

THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION, DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION AND AWARENESS RAISING: REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL WHILE THE FUTURE IS UNWRITTEN

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I cite here in passing two singers from the late 1970s. Ian Dury of *The Blockheads* sang of Britain at a time when things were looking very grim socially and politically; nevertheless, he still sang of ‘reasons to be cheerful’. Meanwhile, the music, politics and philosophy of Joe Strummer of *The Clash*, were depicted powerfully in Julian Temple’s 2007 film ‘The Future is Unwritten’. The open-ended nature of possibility is suggested, where working together across cultures and recognising the joys of diversity - while singing - might just help us to enable justice to prevail. In regard to the current policy environment for global education (GE) and development education and awareness-raising (DEAR), without succumbing to naïve optimism, I would like to suggest that this edition of *Policy and Practice* inspires an amalgam of Drury and Strummer. There are indeed reasons to be cheerful; and the future is unwritten.

At the time of writing, the policy environment regarding GE and DEAR is being re-written; the future of this policy landscape, as yet unwritten, is thankfully being written of a little here and now. It is heartening that just as this issue of *Policy and Practice* is focusing on the issue of the policy environment for GE and DEAR, other journals in the field are also focusing on research regarding the policy environment in Europe. From *Sinergias* in Portugal to the German-language ZEP, to the *International Journal on Development Education and Global Learning* in the UK – all may share a similar focus on the issue of the policy environment for GE and DEAR this Autumn and Winter.

The policy landscape for GE and DEAR - reasons to be cheerful?

If we consider the policy environment for GE/DEAR now in Europe and more globally, compared to a decade ago, then there are indeed reasons to be

cheerful. I will outline here some of the policy perspectives and recent processes, initiatives or policy documents that give rise to hope for more solid support for GE/ DEAR.

At European Union (EU) level and at national level in Europe there have been several promising developments during 2020 that suggest a very specific focus on strengthening GE/DEAR within the EU's broader foreign policy:

- The Council of the EU's Working Party on Development (CODEV), meeting in Brussels on the 6 February 2020, reached a strong consensus on the centrality of GE/DEAR to the EU's aspirations regarding the global goals and the Green New Deal. 14 countries spoke strongly in favour of strengthened support and coherence between national and EU policies and initiatives in GE/DEAR (Wegimont, 2020).
- This consensus was built upon in the Council meetings that led to the adoption of the Council Resolution on Youth in External Actions on 6 June 2020. This put GE/DEAR at the core, calling on the Commission and member states to:

“Enhance active global citizenship through strengthened global education, development education and awareness raising (DEAR) with youth including training, youth work activities and awareness-raising in human rights, sustainable development and good governance – and to support young people's active engagement in responding to global challenges and efforts to build democratic, peaceful, inclusive, equitable, tolerant, secure and sustainable societies across the world...” (EU Council, 2020).

Along with this strengthened recognition of the need for support for GE/DEAR at European level, a growing number of European countries also have their own national strategies, policies or coordinating mechanisms for GE/DEAR (Lee, McAuley and Wegimont, 2020). This includes the strong Irish example cited in the Foreword to this edition by Irish Aid. These national strategic initiatives have consciously learnt from one another through GENE (Ibid.; GENE, 2020). Examples of such learning can be seen in the European Global

Education Peer Review process of GENE, now in its seventeenth year, and the annual *State of Global Education in Europe* (GENE, 2019). They provide both country-based and Europe-wide policy, data, narratives, and research on countries across Europe. When read in tandem with the work of the growing Academic Network on Global Education Learning (ANGEL, 2020) and the work of the aforementioned journals we now see a growing body of policy-related research that augers well for the future of the field.

At *the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)*, there have also been developments over time that have influenced the policy environment for GE/DEAR in a number of ways. These are mostly two-fold: in regard to the growing focus on GE/DEAR within the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Peer Review Process; and in the increasing influence of PISA (Programme of International Student Assessment, 2020) and other large-scale assessments and policy-focused research initiatives of the Education Directorate of the OECD. In regard to the former, it is clear that Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) administrations at national level are exercised by the periodic, comparative and quality enhancement focus of the DAC Peer Reviews. The strength of focus in each Peer Review regarding GE/DEAR has varied (Nygaard, 2020). The DAC has periodically reviewed its guidance for peer reviewers in this regard. This process has strengthened the focus on GE/DEAR over time, and there are some hopeful signs that the guidance manual for reviewers may in future include a stronger and more consistent focus on GE/DEAR. Meanwhile, the OECD Education Directorate has engaged in dialogue regarding the importance of Global Competencies and, since 2018, has included the measurement of global competencies in its PISA assessment (OECD, 2018). While this development is not, and should not be, uncontested; it does provide opportunities for policy dialogue regarding the nature of education, the importance of the global dimension and the necessary defence of centrality of the struggle for justice, equity and human rights in GE/DEAR (Van Damme, 2020; Connolly, Lehtomäki and Scheunpflug, 2019).

At *United Nations (UN) level* the work of UNESCO in ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) (UNESCO, 2020a), GCE (Global

Citizenship Education), EPEV (Education for the Prevention of Extremist Violence) (UNESCO, 2020b) and more broadly the focus on SDG 4.7 (SDSN, 2020) have all enhanced the policy environment for GE/DEAR. I might also mention here the strong work of Bridge 47 (2020) – a group of civil society organisations (CSOs), umbrella bodies and individuals that have managed, through a singular focus on SDG 4.7 and a commitment to coalition building, to move the GE/DEAR agenda significantly in unusual ways and with previously untapped partners. Finally, while the scope of this brief outline is predominantly European, there are a number of national, regional and interregional initiatives emerging among and between policymakers and researchers in the global South. These progressive approaches, while not the focus of this edition, do give rise to hope.

So in spite of the dark clouds gathering on the horizon - in the shape of extremism and fascism; challenges to truth, human rights and multilateralism; and in our abject failure as Europeans to change the narrative and to welcome with open arms those fleeing violence and persecution - there is, nonetheless, hope. If one believes in the ability of people, through critical education – particularly through GE/DEAR – to create a world of greater justice and human rights for all; if one believes that the global North must act in solidarity with peoples across the globe, and particularly in the global South and those who are excluded, locally and globally, to overturn things; then there are in the current policy environment for GE/DEAR reasons to be cheerful.

At no time in the past thirty years has there been such congruence of forces within the policy environment aligned in support for strengthened GE/DEAR (Wegimont, 2020; Hartmeyer and Wegimont, 2016). In my view, this is a result of decades of strategic activist and practitioner engagement; along with growing recognition by policymakers - in development and foreign policy and in education – of the importance of GE and DEAR; combined with a strong policy focus in the recent, burgeoning field of research in GE/DEAR (Bourn 2020; ANGEL, 2020) and, more recently, a growing recognition coming from within the recent crises that current challenges require local/global responses. This, to me suggests that there are indeed reasons to be hopeful, maybe even cheerful.

The future policy environment for GE and DEAR is being written

The articles contained in this edition not only give pause for thought and ask deep, profound, and critical questions regarding current policy and practice in GE, but also give hints towards a foreseeable future policy environment for GE/DEAR. Mags Liddy and Susan Gallwey ask timely and necessary questions regarding the predominance of results-based approaches (RBAs) in the evaluation of development education (DE). In a balanced and thoughtful piece, they outline the roots of RBA approaches in public sector management reform and highlight some of the effects of such approaches. While recognising some of the positive dimensions of RBA approaches, they also outline their narrow limitations. The imposition of such approaches, coming as they do from development cooperation practice, tends to straight-jacket the richness of development education. This results in beating square pegs into round holes. The authors argue ‘the limitations in the use of results and impact miss the other gains and positives that can be attributed to the DE work’. While recognising the necessity at times of RBAs, the writers also outline a number of adaptations and alternatives, raising very useful questions for a way forward; these questions and accompanying critique have been emerging for some time and are currently reflected among researchers in other European countries and languages (Wegimont, 2008; Scheunpflug, 2020; Bergmuller and Hock, 2020).

In the second Focus article in this issue, Dobrawa Aleksiak and Magdalena Kuleta-Hulboj set out a critical analysis of global education in the Polish formal education system. Informed by models of curriculum analysis of GE that take account of framing and national curriculum, the authors take a critical, post-colonial approach to the analysis. The article provides an extensive exploration of both the historical genesis of GE in Poland and of the current situation. Following a strong methodological reflection, recognising strong gains in GE over a decade ago, they analyse more recent national curriculum reform and the integration of GE into particular subject areas. The authors argue that GE in the curriculum has been downplayed. The focus on the national at the expense of the global, particularly in the history curriculum analysed, has meant, according to the authors, a regression in global education

in Poland. The article provides a critical contribution to the debate about the future of education and GE in Poland.

Meliosa Bracken uses a discourse analysis methodology to examine the possibilities for development education within the policies of Adult and Community Education (ACE) in Ireland. Irish development educators have had a strong tradition of moving from initiatives with individual organisations to more sector-wide, partnership approaches. This contribution to policy analysis comes at a time when policy change in the sector in question, coupled with sector-wide initiatives in DE, combine. Bracken outlines an exposition of the context in a detailed and considered critical discourse analysis of the policy landscape. Further Education policy per se, as well as the National Education for Sustainable Development strategy and Irish Aid DE strategies, are explored. The author highlights the importance of identifying policy gaps, as well as highlighting the usefulness of this methodology for policy analysis more broadly. In GE/DEAR strategising, those involved tend to ask questions about the potential or the opportunities within existing education policies. Bracken provides an analysis that in a way turns that habitual order or direction on its head. Her analysis demonstrates how DE strategy might inspire and address critical questions of the broader policy environment, critiquing existing policy and also asking questions that are of immediate relevance to emerging policies.

Articles in the Perspective and Viewpoint sections of this issue also deal with issues in the broader policy landscape. Stephen McCloskey's review of the final report of the UN Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Philip Alston, serves as a potent reminder of the watering down of shared visions for the global eradication of poverty. More broadly and more radically, the article reminds the reader of the necessary, foundational link between GE/DEAR and the critique of the predominant model of development – including a critique of the SDGs. As McCloskey summarises, if GE/DEAR is about education in the tackling of root causes of local and global injustice, then we must remember that:

“The ‘root causes’ of contemporary inequities between North and South include centuries of colonisation, indentured slavery, the extraction of commodities and precious metals and the eradication of indigenous peoples and their cultures, values and lifestyles”.

Doug Bourn looks at the challenges arising from the recent merger of the Department for International Development (DfID) with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the UK into the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. Recognising that there are different models of the relationship between agency and ministry, Bourn provides a useful outline of the location or ‘residence’ of GE/DEAR responsibilities within different line-ministries and agencies in other European countries. He also outlines the implications for DE in the UK of this recent merger and proposes the need for a coalition of stakeholders.

Sive Bresnihan briefly outlines the rationale, piloting and delivery of a new ethical communication course from Comhlámh being run by European partners, reminding us of the necessary intertwining of emotional and cognitive dimensions of the pedagogical process in GE and DEAR. This edition also includes an article by Phethani Madzivhandila on ‘Fighting the Pandemic in the Global South’, which highlights the horrifying effects of our current ordering of the world and the unequal impact of the pandemic; the author calls for a ‘new imagination’ to help build movements for change.

I must conclude by complimenting the authors and the editors of *Policy and Practice*; it was an honour to be invited to guest edit this issue. When read in tandem with forthcoming related editions in sister journals from across Europe, it will be clear from the current edition of *Policy and Practice*, that in spite of the clear and present dangers that beset us in political arenas, nevertheless, the writing in this edition suggests that the policy environment for GE and DEAR gives rise to some considerable hope. In that vein, I conclude with the words of another band from my era, and from the northside of Dublin:

“October /and the trees are stripped bare/ of all they wear/what do I care?”

October/and kingdoms rise, and kingdoms fall, but you go on, and on...”

Note on terminology

In this article the use of the term global education (GE) is based on the Maastricht Declaration (2002) definition:

Global Education is 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. Global Education is understood to encompass Development Education, Human Rights Education, Education for Sustainability, Education for Peace and Conflict Prevention and Intercultural Education; and the global dimensions of Education for Citizenship.

GENE uses the term in its European Peer Review process and other international processes as an umbrella term, in a non-prescriptive way. This enables comparative policy learning, while also respecting the varieties of preferred national terminology – such as development education, global development education, etc. GENE also recognises the prevalent European Community language of Development Education and Awareness-Raising (DEAR). Giving the differing usages across articles in this edition, I use the terms GE and DEAR interchangeably.

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