

THE EUROPEAN CONSENSUS ON DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION: FROM SCRATCH TO IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

In this article, **Rilli Lappalainen** looks at the European Union's efforts to coordinate and evaluate development education practice through common frameworks, joint strategy monitoring and evaluation reports and documentation of various countries' development education innovation, strategies and implementation. It aims to demonstrate the utility of Europe-wide research in maximising effective development education delivery through communication and coordination among member states.

Introduction

The European Union (EU) is the foremost donor of international aid in the world, accounting for 56 per cent of the total aid flows (DCD-DAC, 2010). Despite the quantity, effectiveness of aid has not yet reached a proportional level. Due to this contradiction, coordination and harmonisation of development cooperation has been one of the EU's main concerns in the first decade of 21st century. In addition, development education and awareness raising have gained ground at the European level as well. Beginning from the Europe-wide Maastricht Global Education Congress in 2002, the importance of global education/development education has been emphasised at the EU political level as a means to poverty eradication and sustainable development.

To harmonise European development strategies, a common framework for development education and awareness raising was published in November 2007. It assisted in the implementation of the general European Consensus on Development, set up in 2005, with particular reference to the declaration that '...the EU will pay particular attention to development education and raising awareness among EU citizens' (2005). *The European Consensus on Development: The contribution of Development Education & Awareness Raising* was compiled in joint cooperation with representatives from EU member states, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), European Commission, European Parliament, the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) and the Council of Europe. The representatives comprise the European Multi-Stakeholder Steering Group on Development and Education, established in Helsinki in 2006. The strategy framework is a roadmap for decision-makers and different organisations in the EU member states to carryout persistent, regular and creative educational work.

The joint statement provided the first strategy framework for development education at local, regional, national and European level.

The European Consensus on Development

The main aim of 2007's *European Consensus on Development: The contribution of Development Education & Awareness Raising* was to increase people's knowledge about global issues and their understanding of the interconnectedness of the world, hoping to in turn transform their actions reflecting to the ethos of global responsibility (2007). It also promotes people's active engagement in global issues and to take knowledgeable, critical, and positive public action in a changing world. In addition, the Consensus seeks to enhance interest in common international concerns and to strengthen cooperation between different stakeholders. The development education sector in Europe requires wider impact and better integration in the existing informal and formal education systems to establish collaborative strategies between EU, state and non-state actors.

The Consensus offers a clear framework for institutions and other actors in the field, and it has already encouraged countries to initiate their own national strategies for development education and awareness raising. In addition, it drives to establish active dialogue between stakeholders in order to create common operation models and to learn from other's experiences to avoid possible flaws and overlaps. The framework answers to the urgent needs of systemising the heavily fractured development education field in Europe and encourage different stakeholders to be involved in cross-cutting activities.

Initiating the evaluation process

Evaluating progress on the European Consensus on Development Education was taken forward when the European Development Education Monitoring Report (DE Watch) was published in June 2010. The report constitutes an integrated overview of the existing development education policies around Europe. The comparative overview provides practitioners and policy-makers adequate information on DE frameworks used in 28 European countries and enables readers to seek parallels between the different systems.

The study was conducted between January and May 2010 on behalf of the European Multi-Stakeholder Steering Group. It is not based on a primary piece of research, which some see as compromising the reliability of the report.

Instead, the data was collected through a range of previous studies on development education in Europe, and was compiled on a synthetic basis. The documents that were utilised in the study included national reports and previous European evaluations and surveys, e.g. General Evaluation of DE/AR by the EC (2008), CONCORD/DEF Study on DE in the School Curriculum (2009) and various other reports. During the spring of 2010, the study was circulated twice for additional comments from the different stakeholders. The stakeholders included: 11 governmental and 20 non-governmental national actors from 18 countries; two international actors (North South Centre, Global Education Network Europe); and representatives from the Development Education Research Centre at University of London (DE Watch, 2010).

Although the dependability of the study can be questioned, it should be viewed as a working paper - a well-projected starting point, calling for future updates and further research. It enables readers to seek common denominators within the systems and identify recommendations and proposals for the development education sector in Europe. It also takes into account various levels in DE and helps to elaborate coherent and coordinated strategies within Europe (DE Watch, 2010).

The methodological challenges are also expressed in the DE Watch. One of the most challenging issues in the making of the monitoring report was the inconsistency between definitions of development education in different countries. The usage of different jargon made it difficult to analyse the amount of funding that development education is granted in different contexts and therefore, direct comparisons between the different countries are unreliable. The report attempts to conceptualise the term development education into four main groups: public relations; awareness raising; global education; and life skills. Without acknowledging a starting point for a well-balanced framework, a need for extra clarification and discussion on the substance is needed.

The findings compiled in the research suggested some common trends and tendencies that could be enthroned from the study. In countries where development education is practised in close cooperation between different institutions, the impact of DE has been more effective. Also common strategies for implementation enrich the vitalisation of quality DE. In addition, the research concluded that the responsible ministries and institutions should be in a leading position in implementing the common development education strategies, including schools' curricula. For the finalisation of quality DE, development education should be understood as part of a good democratic

process, where it functions as a necessity for common global responsibility and a sustainable future (DE Watch, 2010).

Monitoring and restructuring of DE in Europe

Presently, development education is in turmoil. The global financial crisis and the politically right-wing atmosphere in Europe have led to DE funding setbacks during the past years. This was also identified by the NGO representatives taking part in the Development Awareness Raising and Education Forum, which met on 20 May 2010 in Lisbon, Portugal. However, despite insufficient funding, a great deal of effort is put in lobbying and implementing development education in many countries. In France, the Ministry of Education has decided to integrate education for sustainable development into their schools' curricula; Cyprus has shown efforts to commence drafting their own national strategy for DE; and Estonia has finalised a national concept paper. Also, various other cross-curricular networks are being developed to strengthen the implementation of DE in a more coherent and Europe-wide approach. In numerous countries national strategies for DE have been constructed through a multi-stakeholder process, including the Czech Republic, Ireland and Finland. More recently strategies have been developed in Portugal and Spain (in 2009 and 2007, respectively), where they are currently in the phase of preparing action plans for the implementation of the strategy.

The increase in the number of national strategies is promising, but attention to the quality of DE should be of further concern. The process should also include a variety of civil society actors, and should be provided with sufficient funding. In line with the intentions of harmonisation and including civil society organisations and local authorities (CSO & LA) in the decision-making process, the European Commission launched a structured dialogue process in March 2010 (European Commission, 2010). It brings different stakeholders to the same table to discuss jointly the EU's different development policies. The structured dialogue aims to find ways to improve the effectiveness and quality of CSO & LA involvement in the European Commission's development education and awareness raising cooperation and programmes. It consists of various working groups, several meetings and regional seminars, and three supporting initiatives, including a seminar on Development Education & Awareness Raising (DEAR). The format encourages participants to contribute their knowledge and ideas in the discussions through live-events, but also through structured dialogue on-line discussions (European Commission, 2010).

The DEAR Study

To facilitate the ongoing structured dialogue process, the European Commission (EC) assigned a team of experts to carry out an initial study on the European development education sector. The primary focus of the study is on the CSO & LA projects funded by the European Commission and which operated between 2004 and 2009. The interim report of the 'Study on the Experience and Actions of the Main European Actors Active in the field of Development Education and Awareness Raising' (DEAR Study), similar to the DE-Watch, includes an overview of the main actors, strategies and initiatives in the field of DEAR in the 27 EU Member States and offers recommendation for future EC initiatives in the field of DEAR. In addition, the study examines 286 EC-funded projects, and compares feedback gathered from the field to find quality practices in project cooperation, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Additionally, the DEAR-study focuses on portraying the different national development education sectors and gives details on country specific cooperation forms. The final report will be published in November 2010, after it has been circulated for comments and responses from DEAR stakeholders (DEAR Study, 2010).

Development Education Summer School in Finland

Continuing the multi-stakeholder progression in the EU, the European development education project DEEEP (Developing Europeans' Engagement for the Eradication of global Poverty) and CONCORD annually organise a week-long Development Education Summer School (DESS), an international event aimed at sharing knowledge and learning. It is targeted to European Union and the countries, as well as Southern NGO partners. The Summer School educates on the annual theme, reinforces participants' ability to work towards reducing global poverty and strengthens their social participation. The 2011 DESS in Finland will for the first time feature a multi-stakeholder view on DE, with representatives from different European multi-stakeholder groups invited to attend the event. It will focus on the quality and impact of development education projects and initiatives, and will therefore also content-wise continue the process of reaching quality development education in Europe.

Conclusion

The progress in development education in Europe since the 2002 Maastricht Treaty has been considerable. The increase in international processes in

development education and the multilateral dialogue possesses great potential for future work and it demonstrates the strong commitment of people working in the field. The importance of the previous milestones presented in this article, including the studies prepared in joint collaboration with different stakeholders and the increasing political engagement towards development education, lies in the created momentum that needs to be maintained. The reports such as the DE Watch and the DEAR study, as well as *The European Consensus on Development: The contribution of Development Education & Awareness Raising*, have paved the way to create stronger political commitment and increase the level of knowledge in development education. Establishing a common framework and creating a legally binding document for European nations to ensure quality development education for all can be reached through versatile and comprehensive dialogue with every stakeholder involved and committed to the work.

References

DCD-DAC, Development Co-operation Directorate, (2010) *Development aid rose in 2009 and most donors will meet 2010 aid targets*. Available at: http://www.oecd.org/document/11/0,3343,en_2649_34447_44981579_1_1_1_1,00.html

DEAR Study Team (2010) *“Work in Progress”: Interim Report of the “Study on the Experience and Actions of the Main European Actors Active in the field of Development Education and Awareness Raising” [DEAR Study]*, available: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/aidco/images/d/de/DEAR_Interim_report_text_2010.pdf.

European Commission Technical Assistance Team, (2010) *Structured Dialogue, Background Document*, available: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/who/partners/civil-society/documents/final_structured_dialogue_background_document_en.pdf

European Multi-Stakeholder Steering Group on Development Education (2010) *European Development Education Monitoring Report “DE Watch”*, available: http://www.deeep.org/fileadmin/user_upload/downloads/MSH_group/DE_Watch.pdf.

Joint Statement (2007) *The European Consensus on Development: The contribution of Development Education & Awareness Raising*, available: http://www.deeep.org/fileadmin/user_upload/downloads/Consensus_on_DE/DE_Consensus-EN.pdf.

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 (2005) *The European Consensus*, 14820/05, 22 November 2005, Brussels, available: http://www.fp7.org.tr/tubitak_content_files//268/dokumanlar/eu-consensus-development.pdf

Rilli Lappalainen is the Co-Chair of the ‘European Consensus on Development: the contribution of Development Education & Awareness Raising’ process, a member of the board of CONCORD (the European NGO confederation for relief and development), and the former chair of the CONCORD Development Education Forum.