



# TEACHERS AGENTS OF CHANGE

**Nauczycielki zmieniają świat**

**GLOBAL EDUCATION  
IN THE POLISH CONTEXT:**

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**the story of a project...**



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## **GLOBAL EDUCATION IN THE POLISH CONTEXT: the story of a project...**

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When one works on education projects encompassing such a diversity of not so obvious issues as the ones covered by *global education*, one has to confront the status quo, current theoretical perspectives and already undertaken activities in this field. Furthermore, one needs to be aware of the fact that knowledge and education function in different areas: formal (e.g. formal education system and academia), non-formal (e.g. educational activities carried out by non-governmental organisations) and informal (narratives, debates, conversations). This complex context of discussion about knowledge compels one to be flexible, thoughtful and inclusive in one's work with teachers and schools. For these reasons the project 'Teachers: Agents of Change', run by the Institute of Global Responsibility (IGO), has become an area of educational and scientific co-operation, combining experiences of people involved - in various ways – in global education.

The work in a diverse team has generated many polemics and disputes during working meetings, study visits and scientific seminars. The results of this work have materialised in the publication *Global education. Polish contexts and inspirations*, edited by Magdalena Kuleta-Hulboj and Marta Gontarska<sup>1</sup>, which is the first monograph on critical global education to have been published in Poland.

The objective of this paper is to discuss how the notion of global education has become an element of an important and stimulating debate about social and educational change. Having started a debate of such a polemical character the participants in the project assumed that they would also initiate transformations in education.

But let us discuss these issues one after another.

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<sup>1</sup> M. Kuleta-Hulboj, M. Gontarska (ed.), 2015, *Edukacja globalna. Polskie konteksty i inspiracje*, WN DSW, Wrocław.

## Meetings, educational perspectives, discussions

Throughout the project three working meetings, four national seminars and one study visit were organised. They provided an excellent opportunity for the participants with different reflections and perspectives on global education to meet and make use of the discussed issues in their practice. The academia was represented by researchers from different academic backgrounds who in their research, writing or teaching are involved in global education and/or related areas such as development education, human rights education, cultural and ethnographic studies linked to the (de/neo) colonialism and critical pedagogy.

The non-formal education was represented by educators and activists from non-governmental organisations who are involved in types of education which can be hardly found in teaching programmes and/or are marginalised, trivialised or overlooked in education reforms. In this context, multicultural and intercultural education as well as anti-discriminatory and citizenship education were also discussed.

Meetings of people who approach a particular subject from different perspectives usually lead to stimulating exchanges and sessions of brainstorming. The discussions held during the meetings focused on four questions:

- **The description of the subject, scope and issues covered by global education.** Global education in the Polish education system has a rather untypical status. Firstly, it has been formally included in the curriculum since the 2009/2010 school year following an ordinance of the Ministry of Education. This means that global education issues should be featured in teaching programmes at all stages of education. However, global education is not a school subject, which prevents its real status from being regulated. The inclusion of global education in teaching is dependent on the awareness, knowledge and willingness of teachers. Due to these conditions one of the crucial questions which have been addressed during the working meetings was how to define the subject of global education and its scope as well as the contents in existing school subjects which are close to the perspective of global education.

The discussions about the theoretical aspects enabled the participants of the working meetings to confront their opinions. The perspectives

rooted in social sciences and humanities referred to scientific theories and narratives present in formal education institutions and personal reflections of the researchers. The reflections based on pedagogy, sociology and anthropology were confronted with capacities of teachers and teaching programmes.

The perspective of educators focused on experiences of their organisations and practical possibilities of promoting global education they deal with in their work. In this context several important issues were raised: the promotion of global education topics, methodologies and ways of collaborating with teachers and building relations with educational institutions (from central educational authorities to schools and kindergartens).

The difference in the approach to global education which became apparent during the discussions revealed the classic division between practitioners and theorists. However, what is more important, it also indicated areas of possible co-operation. Education non-governmental organisations support schools and teachers in their ongoing teaching in an interim way, focusing on selected points. The academic activity makes it possible to equip future teaching counsellors and teachers with the competences they can develop themselves by co-operating with for example education organisations from the non-formal sector. The common denominator for the work of both academia and the non-governmental sector can be training teachers in how to become more aware of local and global perspectives of functioning in the world.

The divergences were also visible in the discussions regarding the definition of global education. An unequivocal and complete definition is not only difficult but nearly impossible to develop. Due to this challenge elements of education for sustainable development, human rights education or education for peace are also taken into account. The multidimensional character of global education, different understanding and interpretations of historical and contemporary events, various cultural and social experiences, including individual experiences, call for a thoughtful approach. Furthermore, the disciplinary background

(e.g. pedagogy, sociology, cultural anthropology, natural sciences, political sciences etc.) shifts the emphasis in global education. This means that on the one hand there are certain complications in terms of theory and semantics. On the other hand, it is necessary to adopt several boundary assumptions which make it possible to start a substantive debate. For this reason the definition developed by Vanessa Andreotti (references to her publications can be found in the monograph) was often mentioned in the discussions since it allows encompassing a multitude of issues within global education.

The key question in this area is the following: how to understand global education? From what theoretical and/or analytical perspective should we consider its scope of contents? In what ways should we present similarities and differences in relations between the global North and South? How should we approach issues linked to development and de-growth? How should we understand the concept of *global citizenship*? How to anchor it in the Polish context? In what way can we make global education an equal educational narrative?

- **Political and citizenship character of global education.** The taught contents are of ideological and political character and the declared apoliticality of the Polish education system is paradoxically the element of its political nature. Furthermore, it is expected from schools, both by the government and society, to sensitise students to social and civil society issues. In this context the political nature of education is an inalienable element. It has therefore become indispensable in the discussion about global education to embed its narratives in the social, political and ideological categories. The theoretical frames of global education clearly indicate its citizenship-related character and potential for critical analysis and emancipation. Therefore, social, political and ideological dimensions should be approached in a critical, thoughtful manner in order to teach global education and not to deprive it of its vital identity-constituting elements. This aspect was particularly important in the discussions: how to teach global education in a way which is relevant, content-based and compelling for students. The research and practice prove that schools have problems in the area of thoughtful, critical education and without this component global education cannot successfully fulfil its role.

The key question in this area is the following: how to make issues linked to politicality in education an element of the debate about changes in the education system? How to approach politicality in global education? What narratives should be used to discuss topics linked to global education? How the emphases on the *global* and *local* dimensions should be placed? What should be the role of teachers in global education? What methods and in what ways could they employ to talk about and promote new topics?

- **Educational co-operation between the sectors.** The participants of the working meetings differed from one another in many aspects: affiliations, ways of working, their approach to knowledge, theoretical or practical orientation towards education and objectives. The awareness of these differences was however not an obstacle in their approach to global education.

Global education is an important element of increasing knowledge of globalisation and its local dimension (*glocality*). This knowledge is significant and much needed since it provides opportunities to participate in social life and culture. Social competences of critical analysis are important both in academic pedagogy and practice of non-formal education. The inclusion of global education narratives at the stage of training future teachers and teaching counsellors may constitute an element of co-operation.

It is therefore crucial in the collaboration between the two sectors to exchange information about one's work and draw on experiences of both sides. Thus by joining forces in order to teach students formally (by following teaching programmes) and encouraging the participation in educational programmes developed by non-governmental organisations (e.g. training workshops run by NGOs) an area of dual educating may be developed.

- **Critical questions about the specificity of the new knowledge.** Global education has also become a perspective in the learning process of the participants of the working meetings. With this came multiple questions about its scope, context and methodologies. Vital issues regarding global education focused on how to define it. What contents and in what ways to use? What methods and teaching approaches to use in promoting it? In what

context to present the Polish perspective in discussions about globalisation? How to present marginal issues or issues which are not relevant to the Polish realities? In what way should we use knowledge in order to make full use of its potential for critical analysis?

These questions have revealed that co-operation on a project must be interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder. The participants of the discussions offered their particular points of view on global education. However, they also took into account reflections of other participants and built on them, which created a particular new quality in thinking about global education.

The working meetings and discussions about the diversity of global education have also led the participants to thinking about writing a monograph which would present the discussed perspectives and also offer reflections on global education in Poland.

During the discussions during the working meetings (also seminars and the joint study visit) their participants realised the differences stemming from different modes of functioning in academic institutions and non-governmental organisations. Different organisational cultures, priorities and possibilities of taking action, different approaches to knowledge and the possibility of promoting it prompted the decision to develop the monograph devoted to global education. Its objective was to present aspects of reflection on global education and its practice.

The crucial aspect in deciding to prepare the monograph was however the attempt to draw attention to its potential for critical analysis. The critical character of global education puts emphasis on inequalities, differences and deficiencies while showing how both individual and systemic changes and transformations could be introduced. Furthermore, the critical focus of global education has become one of the elements which were common for the participants in the project. Both the activists from the non-governmental organisations and the interdisciplinary researchers recognised as important and necessary the development of a publication which would analyse not only theoretical dimensions of global education but also its potential for critical analysis. Seen from this perspective not only does global education provide knowledge which can be absorbed but also a tool which makes it possible to understand the global realities of the contemporary world and actively participate in it.

**IN THIS CONTEXT GLOBAL EDUCATION IS AN ELEMENT OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY WHICH ENCOURAGES INVOLVEMENT IN CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVITIES, REQUIRES A WIDER PERSPECTIVE OF ANALYSING THE WORLD AND REFERS TO THE REALITIES WHICH ARE FAMILIAR TO LEARNERS. IT IS THEREFORE DIFFERENT IN MANY ASPECTS DUE TO THE SPECIFICITY OF INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS BUT ALSO MAKES IT POSSIBLE TO SPEAK IN ONE VOICE WHEN THE ANALYSIS IS SHIFTED TO THE SOCIAL OR CULTURAL LEVEL.**

## Initiating an educational narrative

The monograph 'Global education. Polish contexts and inspirations' has opened a new educational discourse, presenting a diversity in thinking about global education. It discusses the practice of global education in the education system as well as social, political and cultural contexts of the knowledge that has until now been marginalised or trivialised. Furthermore, it embeds in the Polish education system the contents which should be included in order to understand ongoing changes in Poland, Europe and across the globalised world.

The issues raised in the monograph cover the following areas:

- **The justification of the necessity to incorporate contents of global education.** Katarzyna Jasikowska presents the international context and origins of global education and problematises Eurocentric perspectives which are often present in discussions about global education. Jasikowska also reveals the complexity of knowledge within global education which, apart from its cognitive dimension, may also be used to exert ideological influence.
- **Polish contexts of global education.** Marcin Starnawski reflects on Polish contexts of thinking in global terms from the perspective of a semi-peripheral country. This leads, above all, to discussions about the political reception of the notion of difference (in the divisions of the world into West/East and North/South) and consequently – to different ways of understanding global education.
- **Relations between the formal and non-formal education.** Paweł Rudnicki raises the issue of relations between the formal and non-formal education in developing global education teaching programmes and promoting them. He analyses the critical and trivial dimensions of knowledge and the way in which global education is presented in schools in Poland.
- **The post-colonial dimension of global education.** Magdalena Kuleta-Hulboj emphasises the (post)colonial dimension of global

education. Kuleta-Hulboj discusses issues linked with areas of dialogue and disagreement and presents pedagogical dimensions of teaching global education.

- **Anthropological references to global education.** Agata Hummel presents anthropological reminiscences in global education and analyses the term of development as one of the crucial and recognisable concepts in social sciences and humanities.
- **The creation of social values in the proces of learning.** Ewa Szadzińska indicates axiological dimensions in the reflection on and the teaching of global education. Furthermore, Szadzińska discusses the perspective of sustainable development and underlines how important the awareness of difference is in global education.
- **Methods of work involving the contents of global education.** Gabriela Lipska-Badoti presents the method of Philosophy for children (P4C) as a vital and relevant tool to teach global education. Lipska-Badoti focuses in particular on the potential of P4C for critical analysis and the possibilities of developing thoughtful and self-directed sense of global citizenship.

The diversity of aspects analysed in the monograph encourages the reflection on the multiple facets of global education, both from the theoretical and practical perspectives. Global education is not a standard school subject. It cannot be such a subject because its inherent components are the social competences which go beyond the school teaching framework. The axiological dimension of global education is based on raising the awareness of diversity and the respect which is due regardless of the place of birth, social status, colour of skin, language, sex or religion. The values inherent in global education present human beings entangled in different contexts of the realities, human beings who need empathy, support and help irrespective of where they come from or who they are. The global and local dimensions of citizenship define the perspectives of making a change in the world - both the distant and the small, everyday ones. The authors of the monograph see in global education the potential for organising the world in a better, more aware and just manner.



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**THE INSTITUTE OF GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY (IGO)** is an independent non-governmental organisation based in Warsaw, Poland. It was established in 2007 and focuses on development policy issues, development education and cooperation with partners in the South.

IGO is one of the few Polish NGOs that conduct continuous research and advocacy work on aid effectiveness. It addresses development issues in the Polish, European and global context through a human rights based approach. Central to its mission is taking a position on the challenging areas of North-South relations and concentrating on Poland's global responsibilities towards developing countries when it comes to trade, economic regulations and the social dimension of globalisation.

IGO works to increase the quality of development education in Poland through training workshops, public discussions and publications. It also supports specific initiatives of Southern partners that seek to address the causes of injustice and improve mechanisms of development cooperation.

IGO uses its expertise to advocate for policy changes to ensure that the ownership of Southern countries is reflected in Polish and European policies and development programmes. It participates in face-to-face meetings with representatives of the Polish government and MPs, organises seminars and raises the concerns of its Southern partners in expert debates and during open events for the general public.