

CAN GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP BE A PART OF THE POST-2015 AGENDA?

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Abstract: 2015 is an important year for international development with the agreement of a new set of targets that will supersede the Millennium Development Goals. This article maps some ongoing and upcoming development policy initiatives that development educators need to engage with in order to strengthen the global citizenship agenda. It argues that considerable policy advances have already been achieved in an EU context under the auspices of the Development Awareness Raising and Education (DARE) Forum which unites national development platforms across the EU. These efforts should spur the sector toward influencing the post-2015 international development framework to push development education higher up the global policy agenda. The article suggests that development educators need to engage a wider constituency of support from civil society organisations including academics, trade unions, churches, the private sector and local authorities to work together to achieve our goal of global citizenship for all.

Key words: Post-2015 framework; global citizenship; sustainable development; civil society; global policy agenda.

Some of the recent thinking in development education (DE) has suggested that we need to update our current understanding of DE. The traditional definition of DE considers it an active and creative educational process designed to increase awareness and understanding of the world. The development education and awareness raising definition expands on this to suggest that the aims of DE are to: inform citizens about development issues; mobilise greater public support for action against poverty; give citizens tools to engage critically with global development issues; and to foster new ideas and change attitudes (DEAR, 2012: 6). While accepting that these elements

of education are needed, are they enough to address the development challenges in the world today?

I present below some key past and current processes in international development which are central to the framework of global policymaking on development issues. I suggest that development educators need to be aware of these initiatives and, encourage them to engage with upcoming processes around the post-2015 international policy framework which will inform their future activities. These processes include: Education for All (EFA); the Global Education First Initiative (GEFI); the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and education for sustainable development (ESD).

Education for All

The Education for All process was launched at a world conference in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, where the parties agreed to make primary education accessible to all by 2000 and to reduce adult illiteracy by half. A total of 164 UN member countries reaffirmed their commitment to the Jomtien Declaration at the World Education Forum in Dakar, organised by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank in April 2000. The World Education Forum in Dakar adopted a Framework for Action for EFA and the following six goals were targeted for 2015:

- 1) To expand and improve early childhood education;
- 2) To ensure access to primary education for all;
- 3) To provide learning and life-skills programmes for young people and adults;
- 4) To achieve a 50 percent improvement in adult literacy, especially among women;

- 5) Gender equality; and
- 6) To improve every aspect of the quality of education (UNESCO, 2000).

The EFA agenda has been criticised for being too imprecise, too general with overly-ambitious goals and inadequate indicators. Access to primary education and gender equality has improved, but it is argued that the other EFA goals have not received sufficient attention. Cooperation between administrative sectors has not received sufficient attention, for example, in the questions of employment, vocational training, cooperation with the private sector, and youth and family wellbeing. Higher education, research and innovation are not included in the EFA agenda. It is important, therefore, to learn from previous successes, shortcomings and bottlenecks. These have been analysed in particular in the EFA Global Monitoring Reports (GMR) by UNESCO. An independent team of researchers has compiled the GMR, the most important monitoring mechanism for EFA, annually since 2002 (UNESCO, n.d.).

Global Education First Initiative

The biggest global wake-up call for a process towards DEAR and global citizenship has been the Arab Spring, which illustrated the power of informal education networks to create awareness, mobilise people and start to reclaim political power. At the same time, the resources and interest invested in education initiatives related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has decreased which may have spurred the United Nations (UN) Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon's Global Education First Initiative (GEFI). The main focus of GEFI is to get global issues higher on the formal education priority list and one of its three main targets is to promote global citizenship. As the GEFI web site suggests 'Education is much more than an entry to the job market. It has the power to shape a sustainable future and better world. Education policies should promote peace, mutual respect and environmental care' (GEFI, n.d.). GEFI is one of several global initiatives coming to a

critical juncture in 2015 to promote development, justice, sustainability and education in these areas.

In 2012, after the Rio+20 summit, the UN initiated the process of agreeing the post-2015 development framework that will supersede the MDGs. Preparations at the UN-level included, in 2012, the establishment of a UN Task Team, comprising representatives of all UN agencies, which published a report *Realizing the Future We Want for All* (UN Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, 2012), that created a roadmap for planning the Post-2015 agenda. Also in 2012, at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20, the decision was made to draft Sustainable Development Goals and in the summer of 2013, the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on Post-2015, appointed by the UN Secretary-General, completed its report (United Nations, 2012). It proposes 17 development goals to be achieved by 2030. The preparations for the Post-2015 development agenda are picking up pace with intergovernmental negotiations beginning in early 2015. The most important fora on SDGs at the UN-level have been:

- The Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG-SDG): was established after the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development, with the task of preparing a proposal on universal Sustainable Development Goals. The Working Group consisted of 30 Member Countries and its final outcome document and proposal for SDGs was submitted to the UN General Assembly in September 2014 (OWG/SDG, 2014).
- The Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing (ICESDF): was also established as a result of the Rio+20 Conference, with the mandate to assess the resources needed for implementing the SDGs, and the mobilisation of these resources. The ICESDF Report was submitted to the UN General Assembly in September 2014 (ICESDF, 2014). The report will

form the basis for the high-level UN Financing for Development Conference to be held in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July 2015.

- The Synthesis Report of the UN Secretary-General: was published on 4 December 2014 and compiles all Post-2015 planning thus far. It makes a proposition for the international development agenda to 2030 on the basis of the OWG-SDG and the ICESDF reports (United Nations, 2014).

All of these reports will underpin intergovernmental negotiations starting in early 2015. The new post-2015 sustainable development agenda will be adopted at a summit in New York from 21-23 September 2015, during the high-level week of the UN General Assembly.

Post-2015 education and EFA: the process and contents of planning

As in many other sectors, the planning of the Post-2015 education agenda has started in many fora. At the UN level, UNESCO and UNICEF have primarily facilitated the consultations. UNESCO has responsibility for the Education for All process (2000-2015), and thus a central role in designing the education goals. There have been two tracks for these goals at the UN-level: the Outcome Document of the Open Working Group (OWG/SDG, 2014), appointed by the UN Secretary-General, sets out ten education goals (currently the main basis of all Post-2015 preparations); and the UNESCO Muscat Agreement (UNESCO, 2014a), adopted in Spring 2014, and its seven education goals. A wide international consensus exists on the significance of education for development. The outcome document of the OWG-SDG education has its own set of goals, with the overarching goal to 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030' (OWG/SDG, 2014).

This corresponds to the formulations of the Muscat Agreement and the decision of the UNESCO general conference (2013) to view quality, inclusiveness and lifelong learning as guiding principles in the preparation of

the post-2015 education goals. There is thus a shift from primary education to questions regarding the quality of education, including learning. Pre-primary education, secondary education, vocational training and skills, higher education, teachers, literacy and numeracy of young people and adults, and education for sustainable development have all been included in the goals of the OWG-SDG outcome document. Science, research, technology and innovations are included in many of its targets (water, energy etc.). It is necessary to ensure that the impact which quality education can have on poverty reduction is sufficiently taken into account in the universal post-2015 agenda. Furthermore, gender equality and the needs of marginalised/vulnerable groups should be mainstreamed into all activities.

The Muscat Agreement (UNESCO, 2014a) was adopted at the high-level UNESCO Global Education for All meeting in Muscat, Oman held from 12-14 May 2014. UNESCO submitted the Muscat goals to the Secretary-General's OWG-SDG in the summer, and the outcome document of the OWG was submitted to the UN General Assembly in September. Many of the Muscat goals were taken into consideration in the outcome document. The background to UNESCO's preparations were informed by the decision of the UNESCO general conference (2013) to obligate the UNESCO Director-General to consult member countries on the preparations for post-2015 education goals and create a global Framework for Action. The purpose of the Framework for Action is to support member countries in realising the agenda, including in the creation of differentiated and country-specific indicators. The high-level World Education Forum (WEF) in Incheon, South Korea, to be held from 19-22 May 2015 will adopt a position on the Framework for Action. The fact that the final decision on the development goals for education, together with the rest of the post-2015 agenda, will be taken in September, is a challenge given that negotiations between governments have been very difficult to date. However, the UNESCO general conference in November 2015 aims to seal the Framework for Action on the basis of the decisions made at the UN post-2015 summit in September.

The World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development in Japan from 10-12 November 2014 concluded the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD, 2005-14). The conference launched a Global Action Programme on ESD and contributed to the post-2015 preparations on education (UNESCO, 2014b). UNESCO has collected reports on the implementation of the EFA-agenda (2000-2014) from its member countries and will draw from these reports in the EFA Global Monitoring Report that will be published in April 2015. The report will examine how the EFA-agenda has been delivered to date, for example in regard to the financing of education, efficiency and monitoring. The report will pave the way for the World Education Forum in South Korea. As a further aspect of the preparations, the UNESCO Director-General has appointed a technical advisory group (TAG) to discuss indicators to monitor the education goals. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) coordinates the work of the group consisting of representatives from the OECD, the World Bank, UNICEF and the team behind the EFA Global Monitoring Report. The TAG is expected to publish its report in Spring 2015. Meanwhile, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) is currently coordinating preparation of the report *Rethinking Education and Learning in a Changing World* which takes lessons from the so called *Faure Report* (1972) and the *Delors Report* (1996). Both reports are important milestones for the concept of life-long learning and for humane and values-based education.

Education for sustainable development

It is very important also to mention the important work carried out in the field of sustainable development from the original Rio summit in 1992 when the ESD concept was created. This has resulted in remarkable work in many countries to get people interested in global issues and sustainability. The concept of sustainable development was introduced in the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, chaired by former Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland. Sustainable development was defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own

needs. From the environmental point of view taken by the Brundtland Commission, the concept of sustainable development has grown to incorporate three dimensions: ecological/environmental, social (including cultural) and economic. Multiple documents on the topic have in recent years emphasised the need to assign all three dimensions equal weight and value.

The concept of ‘ecosocial civilisation and wellbeing’, the newest concept in the international discourse, attempts to clarify the relationship between these three dimensions. It has, as its starting point, guaranteeing the prerequisites for life through an ecological dimension. The second dimension is the social one, with respect for human rights. The ecological and social dimensions make it possible to develop a stable economy. The ecosocial concept and its hierarchy are not yet in common use but the idea is gaining in popularity for example among scholars. The final document of the UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro 1992, Agenda 21, identifies education as the basis of all development. This was confirmed in the follow-up summit in Johannesburg 2002. Today ESD is understood as education that allows human beings to acquire knowledge and skills on sustainable development to be able to adopt critical and creative solutions in different situations. The DESD has strengthened the position of ESD by enhancing the position of sustainable development in many national and local curricula, which was one of the main goals for the decade. In addition, the quality of classroom practice and teacher education has received special attention although there are still significant differences between countries and regions.

There has been a shift in emphasis from the early phase of ESD, when normative guidance (creating strategies and curricula and improving teacher education) was in focus, to promoting a participatory approach and measuring concrete results. The most challenging part about measuring results is that ESD encompasses lifelong learning in many different subjects, vocations and activities. A DESD conference was organised in Bonn 2009 and the resulting Bonn Declaration addresses a wide range of issues to further promote ESD. On a policy level the document focuses on promoting

quality education, increasing public awareness and understanding about sustainable development and ESD, mobilising sufficient resources for ESD, further developing schools' curricula and creating cooperation mechanisms between different actors. On a practical level the Bonn Declaration addresses, for example, monitoring and evaluation, an integrated approach to ESD, scientific research, workplace learning, youth, civil society and equality. There is a continuing need for improvement in all of the issues above, almost everywhere in the world.

The 37th session of the general conference of UNESCO (2013) adopted the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2013). It was also adopted by the UN General Assembly and officially launched at the ESD World Conference in Japan in November 2014. The leading principles of the programme were chosen with care:

- ESD supports informed decision-making;
- ESD is grounded in a rights-based approach to education;
- ESD requires creative and innovative solutions;
- ESD is transformative education (education, that strives to reorient society, not just reaffirm it);
- ESD relates to the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced and holistic manner;
- ESD encompasses both formal and informal education;
- In addition, many other activities are in line with the goals of ESD, although they may not be referred to as ESD.

The priority action areas of the programme are integrating ESD into policies, promoting whole-institutional approaches to ESD, teacher education, youth and local communities.

ESD is also connected to the wider discussion on the status of education at the conclusion of the MDGs and as the post-2015 development agenda is taking form. UNESCO is organising a world education forum in South Korea in May 2015, to discuss post-2015 education goals and an action programme to support them. ESD builds upon the EFA-process which has helped to promote education around the world and the EFA-goals, like the MDGs, stretch to 2015. Through EFA, significant progress has been made in the field of education (particularly through access to primary education and improving gender equality), and the international community has accepted education as a vital tool in promoting sustainable development. ESD is one aspect of this education. A more precise definition of the content of ESD is currently under development in separate processes and documents, simultaneously and while taking notes from the Post-2015 process. The launch of the Global Action Programme and the ESD conference in Japan 2014 have been examples of this (UNESCO, 2014c).

How can DE influence the post-2015 agenda? And what are the possible benefits to practitioners?

European development education and awareness raising (DEAR) activists, especially in CONCORD (The European Confederation of Relief and Development NGOs), the DARE forum and through its development education project (DEEEP), have incorporated these processes into their agenda in an effort to influence the post-2015 process. DEEEP (2014), for example, organised a conference in June 2014 in Brussels to formulate a common proposal towards post-2015 and the global citizenship agenda. DEEEP has also been active in a UNESCO-led process to better identify the concept of global citizenship and advocate for UN member states to incorporate it into their post-2015 negotiations.

In 2015, there will be a once in a lifetime (or at least in a generation) opportunity to have the elements of development education, global citizenship and education for sustainable development pushed higher up the global policy agenda. Global citizenship and ESD have been so far proposed in open working group reports and we have to keep them there when

governments negotiate the SDGs in 2015. We need wider constituency support from civil society organisations including academics, trade unions, churches, the private sector and local authorities to work together to achieve our goals for global citizenship for all.

One of the elements of the proposed new agenda is to make it universal thus avoiding the usual ‘developed’ or ‘developing’ countries classification. This means that every country in the world must take into consideration their behaviour towards climate change, inequality, tolerance, growth, social affairs etc. That needs a big change in mind-set and civil society can really play a fundamental role in translating these principles into practice.

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