

## **EDITORIAL**

### **STELLA MURRAY**

This issue of Policy and Practice focuses on global citizenship and looks at some of the challenges of educating people in our society to be responsible global citizens. Our rapidly globalising world is full of possibilities. New technologies and increased communications open up a world of opportunities. Peoples' lives around the world are linked more closely than ever before - whether for good or for ill - and our potential as global citizens with the ability to impact outside our national boundaries is growing expeditiously. Recognising and embracing this potential is an exciting and challenging prospect and one with which a growing number of educators are involved.

The media profile of global injustice, wars and climate change, however, presents a daunting future to our young citizens. From this world view there are many examples of conflicts being 'resolved' by the creation of yet greater conflict and cultural diversity is often presented as a threat. The consequences of our interdependence are most obvious in the effects of war and environmental damage, or the injustices of international trade laws, led by an often inconsiderate consumer driven global economy. Repeated tales of global poverty can lead to a sense of superiority rather than solidarity. Saturated with images of human suffering, many people are overwhelmed by the scale of the problems involved and driven to apathy rather than empathy.

The task of the development educator is to facilitate a way forward and enable learners to embrace their role as global citizens. Perhaps instead of dwelling on 'what is wrong with the world?' we should be focusing on 'what is right with the world?' Changes to national curricula and a recognised need across many sectors for the inclusion of citizenship education with a global agenda has meant that more people, whether through choice or necessity, are

now involved in citizenship education. The Oxfam 'Education for Global Citizenship' resource presented the case succinctly:

“Global citizenship goes beyond simply knowing that we are citizens of the globe to an acknowledgement of our responsibilities both to each other and to the Earth itself. It is about valuing the Earth as precious and unique and safeguarding the future for those coming after us. It includes understanding the need to tackle injustice and inequality, and having the desire and ability to do so actively. Global Citizenship is an outlook on life that everyone can have, at any age, anywhere in the world” (Oxfam, 2003:5).

Ultimately, education for global citizenship gives children and young people the opportunity to develop critical thinking about complex issues in safe places.

Increased public engagement with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the rise of global actions such as the Global Campaign Against Poverty and the Global Campaign for Education means that activists can participate in a civic arena on a grander scale. Though the complexities of these campaigns at policy level are often diluted to make them more marketable, the details are still there for those who wish to delve deeper. More political space and opportunities are now available for NGOs to participate in policy decision making at international level. NGOs are increasingly going into partnerships to form coalitions with a voice in places of real power. Although sometimes plagued by the restrictions of internal policies and branding, these coalitions still mark a cooperation which is long overdue and which can produce real results for the citizens involved. This issue of Policy and Practice has the objective of engaging with all of these diverse and often challenging issues.

The term 'global citizenship' can cover a range of issues and methodologies in a variety of sectors. This is reflected in the varied contributions in this issue of the journal. In particular, the following Focus

articles examine a wide range of issues linked with the theme ‘global citizenship’. In his article, Chris Armstrong looks at the potential for involvement in global civil society and considers citizenship beyond the borders of the nation state. He examines the nature of global civil society as the field of engagement for global citizenship and considers the relationships between global and local forms of citizenship. Su-Ming Khoo looks at the mainstreaming of citizenship education and explores the relevance of citizenship and civic engagement to development education at third level and beyond. She also shares the exciting possibilities offered through ‘service learning’ as illustrated in the example offered at National University of Ireland, Galway. Vanessa Andreotti’s thought provoking article compares ‘soft’ and ‘critical’ models of citizenship education and stresses the need for educators to be ‘critically literate’ in order to avoid the pitfalls of a more palatable approach. Graham Finlay argues the need for the inclusion of ‘popular development’ into development education. He encourages development educators to include debate on participatory approaches to development practice. Gerard McCann and Peter Finn give an overview of recent developments in citizenship education across EU member states. This article considers the European Commission’s need for a “shared civic identity” to facilitate economic integration. The subsequent education policies which have arisen to meet this need vary from country to country but have similar goals.

These articles represent a range of issues relating to global citizenship and development education practice. The measure of our success to produce knowledgeable, informed, skilled and above all active responsible citizens may be the positive change which comes about through their actions. Were it possible to set out the requirements of a global citizen, I would hope that values and attitudes relating to solidarity, empathy and respect would score highly. Ultimately, the ability to think and argue critically should be strongly promoted along with commitment and conviction to social justice and equity.

To conclude, the recent Irish Government’s White Paper on Irish Aid states that:

“...every person will have access to educational opportunities to be aware of and understand their rights and responsibilities as global citizens and their potential to effect change for a more just an equal world”.

Coupled with increased funding for development education activities this can be interpreted as a step in the right direction. This is a timely intervention by the Irish Government in the discourse on citizenship and presents those involved in both formal and non-formal education with the challenge of encouraging responsible global citizenship.

### **References**

Irish Aid (2006) *White Paper on Irish Aid*, available: [www.irishaid.gov.ie/whitepaper](http://www.irishaid.gov.ie/whitepaper).

Oxfam (2003) *Education for Global Citizenship*, Oxford: Oxfam, p.5.