

Jedrzej Witkowski

Strengthened Co-operation for Improving Quality

Zusammenfassung:

Der Beitrag stellt den Kontext des Globalen Lernens in Polen dar. Er beleuchtet die jüngsten Entwicklungen im Arbeitsfeld Globales Lernen, beginnend mit einem Multistakeholderprozess in den Jahren 2010 und 2011. Der Autor beschreibt die Wirkung des Memorandums of Understanding, das von den für Globales Lernen zuständigen Ministerien und im Arbeitsfeld tätigen zivilgesellschaftlichen Organisationen unterzeichnet wurde. Besonderes Augenmerk legt er auf den Einfluss, den das Memorandum auf die Diskussion von Qualität und die Etablierung von Globalem Lernen im formellen Bildungsbereich hatte und hat.

Schlüsselworte: *Globales Lernen, Polen, Multi-Stakeholder-Ansatz*

Abstract:

The article presents the context of Global Education in Poland. It reviews the latest developments in the field starting from the multi-stakeholder process on Global Education in 2010 and 2011. The author describes the impact of the memorandum of understanding signed by the ministries responsible for Global Education and civil society actors active in the field, especially its influence on the discussion on quality and mainstreaming Global Education in the formal education sector.

Keywords: *global education, Poland, multi-stakeholder approach*

Context of Global Education in Poland

Global Education (1) is a relatively new notion in Poland. For the first time the term appeared in 2004 right after the Polish government had established its official development co-operation programme. The transition from a recipient to a donor of international assistance was quite swift in the Polish case and was directly influenced by the EU accession in 2004.

The socio-economic background against which the concept of Global Education was developed in Poland is however quite different from what one might know about the so-called Old Member States (EU 15). We need to take into account several issues: a) attitudes of the society (this is one being common for all the Visegrad Countries of Eastern Europe); b)

characteristics of the education sector and c) relations between civil society actors and public administration.

As the Hungarian sociologist János Setényi puts it, several factors hinder the efforts of bringing global issues into schools or more generally into public discourse (Setényi 2009). First of all, societies in the Visegrad countries are less diverse (the influx of migrants is by far smaller) so the need to embrace this diversity and understand for example “Why do people come to our country?”, “Where are they different and what unites us?” is less evident.

Lack of colonial legacy and often a lack of any political or economic relations with the countries outside Europe (apart from the US, Japan and perhaps China) is another factor lowering the interest in global issues. Polish foreign policy is in fact limited to European or Euro-Atlantic relations with allies and partners from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the European Union. Polish development policy targeting the East (countries of Eastern Partnership) and selected countries in the global South is not part of mainstream politics, so Poles rarely hear about global issues in the popular media.

The third factor Setényi mentions is a reminiscence of the oppression by totalitarian regimes. Since people feel aggrieved they rather tend to expect assistance to be provided to them. They do not consider themselves as potential donors. The opinion poll conducted by TNS OBOP for Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in November 2011 proves that while Poles are generally supportive towards development assistance, they tend to believe, that there are as many as 90 countries around the world which are poorer and/or “less developed” than Poland, while Poland ranks 39 according to Human Development Index (Poles on Development Assistance, 2011; Human Development Report 2012).

Education in Poland (especially formal education) is a sector of permanent transition. Since 1989 schools have undergone countless reforms both structural and curriculum-focused. Over recent years the system has gone through a structural reform (introduction of lower-secondary schools in 1999) and now goes through the reforms changing the role of supervision boards, in-service and pre-service teacher education and most importantly a curriculum reform adopted in 2008. This dynamism means little attention can be given to adjectival educations (development, global, human rights, peace education, etc.) as most capacity is channelled into managing and overseeing more general reforms.

This limitation is closely linked with the aforementioned third factor which needs to be considered – relations between NGOs and public administration. With education authorities being less active in the field of Global Education, NGOs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took over leadership in promoting Global Education. Already in 2004 civil society organisations had positive experiences to refer to as they played an important role in successful mainstreaming development issues into citizenship education (in the early nineties) and ecological education (in the late nineties). Looking back one may see both successes have been only possible because of the commitment expressed by the NGOs and by the openness for co-operation from the side of the ministries. The situation has been similar in the case of Global Education – cooperation proved to be a key factor especially that this time NGOs had a strong backing from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Step by step towards multi-stakeholder co-operation

From 2004 one might observe gradual solidification of the development co-operation programme managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and parallel process of strengthening of Global Education which is considered to be a component of development policy. The Peer Review conducted in 2009 by the Global Education Network Europe identified two critical achievements from the period between 2004 and 2009. It commends the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for “establishing the basis for a sound initial structure for an annual funding round” and the Ministry of National Education for allowing Global Education into mainstream education by including Global Education in the official mandatory curriculum (Global Education in Poland, 2011).

The International Peer Review Team recommended the establishment of a National Committee for Global Education with the purpose of strengthening co-operation between stakeholders. Yet, a lack of political will (or insufficient capacity) prevented the ministries (as the main addressees of this recommendation) from setting up such a body. Nevertheless, more co-ordination has been achieved over the last three years.

Progress has been made thanks to the multi-stakeholder process initiated by Zagranica Group (the Polish NGDO platform). The platform invited ministries and a broad range of other stakeholders (representatives of universities, in-service teacher training institutions, boards of education, local authorities and teachers) to the process with a twofold objective: to strengthen and institutionalize the co-operation between actors in Global Education and to strengthen the position of Global Education in the development co-operation programme and the education system. The whole process chaired by Grupa Zagranica was run between December 2009 and May 2011. It included 30 institutions which took part in at least one meeting. It consisted of 5 consecutive multi-stakeholder meetings on defining Global Education, quality standards for it, Global Education in formal education sector, new actors in Global Education and funding matters.

Representatives of the NGOs hoped the process could lead to developing a National Strategy for Global Education but this proved to be too ambitious. Within the Polish legal system the term “strategy” is reserved for documents adopted by the

Council of Ministers and the political decision has been made to reserve this type of documents only for broad long-term programmes (i.e. developing social capital). Informal negotiations conducted between the ministries and Grupa Zagranica led to the conclusion that the process would be concluded in a form of a written Report later endorsed by a Memorandum of Understanding signed by interested parties. The Memorandum of Understanding on Strengthening Global Education has been signed on May 26th, 2011 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of National Education and Grupa Zagranica.

The consensus to build upon

The Report on the Multi-Stakeholder Process on Global Education included a detailed account of the conclusions reached at each meeting. First of all, it presented the definition developed by the practitioners, representatives of academia and administration officials. Before the process different institutions used different terms when referring to Global Education, which caused unnecessary confusion and hampered promotion efforts. A collaboratively developed definition has replaced the terms “development education” and “education for sustainable development” as stakeholders declared that while certain differences between the terms exist these may be ignored for the sake of simplicity. According to the text of the Memorandum:

Global education is the part of civic education and upbringing, which broadens their scope by raising awareness of the existence of global phenomena and interdependences. Its main objective is to prepare the learners to face the challenges faced by all humanity. (...)

Global education puts special emphasis on:

- explaining the reasons and consequences of the described phenomena;
- presenting the perspective of the Global South;
- presenting the world as a complex and dynamically changing system;
- shaping critical thinking and influencing the change of attitudes;
- breaking existing stereotypes and prejudices;
- presenting influence an individual can exert on global processes and the influence of global processes exert on the individual.

Moreover, the Report also lists quality standards for Global Education developed by practitioners (this part of the process was particularly difficult and participants agreed standards should be further developed and revised before they are finally used as reference). The document also provides an analysis of institutions which are active in the field of Global Education and those who have a potential to get involved but have remained passive until now. The fourth part of the Report contains a strategic plan for mainstreaming Global Education in formal education (this became an issue of interest when stakeholders realized that the education system needed support in order to implement the curriculum reform).

The last part of the Report was an ambitious attempt to outline the vision for the development of Global Education in the coming years. The authors pulled together recommendations from all the meetings:

1. Expanding co-operation of institutions involved in Global Education activities.
2. Popularization and promotion of the elaborated definition of Global Education.
3. Developing quality standards of Global Education.
4. Establishing an open catalogue of good practice (activities and tools), which may serve as inspiration to persons dealing with Global Education.
5. Establishing a recommendation system of materials on Global Education.
6. Capacity building of institutions involved in Global Education.
7. Increasing the interest of new grant makers in global education, and enabling a possibly large group of Global Education actors to participate in grant competitions.

Some of these recommendations were repeated in a Memorandum which was meant to formally endorse the outcomes of the multi-stakeholder process. Consultations conducted by the representatives of Zagranica Group and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs represented by Under-Secretary of State Krzysztof Stanowski led to elaborating a final list of commitments politically acceptable for all the parties. Finally, the Memorandum included four pledges:

- to strengthen co-operation between stakeholders and continue the dialogue;
- to adopt and mainstream a new definition of Global Education;
- to work on improving quality of Global Education (among others developing a catalogue of good practice);
- to mainstream global Education in a formal education sector as well as in non-formal education.

The Memorandum was the first agreement on Global Education signed between the administration (Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of National Education) and civil society. Therefore it can be considered an important milestone in strengthening Global Education. However, in legal terms it is merely a general political commitment without clear priorities and action plan. For that reason, it has been clear for all the participants that the real meaning of the document is yet to be decided and will depend on the efforts put into the implementation phase by all parties.

The importance of the process

From the outset Grupa Zagranica wanted the multi-stakeholder process to be co-chaired by civil society and administration (to raise the profile of consultations and generate ownership on the side of the ministries). However, in 2009 neither MFA nor MoNE expressed a will to assume a part of responsibility for facilitation. In response, Grupa Zagranica managed the process unilaterally in 2010 and until May 2011 but expected the administration to take over the lead after signing the Memorandum of Understanding. This was to be the first real test for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whether they take the written declaration seriously.

Fortunately, the invitation to continue the process was officially announced by Vice-Minister Stanowski on the day when the Memorandum was signed. Mr. Stanowski invited all

institutions involved in the multi-stakeholder process to regular meetings which were to be held every quarter and hosted interchangeably by MFA, Ministry of National Education and Grupa Zagranica.

Since that time three such meetings have been organized – MFA hosted two of them and Grupa Zagranica was responsible for assembling one. Although, much shorter and more formal, these meetings formed a good basis for exchange of information on the initiatives planned for the nearest future and consulting funding schemes or changes in the institutional setting for Global Education. One may expect these consultations to be continued over the coming months.

However, within this structure the space for content-related discussions (such as the elaboration of quality standards) has been too limited. Therefore, Grupa Zagranica has also organized two seminars to supplement official consultations. The working seminars brought together both official representatives of the ministries and a broad range of experts and practitioners from NGOs, academia, in-service and pre-service teacher training institutions.

The combination of formal consultations of a higher profile and broader expert seminars to discuss the substance of Global Education proves to be effective so far. One may therefore consider the first commitment expressed in the Memorandum was met. The only weakness the observer can easily see is decreased commitment on the side on the Ministry of National Education, where the department previously responsible for Global Education has been dissolved and GE was added to the portfolio of other officials who are not familiar with the concept. Thus, still the effort is needed from the side of MFA and NGOs to generate commitment and ownership of new people.

Definition as an anchorage

The adoption and mainstreaming of a definition of Global Education has been another precise commitment made by the signatories of the Memorandum. This turned out to be much more important than all actors expected. This is because 2011 and the first term of 2012 was a time of important structural changes in the development co-operation policy and Polish Aid as its operational arm.

First of all, the Development Cooperation Act prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was adopted by the Parliament in September 2011 and enacted by January 1st, 2012. Since the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a champion of Global Education in Poland it is very important that Global Education is recognized in this Act which now provides a framework for all activities in this field. Fortunately, both the political leadership of the Ministry at that time and the line officials clearly understand, why this is important and as a consequence Global Education has been acknowledged as one of the dimensions of development co-operation. The Act uses the agreed term of Global Education (instead of “development education” which appeared in earlier drafts), but defines it shortly as “educational activities (...) in order to increase awareness and understanding for global problems and interdependence between countries”.

The Act made the Ministry of Foreign Affairs responsible for preparing the Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme, which was to be adopted by the Council of Ministers. The Programme was meant to set the government's

priorities in the field of development co-operation. One chapter of the document officially adopted on March 20th, 2012 is focused on Global Education and Voluntary Service which are both referred to as “civic dimension of Poland’s development cooperation”. NGOs proposed to include the new definition of Global Education and repeat the declarations made in the Memorandum, but the MFA claims that the Programme needs to be more general.

In spite of these difficulties with defining Global Education in official documents certain improvements need to be acknowledged: The same term is now used by all stakeholders, it has become a reference point in the latest MFA’s call for proposal (the most important funding scheme for Global Education in Poland) and was included in Poland’s Development Cooperation Annual Report 2010 (published at the end of 2011).

Improving quality – an approach from a different angle

As indicated above the discussion on quality standards for Global Education has been the most difficult part in the multi-stakeholder consultations. Practitioners from NGOs, teachers, teaching consultants and researchers from academia were involved but still there was not enough expertise available to develop a set of standards which would be accepted as a bottom-line consensus. The participants decided more work was needed on that issue and therefore one of the working seminars organized by Grupa Zagranica focused on improving quality of Global Education. A discussion within Grupa Zagranica’s working group was organized to plan the process in a way that it became more effective than the previous attempt.

This was that time when the decision was made to approach the problem from a different angle. An attempt to develop a universal framework which could be easily applied by all practitioners proved to be ineffective. Therefore, participants decided to use the list of standards developed previously (though everybody agreed it was incomplete and imperfect) and arrange a peer review process where these could be applied to the existing practice.

The working group set up the following objectives for the process: a) to improve the quality of existing practices through exchange between practitioners and experts; b) to improve the quality of future initiatives by identifying best practice which could be used as examples and to create a set of recommendations on how teaching materials, campaigns and support programmes for schools should be developed; c) to facilitate constructive content-focused co-operation between practitioners, experts and officials responsible for Global Education.

The peer-review process was the first initiative of this kind developed within the Global Education community in Poland. It brought together representatives of NGOs running projects on Global Education, teacher consultants who often use materials developed by NGOs and train teachers, representatives of four universities and administration officials who assess funding applications. All of them got involved in a dialogue on how to improve existing practice and a critical analysis of what made certain initiatives or publications attractive and effective.

The invitation to take part in the process was distributed to all potentially interested institutions by Grupa Zagranica. The response was surprisingly high as 26 institutions declared their participation (21 institutions wanted their materials to be reviewed and five institutions volunteered their consultants). In order to facilitate a review process it was divided in four categories, namely: teaching materials, campaigns, contests, support programmes for schools.

Small peer-review groups were created in each category, each group had two materials, programmes or campaigns as their focus for a review. Each group consisted of representatives of 2 institutions submitting their materials, two independent consultants (usually researchers from universities, in-service teacher trainers or administration officials) and a moderator responsible for facilitating the meetings.

The set of quality standards listed in 2010 was used to develop a simple review/evaluation tool used by the participants. All actors were aware of the weakness of this reference framework but they agreed that while reviewing materials, programmes and campaigns they would use a tool as a starting point for an exchange and any imperfections of the tool should not prevent them from a constructive discussion.

This approach proved to be successful. Finally, 20 institutions took part in a process in March and April 2012, eight peer-review groups were formed and met for consultations. There were 17 reviews – eight publications, six support programmes for schools, two campaigns and one contest. During the evaluation participants praised the positive atmosphere of friendly but critical exchange between experts who rarely get to work together.

The second step in the peer review was a working seminar organized by Grupa Zagranica to sum up the results of the peer review. Examples of good practice were presented at the beginning of the meeting and later participants split in three groups to work on specific recommendations for future initiatives.

The final part was drafting a report from the seminar. Usually this is more a technical, automatic task allocated to a project assistant acting as a reporter. However, in this case Grupa Zagranica chose a different approach. It had been decided that all the recommendations formulated during the process should form a kind of a guidebook for institutions publishing materials, offering support programmes for schools or designing campaigns. This made the report into a living publication which is being used in everyday work and supports the implementation of future projects. The document not only lists recommendations and explains them briefly but also provides hints on how these recommendations could be implemented and become good practice.

The evaluation of the process showed that the participants appreciate a constructive exchange of ideas between experts and are interested in taking part in a follow-up of the peer review. Moreover, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has decided that the recommendations can be used as a reference in the upcoming call for proposals to assure that projects funded by MFA comply with them. Because of the interest in the follow-up, Grupa Zagranica plans to continue exchange in a less structured way (any time organizations express the will to consult their material). It has been emphasized that it would be even

more productive to review materials or programmes before their publication or launching. This recommendation has been taken on board and several new meetings have been foreseen for the organizations which now receive grants from Foundation Education for Democracy which operates a re-granting scheme funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Global Education in the formal education remains a challenge

While insufficient expertise has made the discussion on quality standards difficult, it is insufficient capacity and lack of political will that impede the dialogue on mainstreaming global education in the formal education sector in Poland.

At the end of 2008 a new official curriculum was adopted by the Ministry of National Education. This is an important document as the Polish education system is very centralized in terms of curriculum content. Basically, the Ministry decides on what is taught and the teacher only chooses how to teach that. NGOs active in the field of Global Education participated in the process of developing the curriculum and as a consequence certain global issues have been included in subjects such as civics, history, geography and biology.

The curriculum is now being implemented in primary and secondary schools throughout Poland. However, the experience up to date shows that changes in curriculum do not result automatically in changes in teachers' practice. The analysis of the textbooks (officially approved by the Ministry as complying with the new curriculum) proves that global issues are poorly described or even omitted. This is a real challenge as for the vast majority of teachers textbooks are the most important (or the only) reference in terms of the content of their teaching. At the same time very little support in in-service teacher training is offered to explain teachers how to teach new issues included in the curriculum for the very first time.

Some educational institutions and non-governmental organisations try to mitigate the impact of these shortcomings on the implementation of the curriculum. Centre for Education Development (the national institution responsible for in-service teacher trainings) created a programme which constructed and supported a network of teacher consultants (based locally) is delivering training on Global Education to teachers through the country. Thanks to the gradually extended network of consultants it has been possible to reach large number of teachers directly in their communities. Centre for Education Development also supports teachers trained by consultants through an e-learning course on Global Education and teaching materials (developed by NGOs within other initiatives). The project is now run in its sixth consecutive year and has so far reached hundreds of teachers.

Apart from this institution it is mostly NGOs that intend to support schools in the implementation of a curriculum. Their capacity (funding and expertise) is however too small to offer comprehensive, large-scale support programmes. Most civil society actors are dependent on funding provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (only a few manage larger grants from EuropeAid), which is in fact limited to 7 month per year (any project can due to administrative regulations only be implemented between May and December). Therefore, NGOs mostly publish materials and offer short training programmes

usually reaching the same teachers who are already interested in the issue.

As members of Grupa Zagranica's working group have recognized that separated, uncoordinated projects will not meet the need from the side of schools, they proposed to include the issue of mainstreaming global education in the multi-stakeholder process. In 2010 within one of the meetings a comprehensive strategic plan was developed with the primary intention to assure implementation of the new curriculum in the field of Global Education. The plan included four priorities:

- Teachers are conscious of the importance and place of Global Education in the formal education system.
- Teachers have competences needed to deliver Global Education (thanks to in-service and pre-service training).
- Availability of quality tools to deliver Global Education in schools.
- Improving quality of Global Education in the formal education system.

The plan was included as a part of the Report on the Multi-Stakeholder Process and was referred to in a Memorandum where the parties pledged to mainstream GE in the formal education sector as well as non-formal education. However, until now this has not been taken on board with necessary attention. Several factors contributed to this situation. Firstly, it is not clear who is responsible for taking the lead on that. On the one hand, it is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that was made responsible for Global Education in Poland (according to the Development Cooperation Act). On the other hand, it is the Ministry of National Education that oversees schools and should assure that the curriculum is taught properly. Secondly, as mentioned above the commitment of the Ministry of National Education decreased in 2011 and it refuses to take over leadership in this process. Finally, as the scope of necessary intervention is huge (there are 418.000 active teachers in Poland and around 28.000 schools) and the education system centralized, no effective programme can be developed without strong partnership of all actors (both ministries and other institutions of formal education system, academia, NGOs and practitioners).

Summary and future outlook

The closer examination of the history of Global Education in Poland since 2004 reveals an important principle. Until 2008 most of the developments in the field were made thanks to the efforts of different experts and organizations working separately. The reform of a curriculum in 2008 was a breakthrough – the first positive experience when cooperation led to important systemic changes in favour of Global Education. This was an important incentive for all practitioners to work together.

Since that time all important initiatives have been carried out collaboratively. Firstly, by the group of NGOs united under the umbrella of Grupa Zagranica, and later on by all other stakeholders (including ministries responsible for Global Education, teacher consultants and academia). It is not an overstatement to say that none of the latest successes could have been achieved without a multi-stakeholder cooperation. It is even more promising if we acknowledge that this collaboration

has not been forced by any kind of official requirement and every positive experience contributes to its further strengthening.

The GENE peer review of 2009 conducted right after the breakthrough mentioned above recognised the significant progress that was achieved in Global Education in Poland between 2004 and 2009 and acknowledged the need for further capacity building, strategic planning and resourcing of institutions and organizations involved. Now by July 2012 it is clear that some of the recommendations expressed by GENE have been implemented thanks to joint efforts of the administration and the civil society: there is a greater coordination between actors, the conceptual debates on defining Global Education and its quality standards have started, funding mechanism have been solidified.

The Global Education community in Poland is obviously much further in its development than it used to be in 2009. However, more work needs to be done collaboratively in order to strengthen Global Education and make the use of existing opportunities. Most pressing issues include:

- embedding successful experience of peer-reviews on quality of Global Education into day-to-day operation of all institutions active in the field;
- building upon recommendations developed in the peer review process on quality and assuring their implementation in all activities being carried out in the country;
- strengthening strategic planning in the field of Global Education required by the Development Cooperation Act by setting up clear priorities for 2012–2015;
- strengthening multi-stakeholder cooperation by setting up a National Committee for Global Education proposed by GENE in 2009 and renewing Ministry of National Education's commitment to Global Education;
- taking a strategic approach on mainstreaming Global Education in the formal education sector and developing operational plan that could assure universal implementation of the curriculum in the field of Global Education.

Note:

- 1 The term Global Education is used throughout the article as an equivalent of a Polish phrase "edukacja globalna" which has been adopted within the multi-stakeholder process in 2010 as a main reference for what was previously called development education, education for sustainable development and global development education. For more information see section "The consensus to build upon".

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Jedrzej Witkowski

is Head of Youth Programmes Department and a co-ordinator of Global Education Programme at the Centre for Citizenship Education (CCE) in Warsaw, Poland. Represents CCE in Grupa Zagranica (Polish NGDO platform), he is a member of Development Awareness Raising and Education Forum of CONCORD. The author was a participant of the multi-stakeholder process on Global Education held between 2009 and 2011 and took part in the subsequent official consultations on Global Education. He holds MA in international relations from University of Warsaw, finished post-graduate studies on development co-operation, prepares a Ph.D. describing the dialogue between NGDOs and Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Poland.