

Implementing global citizenship education in EU primary schools: The role of government ministries

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Abstract

According to recommendations of the UN Secretary General's Global Education First Initiative, countries and regions require a number of structural changes if they are to implement educational policies and practice based on global citizenship education, and to promote respect and responsibility across cultures. In this paper, we present the first results of a three-year project to compare existing educational policies, strategies and school curricula in ten European Union (EU) countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Spain, Portugal, UK) to ascertain the current level of such structural changes. Through a comparative policy analysis, we investigated whether, to what extent, and how global citizenship education is integrated within primary school curricula. The article focuses on national governmental agencies – specifically two main bodies in each country, the ministries of foreign affairs and education – and their political discourses. We argue that the gap between the two traditions, with separate approaches, purposes, concepts and bureaucracies, represents a strategic political challenge for the introduction of global citizenship education in primary schools.

Keywords: global citizenship education, political governmental actors, EU comparative policy analysis, European Union comparative policy

Introduction

While the history of the global dimension in education, as well as of development education, can be traced over decades (Tye and Tye, 1992), global citizenship education has only become a hot but controversial topic in the political and academic discourse since the United Nations Global Education First Initiative (United Nations, 2012). Moreover, its introduction in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and particularly its explicit mention in goal 4.7, has had a further impact on the political agenda by encouraging European countries to integrate this subject into schools.

In this vein, the United Nations (2012; and UNESCO, 2015) identifies crucial factors contributing to the successful implementation of global citizenship education, namely: (1) being embedded in policy with wide stakeholder buy-in; (2) being part of long-term and sustainable action; and (3) providing pre-service and continuing in-service teacher education.

In this article, we argue that the degree of coordination between government agencies has a huge impact on the above factors. Specifically, through a thematic analysis of policy documents in several European countries, we show how the presence

of a high level of agreement between government ministries has a positive effect on the implementation of the above-mentioned factors.

The article is organized as follows: after an introduction synthetically framing the concept of global citizenship education in theory, we present some results of a comparative policy analysis we carried out in 2015–16 among ten European countries, by focusing in particular on the role of ministries of foreign affairs and ministries of education and we discuss how their coordinated or parallel action influences the level of implementation of global citizenship education in primary schools. Finally, we conclude by presenting some strategic contextual dimensions that emerged from the study, and which are crucial for integrating global citizenship education into national policies.

Framing global citizenship education

The global citizenship education approach, as promoted by UNESCO, is more than new educational content and appears as a ‘framing paradigm’ (UNESCO, 2014: 9), a new educational perspective that allows theoreticians, policymakers and practitioners to reconceptualize old issues. This new perspective can provide new meanings for the problems of citizenship in global, plural and heterogeneous societies, combining inter-cultural education with environmental sustainability (Tarozzi and Torres, 2016).

Global citizenship education is open to many different interpretations (Peters *et al.*, 2008; Tawil, 2013; Gaudelli, 2016; Torres, 2017; Reimers *et al.*, 2016), which there is insufficient space here to address. It has also been blamed for a naïve internationalism, aiming at pursuing a vague ‘international awareness’, which could also be understood as an expression of a masked colonialism (Abdi *et al.*, 2015; de Oliveira Andreotti and de Souza, 2012; Jefferess, 2012). Following Andreotti (2006, 2010, 2011), we embrace a global social justice framework to provide a decolonial and anticolonial lens on the processes, objectives and aims of global citizenship education. A non-neutral, committed approach to the integration of global citizenship education in primary school is necessary, even if certain related themes can be deemed politically controversial. Despite the fact that paying attention to such axiomatic dimensions can be politically sensitive, even UNESCO stresses the centrality of values such as peace, human rights, mutual respect, cultural diversity and justice, which are often not embodied in the ethos of schools. Addressing this ethos in school ‘is critical if we want to overcome divisions and expand the prospects for peace and prosperity’ (United Nations, 2012: 21). Also, national public institutions should be aware that the overall assumptions of a global perspective in citizenship education cannot be thought of as ethically neutral, since some key concepts, such as citizenship and globalization, can be read in several ways, including a nationalist or neoliberal view. In our perspective, global citizenship education should be combined with social justice (Tarozzi and Torres, 2016: 21) or, following Bourn (2015), should provide a pedagogy for ‘global social justice’. Therefore, the call for a global citizenship, beyond the extension of the concept of citizenship from the national to the global level, has definitely got an ethical and political value, and by implication an educational significance (Freire, 1985).

In this article, we focus on the implementation processes of educational policies among some European governments for the promotion of global citizenship education in primary schools. We are aware that there are a number of possible definitions of ‘implementation’, and scholars do not agree upon a set of terms or methods to study policy implementation (Hill and Hupe, 2002). In fact, to systematically describe the implementation process of educational policies, we cannot just observe the mere

political action of governments. Many actors are involved and a broad viewpoint is required, one that emphasizes contextualization, that is, 'multidisciplinary, multi-level and multi-focus ... looking at a multiplicity of actors, loci and layers' (Hill and Hupe 2002: 16). A policy implementation cannot be perceived as a simple and linear technical process. Policy processes are always interactive and multi-layered (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). Nevertheless, given the space limitations, in this article we will focus on the action of government ministries, in particular ministries of education and foreign affairs.

There are various ways in which an institutional political actor like a ministry can stimulate the introduction of a global citizenship education into the curriculum for schools. UNESCO (2015), in its strategic document, suggests four main paths through which global citizenship education can be introduced:

1. as a school-wide issue
2. as a cross-curricular issue
3. as an integrated component within different subjects
4. as a separate, stand-alone subject within the curriculum.

To enhance structural changes, all four paths require the action of policymakers at the planning level. In addition, the reform of national curricula entails certain strategic contextual actions, such as working on teacher education, revising textbooks to incorporate global citizenship education concepts, and promoting the construction of global networks of schools and exchanges between teachers. For all these, the support of national governments at the highest level is essential, although not sufficient, to ensure successful practical results.

The Global Schools research project: Background and methods

Data used for our comparative policy analysis has been collected in the framework of the research activity of the Global Schools project (2015–2018; www.globalschools.education). Global Schools is a European project realized in ten European Union (EU) countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Spain, Portugal, England (UK)) by 17 partners, led by the autonomous Province of Trento. It is co-funded by the DEAR Programme of the European Commission. The three-year-long commitment aims at embedding global citizenship education, as a cross-cutting theme and approach, into all existing subjects of primary school programmes in the partner countries. It also aims to analyse existing educational policies in Europe to ascertain whether, to what extent, and how global citizenship education is integrated in formal primary education, and provide additional analysis of the situation at international and European levels.¹ The main sources of data are:

1. Relevant legislative documents, both recommendatory and normative, with a total of 186 documents, being respectively 164 documents from the 10 partner countries, plus 5 from non-partners Finland, Germany and Greece that are relevant for the study, and 17 EU and international documents. International and EU documents represent a very important normative framework for several countries, while the non-partner countries were chosen as relevant case studies for their composition or dimension or because they already have an advanced implementation of global citizenship education in primary schools.
2. 20 interviews with key informants (2 per country).

The concept of 'policy' is controversial and not univocally defined in literature (Ball, 1990; Dye, 1992; Bacchi, 2009). Given the complexity of this notion, we did not want to oversimplify it. Therefore, we considered 'policy' to include a wide range of political processes of implementation of ideas into practices, encompassing plans, programmes and guidelines, that have an impact on the integration of global citizenship education in formal primary education system. A policy document was considered relevant when it has had an effect on the action of teachers and/or in implementing the global citizenship education approach in each country's schools.

Each member of the research team also carried out in-depth interviews with two types of key informants: a) policymakers – authors of documents, political executors of the education policy; and b) practitioners – people who implement the policy, such as educators or school principals.

Based on the analysis of policy documents and interviews, each of the ten national researchers produced a Country Policy Analysis (CPA), describing the approaches to and modes of global citizenship education implementation, following the same structure of analysis. Each CPA describes the historical roots of the country's approach to global citizenship education, the level of implementation and the main state and non-state political actors. The CPAs served as analytical reports and became the main source of comparative analysis with reference to the policy document synopsis, in case of doubts or for further investigation. Data was analysed through an inductive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), using some procedures of grounded theory approach (Tarozzi, 2008; Charmaz, 2014). Full details of this process are available on the website for Global Schools (n.d). Three main questions guided our thematic analysis:

1. To what extent has global citizenship education been implemented in each country?
2. Who are the main actors that promote or hamper the implementation of global citizenship education?
3. What are the concepts and terms used in each country to define global citizenship education?

The data was analysed by two independent coders (the two authors), using qualitative data analysis software (NVivo®), and two different sets of themes emerged:

1. Themes used as indicators of the extent of the implementation (financial allocation, monitoring and assessing procedures, initial training), which will be further developed through analysis of the interviews to identify the gap between policies and school practices.
2. Three macro-themes, or levels of analysis:
 - a. levels and *modes of implementation* of global citizenship education in primary school, where we elaborated the basic processes
 - b. *political actors*, conceptualizing roles, functions, relationships
 - c. *conceptual analysis*, where we carried out a conceptual comparative analysis of national terms and related various adjectival educations.

For the purposes of this article, we focus on the political actors (theme 2b), specifically institutional ones, and the role they play in the promotion of global citizenship education in the primary school system. The main result of the qualitative comparative analysis of the CPAs and the synopsis of some key policy documents is that ministries of education and foreign affairs emerge as the main political governmental actors for global citizenship education implementation, but their effectiveness largely depends on their willingness and ability to work together in a coordinated way and with other key stakeholders.

Role of the ministries of foreign affairs and education

From the analysis of the policy documents, the three main roles that these ministries play in implementing global citizenship education policies are: (1) issuing policy documents that set a normative framework for teachers' action; (2) funding both global citizenship education activities, which allow implementation activities in the schools, and in-service teachers' education; and (3) contributing to the construction of the political discourse and mostly to the national terms used to refer to global citizenship education.

Among the 164 documents collected in the 10 countries, researchers identified a number of highly relevant documents for global citizenship education implementation in primary schools. The analysis of these 62 documents, presented in Table 1, shows that 35 out of the 62 most influential documents are issued by ministries of education and include greater regulatory activities (even though most of the documents are recommendations only). As illustrated in Table 1, the normative documents are mostly national curriculum reforms, launched by national governments (11%). Ministries of foreign affairs have the second highest number of documents.

Table 1: Policy documents and main issuing bodies (as of December 2015)

| Issuing bodies | No. of documents | % | Document example |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-----|--|
| Government unspecified | 7 | 11 | Revised Prevent Duty Guidance: For England and Wales (HM Government, 2015) |
| Ministries of education | 35 | 56 | Instructions pédagogiques: Education au développement et à la solidarité internationale (French Ministry of Education, 2009) |
| Ministries of foreign affairs | 10 | 16 | National Strategy for Development Education 2010–2015 (IPAD, 2009) |
| University | 1 | 2 | Development Education/Global Education Bulgaria (Valchev, 2009) |
| NGOs | 6 | 10 | Carta dei principi dell'educazione alla cittadinanza mondiale [Charter of principles of Global Citizenship Education] (Consorzio ONG Piemontesi [Consortium NGOs], 2010) |
| Intergovernmental agencies | 2 | 3 | The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) |
| Local authorities | 1 | 2 | Order June 2014 adopting the curriculum of primary education and authorizing its implementation in schools of Aragon (Autonomous Region of Aragon, 2014) |
| Total | 62 | 100 | |

While the current situation is in constant and rapid change following the pressures that international organizations exert on national governments for the implementation of global citizenship education in schools, across Europe, ministries of education and ministries of foreign affairs portray two different cultural and pedagogical traditions, both of which meet the broad concept of global citizenship education to some extent. While ministries of education focus especially on intercultural education and citizenship education, ministries of foreign affairs foster development education and education

for sustainable development in the framework of their development cooperation strategies.

Ministries of education: Intercultural education and migrants' integration

The role of ministries of education in promoting intercultural education and citizenship education is particularly important in certain states such as Austria, Bulgaria (Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science, 2015), France (French Ministry of Education, 2015), Italy (Italian Ministry of Education, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2015), England (DfE, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015) and Ireland (Ireland DES and OMI, 2010; Ireland DES, 2014). For example, in Austria, intercultural learning is defined as a binding principle in the Austrian curriculum for primary schools (Austrian Ministry of Education, 2014) where it is explicitly mentioned, together with peace education, which forms part of civic education and intercultural education.

Ministries of foreign affairs: Development education and sustainability

Although ministries of education are very active in promoting policies, documents and strategies to implement global citizenship education-related issues, we must stress that in the same countries the ministries of foreign affairs are the main financial supporters of global citizenship education-related actions in every case. Since global citizenship education policies are mostly embedded in international development cooperation strategies, ministries of foreign affairs mainly sponsor NGOs' activities through annual calls for proposals for development education activities (such as in Italy and Czech Republic). These are aimed at awareness-raising about development-related issues and supporting training courses for teachers. One example is that of Ireland, where the White Paper on Irish Aid (Irish Aid, 2007) sets out the government's aim that every person in Ireland will have access to educational opportunities to understand their rights and responsibilities as global citizens and their potential to effect change for a more just world.

Thanks to the growing financial support of ministries of foreign affairs and departments of development cooperation, since the 1970s, NGOs across Europe have been promoting the introduction of development education in schools. Furthermore, since 2004, the European Commission has created a specific budget line to support development education awareness-raising activities. This comes under the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, a body that coordinates the work of ministries of foreign affairs across Europe (European Commission, 2012).

The role of ministries of foreign affairs is particularly relevant in Portugal, where in 2009 some of its institutional bodies, such as Camões (Institute of Cooperation and Language, CICL) and the Portuguese Institute for Development Assistance (IPAD), launched the National Strategy for Development Education 2010–2015 (IPAD, 2009). Unsurprisingly, CICL is one of the most important funders of development education in Portugal.

Terminological and conceptual divide between ministries of foreign affairs and ministries of education

From the data, a gap emerges to varying degrees in different countries between the way in which ministries of education and ministries of foreign affairs deal with global citizenship education. The divide between two political cultures, with separate

approaches, purposes and bureaucracies, is one of the most important results of the comparative qualitative analysis. Bridging the gap between the two is also one of the most important political challenges to effectively integrating global citizenship education in primary schools. A meaningful indicator of the difference in political discourses and traditions is the use of different terms to refer to global citizenship education, as represented by Table 2.

Table 2: National global citizenship education terms in different EU countries

| Country | Ministries of foreign affairs | Ministries of education |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Austria | Global learning | |
| Bulgaria | Global (development) education | |
| Czech Republic | Global development education | Education towards thinking in a European and global context |
| France | Development and international solidarity education | Moral and civic education |
| Ireland | Development education | Intercultural education |
| Italy | Development education | Intercultural education |
| Latvia | Global education | |
| Portugal | Development education | |
| Spain | Education for development and global citizenship | Education for citizenship and human rights |
| England, UK | Global learning | |

As Table 2 illustrates, while in some countries there is more continuity between the two ministries, towards the use of a common term, in others two distinctly separate expressions are adopted. In the case of Latvia and England, we have to consider that in the latter there was a strategy on the topic and in the former the process towards a joint action of the two ministries has moved several steps forward.

Types of relationship between ministries: Coordinated versus parallel

In the previous sections, we described the main action (issuing policy documents) taken by the two types of ministry that affect integration of global citizenship education. It is evident that they often promote different agendas and put emphasis on different concepts connected to global citizenship education, such as intercultural education, citizenship education or (sustainable) development education. Although we do not have the space here to deepen the conceptual comparative analysis, for which we refer to the full report (Global Schools, 2016), the terminological and conceptual divide between ministries of education and ministries of foreign affairs is definitively evidence of the contrasting political, institutional, as well as cultural discourses of the two types of ministry.

In this section, we present the main dynamics of the relationship between the two types of ministry in the ten countries analysed, so as to understand whether the action of these two political bodies are coordinated and share common objectives or activities, or whether, instead, the action of either one of them prevails, but in an

isolated fashion and therefore they parallel actions. Obviously, any categorization risks oversimplifying complex situations.

However, it is useful to show that there are alternative modes of relationship built on different policies and practices, as well as funding. The resulting provisional modelling can be useful to examine the primacy of one ministry over the other in a particular country and how cooperation between the two ministries influences the process towards the implementation of global citizenship education.

Based on thematic analysis of the CPAs, with reference to the synopsis of the main policy documents examined through indicative themes (role of ministries, financial allocation, etc.), we organized the ten countries in the study into four groups or ideal-types, which are not fixed, but historically changing, and not mutually exclusive, according to the level of mutual cooperation in promoting global citizenship education supporting actions:

- (1) 'Equal parallel relevance of the two ministries': when both ministries have a similar impact on global citizenship education policies and there is no coordination between the two bodies.
- (2) 'Primacy of the ministry of foreign affairs'; or (3) 'Primacy of the ministry of education': when one ministry is the strongest financial promoter or the one that has led the process for the implementation of global citizenship education into the primary school system or it has issued most of the normative policy documents that have influenced the introduction of global citizenship education.
- (4) 'Coordination between the two ministries': when there is an explicit national strategy or other policy documents that foresee joint or coordinated actions between the two and which define roles for key actors involved in global citizenship education implementation. These policy documents are the results of a process of negotiation, which included several stakeholders.

Figure 1 graphically illustrates where the several countries are placed in the four ideal types.

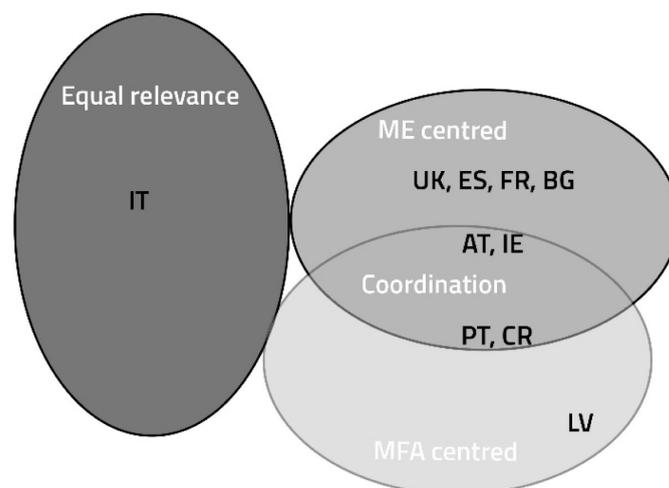


Figure 1: Countries' ideal types

Equal parallel relevance of the two ministries

Italy is an emblematic example, which can illustrate the case of equal relevance of the two ministries, where both are equally important but deeply separated. In Italy,

over the last decades, the two ministries have shown very little cooperation, having only produced a limited and recommendatory joint declaration called the Declaration of Intents between the Italian ministries of education and foreign affairs for the International Cooperation School Week (2014). The two ministries have a deep divide in agendas and objectives as also testified by the different terms used to refer to global citizenship education. On the one hand, the ministry of education has a consolidated tradition in 'intercultural education' (Italian Ministry of Education, 2007, 2015). On the other, the ministry of foreign affairs (in Italy, properly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation) mostly promotes development education, which forms an integral part of development cooperation activities (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014, 2015). However, we have to stress that the situation is rapidly changing as important policy documents have been issued recently, such as the National Operative Program (PON 2014–20), which includes a call for global citizenship competencies in 2017 (Italian Ministry of Education, 2017); national funds for in-service teacher training 2016–19, which includes global citizenship education among its priorities; and the call for proposals for global citizenship education activities (AICS, 2018).

Primacy of ministry of foreign affairs

The ministry of foreign affairs is traditionally the leading institution in the process of implementation of global citizenship education in Latvia, the Czech Republic and Portugal. In the Czech Republic and Portugal, due to the process of national strategy creation, there is currently a close cooperation between the two ministries, as we see below.

In Latvia, the ministry of foreign affairs plays a crucial role in supporting civil society organizations with grants for global education activities. In 2007, the ministry of foreign affairs initiated discussions towards a strategic approach to global education in cooperation with the ministry of education and the Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation. The Latvian government never officially embraced the Development Education Guidelines 2008–2015 (LAPAS, 2008) but in May 2014 the Guidelines for the Development of Education 2014–2020 (Ministry of Education and Science, 2013) were adopted by the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia. While there is no formal agreement between the two ministries, the Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation strategy and the Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation policy strategy 2011–2015 jointly promote development education in schools (Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia, 2011, 2014). Furthermore, there is one development education working group and one global education working group, which brings together all national key stakeholders.

Primacy of ministry of education

The ministry of education is the most influential institution in the integration process of global citizenship education in the primary school system in England, Spain, Bulgaria, France and Austria. Since the case of Austria is very pertinent, it will be described later in the text.

The case of Spain is emblematic. Here the government's change orientation from socialist to conservative in 2011 resulted in the removal of education for citizenship and human rights from the curriculum. This subject was introduced with the Royal Decree 1513/2006 (Government of Spain, 2006) and removed with Organic Law 8/2013 of Education Quality Education Quality Improvement (Government of Spain, 2013) and Royal Decree 126/2014 that regulates the Spanish primary education curriculum

(Government of Spain, 2014). Education for citizenship and human rights included many global citizenship education areas, such as citizenship, civic and ethical values, rights and responsibilities, gender equality, sexual identity, immigration, racism and refugees. Education for citizenship and human rights has been substituted with a new, more national focus called social and civic values that is taught to 5th and 6th grade pupils who do not study religion.

Coordination between the two ministries

In Portugal and the Czech Republic, the leading institution is the ministry of foreign affairs while in Ireland and Austria the ministry of education prevails, but in all these countries there is close cooperation between the two ministries. The main actions that they jointly promote are: (1) building a national strategy, which also involves other actors; and (2) providing pre-service and in-service teachers education in global citizenship education.

In the Czech Republic, the ministry of foreign affairs has issued a national strategy to promote global development education – the National Strategy on Global Development Education 2011–2015 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czech Republic, 2011) and Development Cooperation Strategy of the Czech Republic 2010–2017 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czech Republic, 2010) – as well as education for sustainable development (Action Plan of the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development for 2011 and 2012, Ministry of Education of Czech Republic, 2011). Furthermore, in 2011, the Institute for Pedagogic Research, part of the ministry of education, issued pedagogical guidelines for the integration of a cross-cutting issue on the area of global citizenship education called *Education towards thinking in European and global contexts* (Karvánková et al., 2017).

In Portugal, the Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and the Secretary of State of Education have formally signed the National Strategy for Development Education 2010–2015 (IPAD, 2009) and there is a structural agreement with NGOs signed in 2011 that is currently being renewed.

In Austria in 2009, the Global Learning Strategy was issued (Austrian Ministry of Education and Austrian Development Agency, 2009), encompassing a multi-stakeholder working group, including the ministry of foreign affairs and some pedagogical university colleges. Global Education Network Europe (GENE) has promoted the creation of this working group chaired by the ministry of education, while the ministry of foreign affairs is present mainly through its financial support to NGOs. Such support has been crucial for the definition of the national strategy and for the implementation of global citizenship education-related activities. In fact, in both the Czech Republic and Portugal the ministry of foreign affairs is also the main financial supporter of global citizenship education in the school system. This leading position has probably had a relevant impact on the prevailing use of the term ‘development education’ in these countries.

In Ireland, the ministry of education launched the Intercultural Education Strategy 2010–2015 in 2010 (Ireland DES and OMI, 2010) and the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development, 2014–2020 in 2014 (Ireland DES, 2014). The country is one of the few examples of a fruitful combination between development education (mostly the term used at the ministry of foreign affairs) and intercultural education (the ministry of education term) with a special focus on teacher education.

These four countries represent good examples of effective inter-ministry cooperation towards the integration of global citizenship education in education policy

and it is worth stressing that all four passed through a process of peer review promoted by GENE: Austria (2006), Czech Republic (2008), Portugal (2014) and Ireland (2015).

Discussion: Global citizenship education implementation modes

To implement an education policy is a complex and multifaceted endeavour, involving several actors, different time phases and several political levels. The modes of cooperation between ministries take many forms and the possibility of a fruitful coordination is vital for a real educational change. Also, while the coordinated action of policymakers at the planning level is crucial, school reform also requires certain strategic contextual actions and the involvement of several political actors.

We argue that, in those countries where a national strategy is present, the dimensions that the United Nations (2012) and UNESCO (2015) consider relevant for global citizenship education implementation noted above are mostly met, among many others.

In the next paragraphs, in the light of the themes used as indicators of the extent of the implementation of global citizenship education in school practice, we illustrate some evidence of the positive effects on the countries where a national strategy and a coordinated action between ministries has been undertaken and we compare the situation with countries where such a strategy is not present.

Pre-service and in-service teacher education

Elements of pre-service and in-service teacher education are present in all countries that have a national strategy. In Austria, the new curriculum for initial teacher training in Austrian colleges (Austrian Ministry of Education, 2014) offers opportunities for the promotion and implementation of global citizenship education. One example of a successful teacher education programme is the Curriculum for Initial Teacher Training for Primary Schools at the College of Education in Upper Austria (Pädagogische Hochschule Oberösterreich, 2015), as it specifically mentions global citizenship education. See, for example, the in-house training course for teachers at the College of Education in the Tyrol in 2015–16.

In 2012 in Portugal, a Cooperation Protocol between the ministry of education (the Directorate-General of Education) and the ministry of foreign affairs (Camões Institute of Cooperation and Language) was signed to develop the reference document on development education within formal education and to design and obtain accreditation to in-service teachers' education (article 3 of the Protocol; Camões, 2012).

In the Czech Republic, the National Strategy on Global Development Education for the period 2011–2015 states that it is necessary to reflect global development education in the academic preparation of future teachers (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Czech Republic, 2011).

In Ireland, the global teacher course is a validated in-service teacher training programme currently delivered free of charge across the country, financed by Irish Aid.

In contrast, where a national strategy is not present, as in Bulgaria, Spain, Latvia and Italy, initial teacher education on global citizenship education is lacking and in-service teacher education is mostly provided by NGOs, but it is not compulsory nor widely delivered. In Italy, a policymaker who contributed to writing the national curriculum considers this lack of teacher education as one of the main obstacles of global citizenship education integration:

The introduction of global citizenship education requires a change in teaching, the overcoming of a content-based teaching that is very common in the Italian school. The cause of this limit is not in the curriculum but in the teachers' training, especially pre-service training. Only 10 years ago having a degree became compulsory to teach in primary school (Key informant 1, policymaker Italy Country Policy Analysis).

Adoption of a multi-stakeholder policy

Where there is a national strategy, this has provided a crucial and rare opportunity to allow the most relevant stakeholders to work together. It has enhanced fruitful cooperation between diverse actors, including not only the ministries of education and foreign affairs, but also NGOs, local authorities and educational institutions such as universities and pedagogical colleges.

In Austria, the Global Learning Strategic Group includes the ministry of foreign affairs, the ministry of education, NGOs and some pedagogical colleges. The development of the Global Learning Strategy (Austrian Ministry of Education and Austrian Development Agency, 2009) was one of the key recommendations of the Peer Review on Global Education in Austria carried out by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe and GENE in 2005–06 (North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, 2006).

In Portugal, the National Strategy for Development Education 2010–2015 (IPAD, 2009) has been enhanced by the National Strategy of Education for Development Strategic Group, composed by Camões, the former Portuguese Institute for Development Assistance (IPAD), the ministry of education (represented by the Directorate-General for Education (DGE)), the Portuguese Development NGO Platform and CIDAC (a Portuguese NGO and member of GENE).

In the Czech Republic, there is a National Strategy on Global Development Education, which is composed by the main actors in the field: state ministries (ministry of education, ministry of foreign affairs, ministry of environment), the Council for Foreign Development Aid, the Council for Sustainable Development and the Czech Development Agency, alongside education and research institutions, Czech school inspection and NGOs. The global development education working group coordinates interdepartmental and other actors' activities connected to the strategy's elaboration and its implementation. In the school year 2015/16, global and development issues were included for the first time within the main tasks of the Czech school inspection process.

In Ireland, there is no proper national strategy for global citizenship education, but the ministry of education (Department of Education and Skills) has issued two national strategies – one on education for sustainable development (Ireland DES, 2014) and one on intercultural education (Ireland DES and OMI, 2010) – through a dialogue with key national stakeholders (specifically, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Department of the Taoiseach, Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade). Furthermore, the Development and Intercultural Education (DICE) project, a collaborative partnership between five institutions involved in initial teacher education at primary level, promotes the integration of development education and intercultural education across all relevant areas of the primary school curriculum.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, lies Italy, which, at the time of our data collection, could be considered an example of where there is fragmentation between stakeholders:

Fragmentation seems to be the most appropriate term to describe the Italian situation; furthermore, there is a quite widely accepted conception of Development Education merely as an instrument of promotion and dissemination of development cooperation issues and activities to the wide public. This is the view expressed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is the main actor in this field. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not developed a national strategy, nor has it created a link and dialogue with local authorities and ONGs on the topic (Guimaraes and Cionchetti, 2012: 16).

Long-term economic sustainability is another key issue for cooperation between political bodies. The presence of a national multi-stakeholder strategy, which covers a timeframe of medium to long term, offers a more stable financial horizon for global citizenship education policy, beyond national political change. In Portugal, the national strategy covers a period of five years (2010–15), in the Czech Republic a period of four years (2011–15) and in Ireland a period of six years. Only time and careful control will demonstrate if these protocols, agreements and strategies will be effective and lasting in time. But we can certainly claim that a multi-stakeholder policy within a national strategy as a common framework, promoting (particularly initial) teacher education is a necessary pre-requisite for a real, long-term and sustainable process of global citizenship education integration in primary schools.

Concluding remarks

In this article, we addressed the role of national governmental agencies discussing the main strategic contextual dimensions that are crucial for implementing global citizenship education in national educational policies.

After having briefly introduced the concept of social justice global citizenship education, we presented the preliminary results of an ongoing research study carried out in the framework of the EU co-funded project Global Schools. In each of the ten partner nations, a Country Policy Analysis (CPA) was produced, which describes the situation of global citizenship education implementation, focusing on main actors, policy documents and conceptual analysis of global citizenship education terminology. A comparative analysis using an inductive approach of these CPAs, which are based on policy documents both normative and recommendatory, has been carried out. The results of this analysis showed that ministries of education and foreign affairs are the most relevant governmental actors for the introduction of global citizenship education in the formal school system. Pre-service and in-service teacher education and multi-stakeholder strategy, supported by long-term sustainable financing, are considered crucial for global citizenship education implementation in the framework of structural changes.

It is important, however, to point out the main limitations that this study faces. First, this study was conceived as a comparative preliminary analysis of a two-step inquiry. This first part aimed at describing the current state of global citizenship educational policy, before a second, still ongoing, ethnographic part was to explore in-service teacher education in depth. Second, the comparison between very different educational systems is methodologically impossible. However, we decided not to stop at juxtaposing individual case studies, but we took the risk and we comparatively analysed the different contexts in order to identify a number of common features, broad recurrences and similar conundrums that different systems are dealing with. Third, four out ten researchers appointed to carry out the CPAs were non-professional, but a rigorous and shared research design limited the negative effects of this element,

not to mention that their role as practitioners provided a meaningful perspective to the overall study. Fourth, in an emerging and as yet largely unregulated educational field such as global citizenship education, it is not self-evident to identify policy documents that have a major impact on the integration of global citizenship education in primary schools. Therefore, the documents also aimed at the political and institutional discourse surrounding global citizenship education. Fifth, a policy analysis mostly based on legislative documents that are only recommendations, does not reveal the actual level of implementation of a policy. Instead, with substantial differences across educational systems, they reflect abstract declarations, aspirations or political visions of political actors. To explore the process of implementation would require further and different data. Despite these limitations, we argue that our analysis identifies that the presence of a national strategy has allowed building blocks to be placed to foster stable integration of global citizenship education into the education policy framework.

The inquiry showed that the degree of coordination between ministries, or even better the presence of a national strategy, has a huge impact on these three dimensions: (1) pre-service and in-service teacher education; (2) adoption of a policy with stakeholder buy-in; and (3) the framework of a long-term economically sustainable policy. In particular, in those countries where a national strategy is present, the above-mentioned dimensions are mostly met. We specify 'mostly' because, even though the presence of a national strategy is undeniably a fundamental step towards the integration of global citizenship education in primary schools, it is not enough. In none of the cases analysed has the process towards the integration of global citizenship education policy been fully accomplished, apart from in Finland where there is an explicit and binding reference to global citizenship education and related issues in the national curriculum. Here, within the recent new national core curriculum (from December 2014; Finnish National Board of Education, 2016), global education and global learning are integrated in a number of ways.

In Austria, constant struggles over competencies and finances have slowed down the process of structural and pedagogical reforms, and the political instability of the federal government does not invoke optimism. In Portugal and the Czech Republic, the normative framework is more advanced than the actual implementation in schools, and in Ireland there are no compulsory indications in the curriculum on global citizenship education coverage in class and therefore it relies very much on the class or head teacher's own interests.

A long-term phased and economically sustainable implementation strategy is required but we also know that a stable political direction towards a highly controversial and non-neutral education political agenda encompasses real political conflicts beyond an ideal and superficial agreement. Our comparative analysis shows several cases where the change of government from progressive to conservative has resulted in a sudden interruption of educational policies that previously have been promoting the introduction of global citizenship education-related areas. Emblematic are the cases of England and Spain, but also France.

In Italy, it is relevant to point out that the Conference of Regions and Autonomous Provinces approved a document that defines global citizenship education (Conferenza delle Regioni e delle Province autonome, 2016) and emphasizes the importance of the role of local authorities; however, this has not been approved by three regions (Liguria, Lombardia and Veneto) that are governed by conservative parties.

These examples show once again that to integrate global citizenship education in primary schools is a complex endeavour, never neutral, and requiring a critical and progressive commitment towards human rights, peace, environmental sustainability,

social justice and economic equality, and a positive attitude towards diversity. In this process, ministries of education and foreign affairs should play a fundamental role, but a pure top-down political approach is not feasible nor effective. Another key risk for political institutions is overemphasizing the national dimension of citizenship, rooted in national identity, values and beliefs, in particular when it becomes a school subject. According to the United Nations (2012), national curricula tend to be too centred on education to national citizenship, which does not promote respect among cultures and environmental awareness.

From the policy comparison we undertook, we contend the need for an approach combining a vertical dimension (all levels of government) with a horizontal one (learning communities, networks, stakeholders). Our research shows the efficacy of adopting a national strategy, setting clear objectives at national level with a large consensus, phased in long-lasting steps, supported politically and financially for more than a decade, involving all the strategic political actors, both institutional and non-institutional, at every political level from intergovernmental to local communities and horizontally, involving all the agencies of the territory, and particularly NGOs. Ministries of education and foreign affairs should be able to work together in a joint effort of governance of the whole process and, above all, in enhancing teacher education.

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Notes

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