



Manifesto for the Global Dimension of Citizenship Education in Malta



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"Conectando Mundos is an EC Part Funded Project that thrives to be an alternative space where students from different regions in the world, each with their own geographical, cultural, economic and social backgrounds, are able to participate in activities and to share their experiences."

The partners of Conectando Mundos are:

Cidac (Portugal)
Inizjamed (Malta)
Intermón Oxfam (Spain)
Ucodep (Italy - Lead Agency)

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What's in a Name?

Citizenship Education shares the same educational principles of Global Education, Development Education, Human Rights Education, Education for Sustainability, Environmental Education, Education for Peace, Conflict Prevention and Intercultural Education. The overall title used might be different but the main aim is common to all.

This is the need to assist our students to be able to cope and take an active role within our global society which is more than ever so interdependent. This is in agreement with the challenge recognised by the National Minimum Curriculum which states that *'On the threshold of the new millennium, the people of Malta must continue to engage in critical reflection and training that will enable them to confront the socio-cultural, economic, industrial and political challenges that characterise a small island state in a world that is evolving into a global village.'* In fact young people today are exposed more than ever to what is happening in different parts of the world by constant updated news bulletins on TV and radio, internet, sports competitions and travel abroad. Globalisation affects the clothes we wear, the music we listen to, the food we eat, the jobs we do and the environment we live in (Oxfam 2003). If we fail our students in providing them with the necessary expertise they will end up being passive or worse still indifferent bystanders in view of the misery that a good percentage of the people on this planet are experiencing. Although economic advances have meant huge improvements, that have changed the lives of millions of people, one in five of the world's population still live in extreme poverty. They lack access to basic healthcare, education and clean water, with little opportunity to improve their condition.

Citizenship education promotes an active learning process founded on values of solidarity, equality, inclusion and co-operation. The global dimension of Citizenship means being able to empathise with others - neighbours with a different background as much as with people on a different continent; relationships within a classroom as much as relationships between countries - and understanding that our actions have an impact on others within the increasingly globalised world (DfES, 2005). Every democratic society depends upon citizens who are aware of their rights and responsibilities, informed about the social and political world, concerned about the welfare of others, articulate in their opinions and arguments, capable of having an influence on the world, active in their communities and responsible in how they act as citizens.

Schools are microcosms of the wider world and, as such, present a context within which students can learn about citizenship beyond the curriculum. Many issues present in the wider world are replicated in miniature in every school and classroom. Misunderstandings, arguments and debates, even conflicts about the distribution of resources and power are commonplace in the daily life of the school. A school is connected to the wider world through its staff, students and community links.

Hence Citizenship education should be seen as of crucial importance throughout the entire years of schooling because it seeks to ensure that students become active and responsible citizens, capable of contributing to the development and well-being of their schools, families, neighbourhoods, communities and the wider world. Citizenship education is not just education **about** citizenship which provides students with sufficient knowledge and understanding of national history and the structures and processes of government and political life. It is education **through** citizenship where students learn through active, participative experiences in the school or local community and beyond, thus reinforcing the knowledge component. It is also education **for** citizenship which equips students with a set of tools (knowledge and understanding, skills and aptitudes, values and dispositions) enabling them to participate actively and sensibly in the roles and responsibilities they encounter in their adult lives.

Definitions with particular Reference to the NMC

According to the DE Forum during the 2004 annual meeting Citizenship Education entails:

- An active learning process
- Founded on values of solidarity, equality, inclusion and co-operation
- Enables people to move from basic awareness, of international development priorities and sustainable human development, through understanding of the causes and effects of global issues, to personal involvement and informed action
- Fosters the full participation of all citizens in world-wide poverty eradication and the fight against exclusion
- Seeks to influence more just and sustainable economic, social, environmental, human rights based national and international policies.

Other points raised by National Platforms abroad include:

- Aims to raise awareness and understanding of how global issues affect the every day lives of individuals, communities and societies and how all of us can and do influence the global (DEA -UK)
- Opens people's eyes to the realities of the world and awakens them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights for all (North South Centre of the COE)
- Develops competence in dealing with, mixing with and respecting other cultures and a competence in understanding, self involvement and taking responsibility in society and world affairs no matter whether local or global (MS - Denmark)
- Increasing people's awareness and understanding of global issues and of the interdependence of different countries and parts of the world in relation to those issues. In particular, it's about what sustains underdevelopment and what is needed to reach and sustain more equal development. It is an education based on reflection, analysis and action at local and global level (Dochas - Ireland).

The NMC identifies the main principle of Citizenship Education when it states that '*The educational community generally agrees that a dynamic curriculum should provide an educational experience which facilitates their holistic development.*' (pg.23). In particular it states that

• '*In a society that is increasingly becoming multi-cultural, the educational system should enable students to develop a sense of respect, co-operation, and solidarity among cultures.*' (pg. 19)

• '*The educational process should cultivate within students a sense of social justice and solidarity.*' (pg. 19)

The global perspective is furthermore emphasised by the NMC: '*students are able to realise that much of what is taking place in our country is conditioned by external events. One ought also to promote the view that the sustainability of life on earth is contingent on our everyday choices.*' (pg 21) Small actions on the part of a great number of people can bring about the changes in lifestyle needed so that more can be made available for those who have so little. This can be achieved by reducing our waste and taking more responsibility for all our everyday decisions.

The World Today

Many global problems have been carried over from the past millennium. These include the problem of poverty. 1.3 billion people live on less than one dollar per day (World Bank). Another is lack of education for the 115,000,000 children in the world who do not attend primary school. The great disparity that exists, when the total wealth of the top 8.3 million people around the world rose by 8.2% to 30.8 trillion dollars in 2004, giving them control of nearly a quarter of the world's financial assets. In other words, about 0.13% of the world's population controlled 25% of the world's assets in 2004. An analysis of long-term trends shows that the distance between the richest and poorest countries was about

- 3 to 1 in 1820
- 11 to 1 in 1913
- 35 to 1 in 1950
- 44 to 1 in 1973
- 72 to 1 in 1992

(Human Development Report 1999).

Terrorism, international migration, civil wars and regional conflicts keep dominating the headline news. The human impact has also affected adversely the atmosphere, the lithosphere, the hydrosphere and the biological diversity of our planet so the present generations have to face the consequences of Global Warming, Ozone Depletion, Acid Rain, Deforestation, Desertification and Soil Erosion.

This means that our students have to be able to grasp the interacting aspects of the various social communities that they are part of, meaning: Family - Village/Town - Area - Country - Europe - Region - World. Moreover, in view of our role within the European Union students should be able to comprehend that being part of this enlarged community places increasingly more importance on our responsibility within the global context. Any decisions taken by the EU Commission and EU Parliament, where our Maltese representatives can also have their say, will have global repercussions much more so than when the decisions were taken by the Maltese parliament. Thanks to modern means of communication Maltese citizens, no matter their age, can also contribute to the decision making process just by sending an email or else they can just decide to continue grumbling. Eventually they can be even more effective by choosing the right persons for the post of European Member of Parliament during election time.

This means that at this particular moment in time it is imperative that our young people have access to education that opens their eyes to the causes of global issues otherwise they can easily be manipulated. They have also to be able to envisage a world free from terrorism, intercultural strife and international conflict otherwise they will look at current issues as being insurmountable. If the present socio-economic, political and ethnic structures shaping the world of today are to be made understandable it is crucial for students to be able to learn how to use the media and other sources of information in order to obtain all the various perspectives of the issue under study.

Involving more Stakeholders

The Education Division in Malta already promotes the work being done by numerous NGOs who are working with link teachers in the various schools focusing on related local and global issues namely Fauna and Flora in Malta, Afforestation Projects, School Development, Refugees and Global links with developing countries. These provide students with the necessary resources. Such partnerships with NGOs, both local and international, should be encouraged. However there is a need for a yearly calendar to be devised so that the administration, teaching staff and student representatives can decide the projects which they would like to be involved in from the very start of the scholastic year.

Other stakeholders in Citizenship Education can be the numerous Subject Associations. Examples of good practice can be advocated through the activities organised or by the publishing of related papers.

To obtain the full picture of a related issue other members of the community have to be involved namely the Local Council Members, Parliamentarians, Government Officials, the Broadcasting Authority, Civil Society Organisations, Parents. Above all funding for Citizenship Education should be covered also by other Government Ministries such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity and the Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment. In order that more teachers, no matter what their subject, get involved in Citizenship Education, it is essential that they attend training sessions and seminars locally and abroad to get a broader perspective. Even students should be given this opportunity to attend workshops where they can meet with other young people from across the world.

The Classroom Situation

According to the NMC *'The concept of the holistic development of a person places the student at the centre of the system. The Curriculum should therefore be at the service of the students and not the other way around.'* (pg.26) The emphasis should therefore be a pedagogy based on questioning that leads to further questions rather than answers. Therefore an *'educational ethos is developed that stimulates the development of students' potential without undermining the principles of solidarity and co-operation.'* (pg.2)

In practical terms effective learning strategies in citizenship education include strategies which are:

- active - emphasises learning by doing
- interactive - uses discussion and debate
- relevant - focuses on real life issues facing young people and society
- critical - encourages young people to think about issues in relation to themselves and suggest possible remedies
- collaborative - employs group-work and co-operative learning
- participative - gives young people a say in their own learning.

The multiplier effect can then be achieved by teachers through networking, sharing of best practices, continuous evaluation and by devising new initiatives.

By participating in Citizenship initiatives the motivation of students can be improved. They will become engaged in positive activities. They will be encouraged to volunteer and become involved in their communities and enable them to make informed choices about their lives. Above all, Citizenship Education should not merely focus on the negative issues but it is also about all that is amazingly positive in the world around us.

The sense of wonder that encompasses the global environment whether physical or human should be enhanced. This means that the sense of achievement achieved by students when actively participating in related initiatives should be accredited by Link Teachers, Heads of Schools and other Stakeholders.

The Formal Sector of Education

The global dimension of education is not an additional subject: it is best developed across the curriculum. It is a mix of knowledge and understanding that helps learners appreciate how their lives are affected by global issues, skills that enable them to play an active role as global citizens and, most importantly, dispositions of positive and inclusive stances on world issues.

An urgent action point needed at a local level is for a team of educationalists, each from their area of expertise, to audit the local syllabi and curricula, both at primary level and at secondary level, to identify the related themes covered and targets that can be addressed through the different subjects.

In parallel to this an urgent debate ought to be opened on a whole school approach to a global dimension to Citizenship Education in Malta.

However it is worth noting that in spite of the "works in progress" nature of the global dimension of citizenship education in Malta, there are already a number of local examples of good practice. There are highlighted in Appendix 1.

Conclusion

Maltese society has a long tradition and strong involvement in issues regarding the global dimension of Citizenship Education. This is indicated by the great support given by the Maltese whenever an appeal is made on the media to fund local charities, the victims of a natural hazard and the poor people of developing nations. More and more people are also realising the need to support environmentally friendly measures. However Maltese society is also having to deal with the new challenges that globalisation has brought about, such as xenophobia and unfair trading. Divergent and conflicting solutions to these problems are being suggested. In view of this it is imperative for all students to receive a sound Citizenship Education so that even now, as the young people of Malta, they will make their voices heard. Our decisions at local level are interdependent with current global issues. Schools have therefore a very important responsibility which needs to be addressed in a professional way with the collaboration of all the stakeholders that make up our society.

One final Reflection ...

The drafting of this scientific paper opened up more questions that it answered. While touching on a number of points it is in essence a synthetic document, and hopefully acts as an invitation for more reflection, in particular related to:

- Curriculum as policy, structure and content;
- the challenges facing global citizenship education and curriculum renewal; and
- appropriate Pedagogy for a Global Dimension of Citizenship Education in Malta.

The finalisation of this document comes at a sad time when Malta is in the international media due what is perceived as it being too tough on illegal immigrants trying to reach Europe by sea from Africa. This is only a timely reminder for the required curriculum adaptations and reforms, with a view to strengthening a culture of fairness, equity, tolerance and respect for others.

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Appendix 1 - Global Citizenship Education in Action

1. EkoSkola:

EkoSkola is the local branch eco schools - an international programme for a programme for environmental management and certification, and sustainable development education, for schools. It is an ideal way to implement Local Agenda 21 in the school community. EkoSkola was launched in Malta in 2002, and is today proving its worth in providing students with the means for a holistic education that is not focused solely on the acquisition of knowledge but on developing the whole person.

"The EkoSkola project provides a tangible opportunity of how the United Nation's Agenda 21 recommendations can be implemented on a national level. This initiative has been a catalyst in creating increased awareness and commitment among schools and students alike. The project's emphasis on active participation in decision-making processes augurs well towards the development of a culture of participation that is at the heart of local Agenda 21 processes."

George Pullicino,
Minister for Rural Affairs and the Environment

2. Global Action Schools

Global Action Schools is a unique partnership of seven organisations working with schools across Austria, Czech Republic, England, Malta, Poland, Slovak Republic and Thailand. Currently 6 pilot schools in Malta are exploring how small changes in their day-to-day running could help reduce global poverty.

"The most surprising thing that I learned is that there is a BIG issue about CHILD LABOUR. We try to use fair trade products to make sure that people that are making these things take a good wage for what they do and no children take part in the making of these products."

Student, Carlo Diacono School, Zejtun

3. Global Education Week

Secondary schools in Malta have been participating in the North South Centre Global and Development Education Project since 1999. Good exemplars of Maltese schools' participation in this European Programme are the seminars '*Youth for Change*', '*Youth against Conflict - Youth for Peace*' and '*Together for a World Without Poverty*', held in 2002, 2003 and 2004 respectively. The motto chosen by the North South Centre at an International Workshop, held in Sinai Romania during April 2006, was '**Acting together for a just world!**' so focusing on Millennium Goal Number 8. The local co-ordinating team for Global and Development Education adopted this motto as the topic for the 2006 celebration of Global Education Week.

Corporate Information

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