

Development Education and the School Curriculum

SYNTHESIS of the REPORT on the status of development education in the formal education sector and school curriculum in countries of the European Union

The survey focused on 8 areas of enquiry, and was circulated to the national platforms of NGOs and educational networks active in the creative development and promotion of DE/Global Education in all 27 EU member states. In addition, contributions were also received from China and Hong Kong.

The original report was published in December 2006, and can be downloaded from www.deeep.org.

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The past is a foreign country, they do things differently there. ⁽¹⁾

The millennium provided us all with a subtle but definite change in our perceptions of nation states, global interdependence, collective security, and shared responsibility for sustaining this fragile planet and all its natural resources – including our common humanity. In these first few years of the third millennium educators around the world have begun to talk about education and schools for the 21st century. On a global scale, it is not sufficient to anticipate the achievement of millennium development goal number 2, ensuring that all children can realise their right to a decent primary education, using as a blue-print models of schooling from the past and the curriculum content of the 20th century. We are all obliged to examine whether our school curricula, and the values, attitudes, behaviours and achievements fostered within the school environment contribute to a sustainable future for all nations.

For more than 30 years Development Education has sought to raise people's basic awareness of international development priorities and sustainable human development, through understanding of the causes and effects of national and global socio-economic and political choices. It is not a passive educational agenda, but one that encourages the informed participation of all citizens in worldwide poverty eradication, and the struggle against exclusion and the abuse of human rights.

DEEEP's ⁽²⁾ (the Development Education Exchange in Europe Project) bi-annual surveys of Development Education (DE) in the EU show that the education of young people, and influencing the school curriculum, are consistent priorities for global/development education practitioners throughout Europe.

But the practice of bringing DE or 'the global dimension' into school curricula differs widely between countries. In new member states of the EU it is a relatively new phenomenon outside traditional subjects such as history and geography, with a consequent lack of clarity and agreement about its meaning, interpretation, and relevance to both whole school and subject curricula.

In May 2006 the Curriculum Working Group of CONCORD's DE Forum ⁽³⁾ devised a questionnaire to provide base-line information for examining the status of DE in the formal education sectors of the EU, comparing the application and integration of DE in school curricula across all member states. The results reveal a wealth of information about similarities and differences in the interpretation, current status, practices, and governmental support for Development Education. The survey has provided indicators for what areas of school curricula need to be strengthened, and through what collective measures – to help educate Europe's young people to be active and responsible global citizens with the confidence, skills, shared values, and knowledge to manage local and global priorities of the 21st century.

1 from L.P. Hartley's *The Go-Between*

2 www.deeep.org

(3) www.concordeurope.org

1- What names or terms are used to describe Development Education (DE) or global education (GE) when it is discussed with the formal education sector in your country, (e.g. with schools, teachers, Ministry of Education, government agencies, education authorities, colleges of education, curriculum agencies, etc)?

Although definitions for DE and GE have been debated and refined over the years, they have not been widely adopted by the formal education sector, or by teacher training institutions, or in curriculum development and reform processes. Government recognition and support for DE, as revealed in responses to questions 5, 6 and 8, has – in more than 80% of the countries surveyed – been drawn from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or departments for International development, and surprisingly not from Ministries of Education – despite the implications for their core constituencies of teachers, pupils, school support services, and national and regional education policies.

The survey showed up:

- Difficulties in most countries agreeing the ‘right’ terminology to use to describe DE or GE.
- That in most countries, they are **still in the process of defining DE/GE...**
- But that there is **a global consensus on the word “Education”**.
- Development Education and Global Education are the most widely used terms in Europe.
- The general rule is that use and familiarity depend on the ‘experts’ – whether institutions, practitioners, or the NGO DE sector... It has evolved to address both the quality of education for young people across the school age range, and the application of a complex range of ideas to national curricula and learning methodologies. But its practitioners have had to lobby for recognition and inclusion, and the terminology is still largely identified through a development rather than a pedagogical agenda.
- For several countries, the term combines 2 objectives (epithet adjective + ‘education’ as in *peace education, environmental education...*): to promote the reflection and to aim at changing behaviour.

For others, the priority is on the learning process and on understanding (the use of the word ‘studies’ is therefore relevant: *human rights studies, intercultural studies...*).

2- Where does ‘development education’ appear in school curricula in your country, and in which subjects?

- The traditional humanities subjects of geography and history are still the principal subjects for including the content and aims of DE.

But many of the new subjects within modern curricula (*Personal, social and health education, Citizenship, and Environmental studies...*) address contemporary issues that define the content of DE.

- **Development Education is perceived as cross-curricular and transversal for 56% of the respondents.**
- DE enables the inclusion of a global dimension throughout the curriculum (culture, human rights, sustainable development ...)

- There were few indicators for the integration or mention of DE in political studies (e.g. as in democracy education), which reveals a general reluctance in schools to significantly address political/ideological issues.

Two recommendations emerge:

1) DE should be included in teacher pre-service and in-service training.

Recognition and resources should also be given to **the capacity building of external (e.g. NGO) trainers and educators**, particularly given the fact that most of the significant research into the subject and its impact – as well as the main body of published classroom, teaching and guidance materials, result from activities and projects undertaken by NGOs, working with and in support of the schools sector.

2) A Europe-wide database of best practices for curriculum development needs to be set up, including examples of effective teacher/school support; approved learning materials and methods; how to embed DE issues/the ‘global dimension’ into different subjects...

3- How is DE identified and described in official school curriculum documents?

There is a shade of difference between answers given as “not identified” or “not officially identified”:

- **DE is not identified formally or described in National School Curriculum (NSC) (and in virtually all countries, the phrase ‘development education’ does not appear officially in NSC)**

Nevertheless, it can be identified :

- as an area for learning in the curriculum, or as part of the contents of the NSC (reflected through terms such as ‘global’, ‘sustainable development’, ‘intercultural’, ‘interdependence’...)
- in official documents that do mention DE and related issues and have a formal status.
- as a cross cutting subject in the school curriculum or in extra-curricular activities, introduced and implemented by teachers themselves, by schools, by associations and in a very few cases through institutional regulatory procedures.
- In a few instances it is identified formally but in a ‘narrow way’: as a single subject (e.g. in Italy as “*Civil Cohabitation Education*”, or as “*Social Justice*” in Ireland).
- In Wales it is specifically expressed through the Welsh Assembly’s strategy for Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship, addressed to all sectors of education.

The goal of ‘international solidarity’ is also identified as, for example, in the Swedish Curricula for upper secondary schools, elementary schools, pre-schools, and after school recreation centres:

'An international perspective is important in order to see our own reality in a global context, and to create international solidarity and prepare students for a society with close contacts beyond cultural and national borders'.

4- What are the priority themes for DE in the school curriculum?

- **58 separate 'themes' were identified** : this impressive range of themes and issues indicates how widely interpreted, and all embracing DE is as a means for influencing curriculum content and subjects!
- There was a lot of overlap between national priorities, but as one might expect also distinctive cultural and historical interpretations depending on the particular national context.

Top of the list are:

- **'Human rights'**, mentioned by 68% of the respondents.
- Drawing on convergences: the most frequently mentioned, are **Sustainable development** (in all forms of definition, relating to the natural environment as well as social and economic pillars...) and learning and skills for active **Global citizenship**.

In descending order, after Human Rights, priority themes are: Inter/multi-cultural understanding, cultural identity and diversity; Sustainable environmental education; Ecology and diversity of nature; Democracy; Global economy/markets and Trade; Global poverty; Conflict.

5- Is DE recognised and supported by your government, as a contribution to education policies and strategies for delivering the curriculum? In what ways?

This was interpreted depending on what was understood by the idea of **'support'**:

A) If it is a kind of recognition (of the added-value of DE methodologies; or of implementation of themes in school curriculum...) almost all countries can attest to 'recognition'.

- In some countries, it is more about admission or allowance than formal recognition
- For other countries, recognition of DE appears mostly through implementation of projects, tools, methodologies, etc. rather than as a distinct policy, strategy or protocol.

B) Some countries testified about the availability of grants from their government as evidence of recognition and support (see Q6).

But in the majority, the non-permanent contribution of governments renders the level and effective range of support unpredictable (in mid or long term), or not sufficiently tangible to be considered as a distinct 'policy of support'.

6- Does your government grant fund local or national DE curriculum development projects and activities?

- In all countries where funding is available, NGOs are recognised as legitimate beneficiaries, practitioners and project holders.
- **87%, confirmed availability of government funds for DE**, though only a portion of that is for curriculum development projects or formal sector based work.
- In some countries, a national programme for funding of DE has only recently been established as in some New Member States (NMS) (in 2005 and 2006). In others, it is still being negotiated (for example in Estonia).
- The 4 countries without government funding are all new member states that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007.
- **In many situations budgets are wholly inadequate** for either effectively building capacity of the NGO DE sector, or for providing a significant alternative source of funds to the EC budget lines, which then raises problems of identifying sufficient co-financing. Government funding appears as token acknowledgement of this work in many countries, limited in both vision and commitment.

The major funding for DE is available through:

- The **European Commission/EuropeAid**, through budget line 21-02-03, which has been for many years and still is, **a major funding donor of DE/DA partnership projects in Europe.**
- **Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) or Ministry/Dept of International Development** – contributing an estimated **81%** of government funds.
- Occasionally (it depends on the country) from Ministries of Education.
- Advent of opportunities linking through collaborative programmes the interests of MFA/ Ministries of Education/NGOs and other partners.
- Municipalities, regional and local authorities.
- Church and faith based organisations (for additional grants)
- Private and corporate donor institutions and charitable trusts (e.g. in UK and Ireland).

Most development education NGOs in Europe can testify to the reluctance of donor agencies, whether from government, public or private sectors, to support core programme costs, despite significant and sustained value-for-money contributions to the development of an increasingly professional and applicable body of quality education work.

7- What events or activities during the last year have brought the NGO sector together in co-operation with government and other education bodies to promote development education, and which government departments understand and support DE?

- The most frequently registered answer is: through '**activities**' as in the co-organisation of an event, collaborative actions, or a strategic meeting. Campaigns have been widely quoted; e.g. Global Campaign For Education, Make Poverty History, Fair Trade ...
- **Advocacy for DE:** advocacy seems to be what has brought the NGO sector together with government. In nine countries, NGOs are in the process of negotiating national strategies or position papers on DE/DA with government departments, which is paradoxical, because NGOs felt supported in their actions and programmes more than in their policies (see Q 5)...

8- What do you think are the main weaknesses in your country's education system for children, with regard to DE?

- The great variety of responses illustrate marked distinctions between different national situations, and the perceived priorities for embedding Development Education in school.
- **The most prominent weaknesses for the respondents are :**
 - First, the frequently stated concerns (recognition, support, inclusion of multi stakeholders in state education reforms),
 - The lack of security of employment in the NGO DE sector,
 - The over-crowded curriculum and the need to reform it,
 - The lack of knowledge, experience and motivation of teachers to address DE,
 - The lack of coordination between Ministries or Departments of Education and Ministries of Foreign affairs and Departments of Aid and Development. NGOs, despite their lobbying and pro-active role in promoting DE, consider that they have only a limited amount of influence to improve the situation.
- Few respondents mentioned a lack of financial resources to support more and better DE at all levels, perhaps because it is such an obvious 'weakness' it was deemed self-evident and hardly worth mentioning!

Recommendations:

That effective measures and provisions are introduced to meet:

- a pan-European requirement for systematic **reforms in initial teacher training courses and curricula**, and provision of **high quality in-service training and professional development courses for teachers**.
- There is also a need for significantly increased state provision of **resources to train the trainers**, whether from NGOs, specialist education agencies, or from local

authority advisory services to the schools sector.

“Integration of global and development perspectives into education systems requires the **development of coordinated strategies by Ministries of Education and Ministries of Foreign Affairs, and other relevant Ministries, Civil Society actors, Local and Regional Authorities, and national curriculum bodies**”.....

Conclusions of the European Conference on Development Education in Helsinki (2006)

CONCORD, a confederation of nearly 2000 international development NGOs, civil society organisations and networks in Europe adopted the following statement at its General Assembly in November 2004, under Priority III: Life-long Education,

*Development Education aims to work effectively with national education systems, school curricula, and youth organizations, to equip young people with the values, attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to become informed, confident and active **global citizens**.*

In May 2005 the European Conference on Public Awareness and Development Education for North-South Solidarity approved a set of recommendations. This included:

Awareness-raising and development education should be integrated into the curricula of the formal and informal educational systems throughout the current and future members of the Union. Such programmes, aimed at all levels and ages of society, are necessary to foster the greatest possible North-South solidarity. (full report ~ <http://www.euforic.org/awareness-sensibilisation/>)

The results from the Development Education and the School Curriculum survey lead us to ask:

How far has each nation progressed towards achieving that goal,

- whether in the spirit of the intention,
- in curriculum policy,
- or in the collective recognition of educational provisions necessary for every child's learning in an interdependent, insecure, unequal, rapacious, and rapidly changing world?

The logo for DEEEP, featuring the word "DEEEP" in a bold, red, sans-serif font.

Development
Education
Exchange in
Europe
Project

The logo for CONCORD, featuring the word "CONCORD" in a bold, sans-serif font with a color gradient from red to yellow.

Development Education Forum

For further information about the work of the DE Forum and DEEEP, visit:
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