



PUTTING THE VOICE OF YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein;

Project Number: 2014-1-UK01-KA200-001841



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This briefing forms part of the European Commission Erasmus+ Schools for Future Youth Project led by Oxfam GB in partnership with Oxfam Italy, Polish Humanitarian Action (Poland) and CARDET (Cyprus) and Development Education Research Centre, University College London-Institute of Education (UK).

This briefing is aimed at policy-makers across Europe who are engaged with, or interested in ensuring that education and international development programmes give consideration to the voices of young people. It also aims to contribute to policy-makers responses to how they are implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Schools for Future Youth Project

Schools for Future Youth is an EU Erasmus+ funded project (2014 – 2017), to build the skills and capacity of teachers and young people to use global citizenship education to improve learning both in and out of the classroom. It includes support to schools to set up a Youth Ambassador Group, develop appropriate curriculum materials, encouraging voluntary participation from young people to learn, think critically about, and take action on global issues through informal spaces in school.

Schools for Future Youth has aimed through engaging teachers and young people, to influence policy makers and school systems through:

- The production of innovative resources for teachers globally to use youth participation and global citizenship effectively through their core teaching.
- The production of innovative resources for young people globally to use youth participation and global citizenship to promote social actions through their formal and informal education.
- Influencing school systems across Europe to increase opportunities for teachers and young people to carry out youth participation and global citizenship.

ISBN: 978-0-9934888-4-9

Global Context

The Sustainable Development Goals launched in 2015 make reference to the importance of all sectors of education:

By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

Building on this, UNESCO have developed a major programme of support to Global Citizenship Education around the world. Its key briefing document states;

Global Citizenship education aims to be transformative, building the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes learners need to be able to contribute to a more inclusive, just and peaceful world (UNESCO,2015).

Alongside this, OECD plan in 2018 to include within their assessments of learning to specifically include global competencies (OECD, 2016).

Whilst these initiatives are to be welcome there is little direct reference within them to young people themselves being given the skills and opportunities to have their voices heard on a global stage. Yet it is young people who have been most directly affected by global forces, the increasing insecurity regarding long-term employment, having to compete in a global market place and be subject to rigid forms of examinations and testing.

European Challenges and Opportunities

Within Europe there has been a strong tradition of supporting and facilitating youth voice within educational programmes. There have also been a range of education projects that promote global citizenship. Global and development education projects have been promoted and supported by many national governments across Europe as well as Europe Aid. Global Education Network Europe (GENE) have played an important role in supporting governments develop this work. But in a number of countries, national education priorities have tended to emphasise national cultural values rather encouraging a global outlook amongst its young people. Partnerships and initiatives across Europe can make an important contribution to challenging xenophobia and encourage a sense of global citizenship.

Alongside government bodies, there has been considerable support for global citizenship themes amongst local and regional municipalities and civil society organisations. Indeed it is the last grouping of organizations that have provided the leadership in many countries and have been responsible for the Project, Schools for Future Youth, upon which the recommendations in this briefing are based.

A first recommendation therefore to policy-makers is to become informed about the wealth of activities and initiatives that are taking place across Europe on global citizenship education and recognise the connections and opportunities that the PISA initiative and the work of UNESCO provides to give this area greater priority.

Why Global Citizenship Education

Young people are growing up in to a global society. Many of the factors that will affect their employment and quality of life will be influenced by factors outside of their own community or nation-state. To ensure that societies across Europe remain democracies, greater consideration needs to be given as to how young people can have a meaningful voice. This means equipping them with the skills and knowledge to make sense of the impact of globalization on their lives and to promote a values based approach on the principles of social justice, human rights and concern for the environment.

These areas often do not come naturally as themes to include within the curriculum or classroom teaching. Teaching and learning in many European countries has tended to focus on discrete bodies of knowledge with little consideration to the interests and needs of young people.

Global citizenship education can, if it is promoted by policy-makers and well-resourced, provide teachers with the support they need to ensure young people can actively engage in the global society they are growing up into. It can also contribute to broader areas of personal and social development such as increasing motivation in society and raising attainment by offering more learner-centred approaches to teaching.

Ministries of education to recognise that global citizenship education can enrich quality teaching and learning through the exploration and learning about 'real world' issues that direct relate to and interest young people. Global citizenship education can address international educational priorities as outlined by UN, UNESCO and OECD.

Global Citizenship Education can enthuse and inspire diverse groups of young people to engage in society.

Many European projects that have promoted learning about global issues have tended to focus on their impact in terms of building support for aid and development agendas. Whilst this is very important, it can often result in ignoring the perspectives and views of young people. The Schools for Future Youth Project through its approach of supporting the development of youth-led initiatives in the schools (Youth Ambassador Groups) can result in increased motivation of young people to engage in society more widely.

A feature of these Groups is the use of a Learn-Think-Act approach and within this, the encouragement of the development of skills such as critical thinking, public speaking, developing confidence and self-esteem, working with others and how to communicate.

In the past we didn't have the chance to learn in depth about global issues, and we never had the opportunity to take part to the decision making process of organizing activities related with those issues (Young person involved with the project in Cyprus).

There is evidence from the Project of significant improvements in young people's motivation about engagement in society in general through developing activities that are based around promoting youth voice.

Many of the young people on the project were those who might not always engage in these types of activities for example they were not always the most high-achieving young people, nor were they the most confident or self-assured. It is not clear why this was the case, but the focus on building confidence and giving ideas and opinions seem to be a strong draw:

With the SFYouth project we focused mostly on involving the students who has lower grades, are foreign speakers and are not involved in any kind of school activities because they usually have lower self-esteem and confidence (Teacher in Cyprus).

The evidence also suggests that the Youth Ambassador Groups (YAG) were a very popular with youth and teachers across the four countries, Cyprus, Italy, Poland and the UK. YAGs provided the project with an identity and niche.

This combination of formal and non-formal approaches to learning has been one of the main successes of the Schools for Future Youth.

Global citizenship education projects should aim to put young people much more at the heart of initiatives, to enable them to articulate their views and to develop the skills needed to be active global citizens.

Equipping Teachers to Deliver High Quality Education

To deliver high quality global citizenship education, teachers need to have access to key resources, appropriate and relevant support both within and outside of the school and above all the opportunity to develop their confidence and skills through a range of professional development opportunities. It was evident from Schools for Future Youth that because global issues are often complex to teach, support and materials from external bodies such as Oxfam was recognised as invaluable.

Also for many teachers in Europe, the forms and approaches to teaching global citizenship which are learner based and incorporate participatory methods, can be culturally and pedagogically challenging. This means therefore that externally funded projects that bring together teachers from across Europe can become very important because they enable peer-learning and opportunities to see how different approaches can work in different social and cultural settings.

Teachers play a central role in delivering high quality global citizenship education but resources need to be set aside to enable them to develop their knowledge and skills to be able to both effectively teach global issues and to effectively engage young people in the learning process.

Evidence Base - Putting Learning at the Heart of Measuring Impact of the Project.

All too often policy-makers across Europe who have been sceptical about the value and impact of global citizenship education have looked to a lack of evidence to justify its value. As the evidence from Schools for Future Youth shows, when evidence gathering is built into a project or programme during the Project conception phase, then the impact can be clearly seen.

But this all does not always happen with projects with the tendency to focus on activities and then have some form of summative evaluation at the end that is often technical in nature.

By engaging with academics and researchers, projects can have a robust and well-developed evidence base built into the project. Gathering data, learning from it and engaging with in-depth research to review the evidence are seen as central to any good global citizenship education project.

To demonstrate their effectiveness and impact, Global Citizenship Education Projects need to have a strong research and evaluation component. The engagement of researchers with expertise in this field would enhance both the quality and the status of the evidence gathered.

Learning Needs and Priorities

The Schools for Future Youth Project whilst demonstrating the value of mutual learning across countries also showed that there were very different educational priorities across the four countries involved. This differentiation across Europe in terms of curriculum, social and cultural composition of pupils, differing approaches towards teaching and learning need to be recognised.

At the same time however there are also dangers of allowing national social and political priorities to dominate educational practice. Global citizenship education is fundamentally about encouraging learners to broaden their horizons, to recognise the value of learning about different worldviews and perspectives.

Projects that bring together organisations across Europe need to take account of different national educational priorities. But at the same time, projects need to be encouraged to demonstrate the value of learning across nations and developing global outlooks.

Value of funding opportunities such as Erasmus+ and opportunities to learn across countries with different experiences – build expertise and capacity across Europe

Budget lines such as Erasmus+ provide opportunities for learning across countries and the encouragement of creativity, building capacity and expertise that are all essential to improving the quality of education. In light of political decisions in some European countries, funding opportunities may now need to go beyond European Commission budget lines and look at international foundations and research bodies. Opportunities for NGOs and teachers and direct linkages between pupils across national boundaries can be enhanced by bringing in global citizenship themes. It is through direct experience of meeting people from other countries and cultures that a global outlook is more likely to become internalised within the learner.

Funding opportunities need to specifically include reference to global citizenship themes and their linkages to global priorities. Such funding should compliment national funding on global citizenship education themes.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Policy-makers to become informed about the wealth of activities and initiatives that are taking place across Europe on global citizenship education and recognise the connections and opportunities that the PISA initiative and the work of UNESCO provides to give this area greater priority.
2. Ministries of education to recognise that global citizenship education can enrich quality teaching and learning through the exploration and learning about 'real world' issues that directly relate to and interest young people. Global citizenship education can address international educational priorities as outlined by UN, UNESCO and OECD.
3. Global citizenship education projects should aim to put young people much more at the heart of initiatives, to enable them to articulate their views and to develop the skills that they could be active global citizens.
4. Teachers play a central role in delivering high quality global citizenship education but resources need to be set aside to enable them to develop their knowledge and skills to be able to effectively teach global issues and to effectively engage young people in the learning process.
5. To demonstrate their effectiveness and impact, Global Citizenship education projects need to have a strong research and evaluation component. The engagement of researchers with expertise in this field would enhance both the quality and the status of the evidence gathered.
6. Projects that bring together organisations across European need to take account of different national educational priorities. But at the same time, projects need to be encouraged to demonstrate the value of learning across nations and developing global outlooks.
7. Funding opportunities need to specifically include reference to global citizenship themes and their linkages to global priorities. Such funding should compliment national funding on global citizenship education themes.

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Key Websites:

www.sfyouth.eu

www.gene.eu