

CHAPTER A

WHAT IS GLOBAL EDUCATION?

DEFINITIONS AND DECLARATIONS

Global education is an education perspective which arises from the fact that contemporary people live and interact in an increasingly globalised world. This makes it crucial for education to give learners the opportunity and competences to reflect and share their own point of view and role within a global, interconnected society, as well as to understand and discuss complex relationships of common social, ecological, political and economic issues, so as to derive new ways of thinking and acting. However, global education should not be presented as an approach that we may all accept uncritically, since we already know there are dilemmas, tensions, doubts and different perceptions in an education process when dealing with global issues.

There are many definitions of global education. The Maastricht Global Education Declaration (2002) states:

Global education is education that opens people's eyes and minds to the realities of the globalised 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; being the global dimension of Education for Citizenship.

Various international documents are related to the development of the concept of global education. We have listed some of them because each, in its own way, focuses and enriches this approach:

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Educating shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Article 26, United Nations, General Conference, San Francisco, 10 December 1948

www.un.org/education

Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

UNESCO, General Conference, Paris, 19 November 1974

www.unesco.org/education

Agenda 21, Chapter 36: Promoting Education, Public Awareness and Training

Education, including formal education, public awareness and training should be recognized as a process by which human beings and societies can reach their fullest potential. Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues.

United Nations Conference on Environment & Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3 to 14 June 1992

www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents

UNESCO - Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy. Paris 1995

Introduction: Education has to develop the capacity of appreciation of the value of freedom and the capacities needed for facing the challenges associated to it. This means to educate citizens for resolving difficult and uncertain situations, to build in them aptitudes for autonomy and individual responsibility. This is linked with the appreciation of the value of civic involvement and the capacity of association with other persons for resolving problems and for working towards the building of an equitable, peaceful and democratic society.

UNESCO, General Conference, Paris, November 1995

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United Nations Millennium Declaration, 2000, Chapter: Values and principles

We believe that the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for the world's people. While globalisation offers great opportunities, at present its benefits are very unevenly shared, while its costs are unevenly distributed. We recognize that developing countries and countries with economies in transition face special difficulties in responding to this central challenge. Thus, only through broad and sustained efforts to create a shared future, based upon our common humanity in all its diversity, can globalisation be made fully inclusive and equitable.

Resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations, New York, 8 September 2000

www.un.org/millenniumgoals

United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014

The basic vision of Education for Sustainable Development is a world where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from education and learn the values, behaviour and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and for positive societal transformation.

United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, International Implementation Scheme, January 2005

www.unesco.org/education

European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008

Article 2: Objectives

1. The overall objectives of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue shall be to contribute to [...] raising the awareness of all those living in the EU, in particular young people, of the importance of developing an active European citizenship which is open to the world, respects cultural diversity and is based on common values in the EU as laid down in Article 6 of the EU Treaty and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union [...]

2. The specific objectives of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue shall be to: foster the role of education as important medium for teaching about diversity, increase the understanding of other cultures and developing skills and best social practices, and highlight the central role of the media in promoting the principle of equality and mutual understanding.

European Parliament and the Council of Europe, Decision No. 1983/2006/EC, 18 December 2006

<http://ec.europa.eu/culture/portal/events/current/dialogue2008>

Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, June 2008

Intercultural approach offers a forward-looking model for managing cultural diversity. It proposes a conception based on individual human dignity (embracing our common humanity and common destiny). If there is a European identity to be realised, it will be based on shared fundamental values, respect for common heritage and cultural diversity as well as respect for the equal dignity of every individual. Intercultural dialogue has an important role to play in this regard. It allows to prevent ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural divides. It enables to move forward together, to deal with our different identities constructively and democratically on the basis of shared universal values.

<http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural>

GLOBAL EDUCATION AS TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING PROCESS

In these guidelines we want to look at the role of global education and question attitudes, moving from the culture of individualism, often associated with dominance, to a culture of partnership based on dialogue and cooperation. The first cultural model characterises educational systems in many countries where global themes and building consciousness of world realities are not thought to be relevant to national visions. On the other hand the partnership model can lead to international understanding and cooperation between nations and peoples.

Aspects of domination exist in so many different facets of our societies and are deeply rooted in the structures of education systems. The present model of education reflects this dominance to a large extent. Criticism against it underlines that this model leads to adversarial relationships between individuals and between peoples, particularly if they belong to different cultures, religions, social groups or ways of thinking.

By separating subjects and categorising them we have created hierarchies of knowledge and devalued other ways of learning. The detachment that is created by this process of compartmentalised education does not place us in a connected world and so we have been unable to build bridges to approach, get to know and understand others.

Global education is about implementing the vision required to move to a model of partnership between peoples, cultures and religions at micro and macro levels.

Transformative learning through global education involves a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thoughts, feelings and actions. It is an education for the mind as well as for the heart. This implies a radical change towards interconnectedness and creates possibilities for achieving more equality, social justice, understanding and cooperation amongst peoples.

Three main stages of transformative learning are strongly linked to global education:

- *An analysis of the present world situation*
- *A vision of what alternatives to dominant models might look like*
- *A process of change towards responsible global citizenship*

Global education as transformative learning implies participatory decision-making processes at all these stages. The goal of this kind of learning is to foster mutual knowledge and collective self-awareness. Global education challenges greed, inequality and egocentrism through cooperation and solidarity instead of dividing people through competition, conflict, fear and hatred.

Global education as transformative learning offers a way to make changes at local levels to influence the global in the sense of building citizenship through participatory strategies and methods, so that people learn by taking responsibilities that cannot be left only to governments and other decision makers.

At both micro and macro levels global education brings together the agendas of different fields of education: Development Education, Human Rights Education, Education for Sustainability, Education for Peace and Conflict Prevention, Intercultural and Interfaith Education, the global dimension of Education for Citizenship etc. - in order to define the common grounds of global education.

This will create a real impact on both formal education and non-formal education, which has a huge role to play in bringing people towards a wider understanding of their real power to shape the future.

But global education is not only about global themes, world problems and how to find solutions all together. It is also about how to envision a common future with better life conditions for all, connecting local and global perspectives, and how to make this vision real and possible, starting from our own small spot in the world. Transformative learning enables people to shape a common vision for a more just, sustainable world for all. A focus on the kind of future we want is therefore crucial in such a transformative vision.

Global education can contribute to the visioning process, but it can also play a role in the creation of new methods where social movements and non-formal learning processes are essential as they make room for values, issues and approaches not central to formal learning and give voice to all people, including the marginalised ones.

By shifting the focus onto the transformation from a culture of reproduction and dominance to one of partnership based on dialogue and cooperation, global education modifies established global economy rules by restoring human dignity as a central value.