education in the broad sense (the inclusion of development issues in the formal learning sector, awareness raising, training, campaigning, and advocacy) - is strictly linked to the global process of development and must be seen as a complementary way of achieving the same objectives – inclusive development and the eradication of poverty and of the causes of poverty. This broader approach to development, including all possible stakeholders and linking activities in the North and in the South is the basis of what can be called an ‘inclusive and integrated approach to development’.

The job of development education

Development education is an active learning process, founded on values of solidarity, equality, inclusion and co-operation. It enables people to move from basic awareness of international development priorities and sustainable human development, through understanding of the causes and effects of global issues, to personal involvement and informed action. Development education fosters the full participation of all citizens in world-wide poverty eradication, and the fight against exclusion. It seeks to influence more just and sustainable economic, social, environmental, human rights based national and international policies. Development education rests upon two pillars. First there is the cognitive aspect. We need to know, to study and then to analyse the facts. Those facts need necessarily to relate to the local situations which in turn have compulsorily to be set in their global context in order to guarantee a more powerful understanding of the different situations.

However, a knowledge and understanding of things on their own is not enough. Actually, any development education action rests on a second pillar, which consists of adopting an attitude of solidarity, thus questioning and changing our daily behaviour and that of institutions with an influence on the local and global development. Development education teaches us that this society is not confined to our district, our village or our country, but that it encompasses the whole world and all of mankind. Such solidarity is a synonym of responsibility of all of us for all of us, those in the North for those in the South and those in the South for those in the North.

This ‘culture of solidarity’ becomes an essential element in any form of development when we define that development as ‘guaranteeing for everyone equality in material and spiritual conditions necessary for a human existence worthy of the name, at local and global level’. This is a positive form of words to refer to the struggle against poverty. As a consequence, the interlink between local and global context requires the promotion of contacts

and exchanges and the creation of networks. These are increasingly becoming essential elements in development education.

An unprecedented momentum

In addition to this, the year 2005 has been particularly important for development. The Global Call Against Poverty, the renewed commitment of the European Union (EU) to the Millennium Development Goals, the growth of the Fair Trade movement, the diffused educational activities run by NGOs in partnership with other Civil Society stakeholders, the G8 commitment to Africa, and the media attention to the tsunami disaster, have created unprecedented public attention. The enlarging European Union is also adding new opportunities, in terms of knowledge, geographical links and financial resources available for development. The momentum needs to be maintained through additional efforts to keep attention high and gain the support of citizens who have never engaged before in development. At the same time, these efforts need further coordination at European level, to optimise the impact and the use of available resources.

The recent European Conference on Public Awareness and Development Education for North-South Solidarity (hereon: European Conference) held in Brussels 18th-19th May, has underlined the role of development education and development awareness in mobilising European citizens for world-wide poverty eradication and social inclusion.

The European Conference has also clearly pointed out that *'as part of the overall need to raise both quality and efficiency, best practices should be actively encouraged and supported, particularly between Member states but also internationally. Ongoing coordination and cooperation, learning from past experiences at the widest possible level are therefore essential to ensure coherence and maximise effectiveness.'*

Development Education Exchange in Europe Programme

DEEEP is a programme which addresses these needs, strengthening capacities of NGOs to raise awareness, educate and mobilise the European public for world-wide poverty eradication and social inclusion. It does so by: (a) the exchange of practices, mutual learning, capitalisation of experiences within the NGO community and with other relevant players/stakeholders in Europe and in ELCDCs; (b) the increased exchange and cooperation among EU NGOs and between them and their counterparts in ELCDCs; and (c) more strategic and co-ordinated political work towards the European

Union. Since it started in 2003, DEEEP has contributed to increase cooperation between NGOs, to foster optimisation of resources, synergies, joint programmes, to establish partnerships with Southern Civil Society Organisations and, to create public attention to development education.

DEEEP is a programme run by a consortium of development education NGOs under the auspices and in strict cooperation with the Development Education Forum, a core working group of CONCORD, the confederation of development and relief NGOs based in Brussels.

It receives the majority of its funds from the European Commission due to its ability to work with National Platforms of NGOs in all EU countries.

DEEEP develops along four strands: networking and mutual learning, advocacy and policy, information sharing, and training. These strands correspond to four main activities in which some one hundred and fifty experts and practitioners are involved every year: Summer School, Advocacy, Information and Documentation, Training.

Development Education Summer School

The Summer School is a weeklong training course for around one hundred representatives of NGOs from the European Union and ELDC's. It is an idea launched by the Development Education Forum in 1996 to provide to development educators in Europe training opportunities on methodologies and exposure to contemporary thinking on key development issues to be used in development education and awareness raising activities. The Summer School works as an inspirational, interactive training centre, a place of learning and sharing of experiences between European practitioners.

In 2003 the Summer School was hosted by the Portuguese Platform and focussed on the relation between Development Education NGOs and the formal educational system. Participants were provided with an analysis of a variety of experiences from different countries and tools for effective implementation of development education activities in schools, taking into account the participants' working contexts.

Summer School 2004 was hosted by the Belgian Platform, and offered the opportunity to explore the relations between Development Education NGOs and the Media, a particularly important theme in the current European media scene. This year the Summer School has been hosted by the Swedish Platform around the theme of 'Inclusion/Exclusion in Development', while in 2006 it will move to Germany and the theme will be 'Development and Sport'.

Advocacy

The Summer School is part of a broader strategy to increase the profile of development education in Europe and strengthen the network of NGOs and practitioners. DEEEP is also supporting the European NGOs to establish strategies to increase public recognition and support for development education. As part of this work, DEEEP has facilitated the participation of the Development Education Forum in the European Conference on Public Awareness and Development Education and given a fundamental contribution to the final recommendations, which will constitute the basis for the work DEEEP and the Development Education Forum will undertake in the next three years.

The Advocacy Working Group of DEEEP supports Development Education Forum members in (a) engaging Member States and the European Commission to establish/improve coherent and comprehensive development education and awareness raising strategies and policies; (b) engaging Member States and European institutions to integrate development education in formal and informal educational systems; (c) engaging the European Institutions and Member States to ensure adequate funding for development education and awareness-raising in their planning, moving towards or beyond a figure of 3% of Official Development Assistance (ODA); (d) engaging the European Commission to integrate development education strategically into the new EU Development Policy Statement before its adoption and coherently translated in other relevant policy processes and instruments.

Information

Communication is crucial in development education. To communicate is to connect – between the North and the South as well as between European NGOs. To facilitate the communication flow between European development educators DEEEP has created a website and a newsletter: ‘Development Education Times’ (English version) or ‘Le Monde de l’Education au Développement’ (French version). The goal is to raise the visibility of development education among non-governmental organisations and vis-à-vis the general public. The newsletter and the website are becoming tools to exchange information, start joint reflection, and improve co-operation between different NGOs and European countries.

On the website (www.deeep.org) are available also background and reflection papers, country reports and practice documents, reports of

activities and the link to the quadri-lingual online database of resources ‘ENGLOBE’ (European Network on Global Learning), an initiative in collaboration with the World University Service (Germany). The database makes it possible to share experiences and resources on Global Learning (North-South relationships, peace, conflict prevention, environment, sustainable development, human rights, gender, and globalisation).

Training

There are several training initiatives running in Europe on development education and public awareness raising. Very few, however, have a clear European ‘taste’. DEEEP has created, therefore, a working group which is currently collecting methodologies and examples of best practices in the ‘Evaluation of impact of Development Education practices’. The toolkit produced out of this work will be used to organise every year six training events in different EU countries. Through this training NGOs will have the opportunity to learn methodologies and strategies to evaluate and improve the impact of their action and capitalise the learning, in a European context.

The Development Education Forum

The Development Education Forum is composed of the representatives of CONCORD’s National Platforms working in development education, who meet annually to establish common strategies to strengthen development education in Europe. Its aims are (a) to link NGDO activities with the major changes in the world, and to the new challenges for development education in Europe; (b) to build alliances and partnerships between the several players of development education and the social movements working on the challenges of globalisation; (c) to identify new collaborations with other networks and co-ordination bodies on specific themes.

Development Education in the enlarging EU

To achieve its goals, DEEEP cooperate on regular basis with TRIALOG (www.trialog.or.at), another programme of the CONCORD family aiming to raise awareness of development issues in the enlarged EU and to strengthen dialogue and partnerships between development NGOs in accession countries, EU countries and developing countries.

Development education is a priority for all new Member Countries, where NGOs and Governments need to get citizens' support to the struggle against poverty worldwide. Different history, new visions and new perspectives of these countries obliges a revision of the same concept of 'development education' which must be adapted to new realities.

DEEPEP?

DEEPEP is now approaching the end of the first phase and a new funding application has been submitted to the European Commission. While in the first phase DEEPEP has expanded the opportunities for development education in Europe, during the second phase (2006-2008), it will consolidate this work, with a stronger participation of partners from ELDC's. In the new European and international scenario, with unprecedented attention to the development agenda, DEEPEP through co-ordinated pan-European strategies and activities in the field of development education will continue supporting NGOs to foster full participation of all citizens in world-wide poverty eradication and the fight against exclusion.

Based in Brussels, **Angelo Caserta** is the Project Coordinator of DEEPEP and was Coordinator of the Development Education Forum from 1999 to 2001. He participates in the joint EC/CONCORD task forces on the future of the NGO co-financing and is a member of the Steering Committee in charge of the follow-up of the European Conference on Public Awareness and Development Education.