Post-2015 Global Thematic Consultation on Education

Summary Report of the e-Discussion on Education for Global Citizenship, Jobs and Skills

Background

The thematic consultation on education for global citizenship, jobs and skills ran from **23 January to 9 February 2013** and received **135 responses and comments** from a variety of contributors including civil society, academics, students and youth-based organizations and the co-moderators from UN Women, UNFPA, UNESCO, Save the Children and the Global Campaign for Education (GCE). Participants were asked to reflect on successful strategies, major challenges and the learning and technology required, as well as to propose key recommendations for impact, actions and measurement on the education after 2015.

Whilst consensus is yet to be reached on the *concept* of global citizenship and the skills required for it, there was a strong endorsement of the *need* for education for global citizenship and life skills to have a place in the curriculum of formal and informal education, including comprehensive gender and sexual and reproductive health education. As part of a broader move to strengthen the quality and relevance of education a substantial re-thinking of the teaching of work-skills is needed.

Given the importance and nature of education for global citizenship, work and life, the approach is suggested to be one of life-long and "life-wide" learning. Education in the true sense surpasses the mere acquisition of a degree or passing of an assessment, and should rather prepare and equip for life and for the demands that life places on an individual (including adaptation to changes), now and in the future. Moreover, in line with education being a human right, education for global citizenship, work and life should be equally accessible to all persons irrespective of means, gender, ethnicity or socio-economic group, with special efforts to reach marginalized populations.

Education for global citizenship

According to the discussants, global citizenship relates to fostering peace and human rights; equality, tolerance and

> "[Education for global citizenship] means embracing a more holistic view of what kind of skills and attitudes are needed in our world today. While skills for jobs are important, so are skills for living together." **Carolyn Medel-Anonuevo.**

respect to people and environment; and recognition of the interconnectedness between the individual at the local level and the world outside. Therefore, education for global citizenship should equip citizens with skills in **dialogue and for critical thinking, enabling them to counter messages of intolerance and all forms of violence.**

Many participants reflected on the meaning of education for global citizenship based on personal experiences, and revealed it as something close to their hearts, with links to **empowerment, respect and dignity**. There was

some discussion of the relation between global and national citizenship, with suggestions that learning required for global citizenship relies on a strong foundation of **community-based engagement**, while also noting the need to ensure **exposure to other cultures**. Education for global citizenship can be a long term investment by giving citizens the skills and tools to advocate and influence government policies, encourage governments to create policy change, and help monitor policy and budget implementation to ensure intentions are put into force.

Skills for life

"Reform must not only focus on academic skills but also ensure that children are learning the context-specific and health-related skills needed to thrive in the 21st century." **(Jenny Perlman Robinson)**

There was a general agreement among the contributors that education should equip young people with skills to build healthy, productive and fulfilling lives, with **awareness, confidence and ability** to contribute positively to the world around them. This related to non-cognitive/academic skills such as self-awareness, self-confidence and personal responsibility; sexual and reproductive health and rights; addressing gender based discrimination and violence, including targeted work with men and boys to promote gender equality and healthy, respectful relationships; critical thinking, problem solving and conflict resolution; cooperation, negotiation and leadership skills; the ability to express oneself and showing empathy. Education for life-skills should foster young people's potential as well as their resilience and determination, especially of those most marginalized and disenfranchised. There was a strong sense in the discussion that life-building skills also can help an individual in the work environment.

Skills for jobs

When discussing work-skills, contributors identified disconnect between what is taught in schools and what is demanded in the workplace. Contributors called for a **substantial rethinking of teaching work-skills,** asking that schools not only *teach* and provide knowledge, but also guide students on how to *apply* it. Some responses from southern participants focused on the challenges around **quality** of education vs. skills system, often linked to quality levels of TVET and tertiary education more generally, including lack of qualified teachers, inept links to higher education and absence of stakeholder engagement. Contributors pointed to the need for inclusion of **transferable skills** in curricula, with input from employers in identifying relevant areas. Beyond *training* individuals to fit into specific workplaces, this is about *empowering* them with skills that can help guarantee their livelihoods while making employment choices. Furthermore, education should equip young people, especially young women and girls to navigate and thrive in a constantly changing environment, both within and outside the workplace, interlinking **non-conventional** and **gender-sensitive** work-skills with life-skills and global citizenship.

Many of the discussants raised the point that **technology**, especially *mobile* technology to which so many people in the world have access, can play a role in the development of global citizenship, increase access to jobs and support skills development. Young people can virtually meet and share perspectives with people of other religions, ethnicities or countries. In this way youth are exposed, in a relatively safe environment, to a range of ideas and cultures that they may not otherwise have had access to. They can express their own world views and listen to those of others, thus develop skills of **expression, cooperation, negotiation and of showing empathy**. Access to information about job opportunities, as well as taking online courses to develop skills appropriate to the workplace were also mentioned. As was noted by one of the contributors, *"Technology can be used [...]in the following ways: 1) develop cooperative and participatory learning skills, promote peer education; 2) facilitate intercultural exchange with countries and cultures very different from theirs [youth]; 3) disseminate good practice to a*

large number of recipients […] 5) can take advantage of the World Wide Web potential [...] and telecommunications (mobile phones, apps, geo-location etc.) to inform about the labour market and its opportunities, but also as a tool for e-learning." *(Christian Elevati, Global Citizenship Education Specialist)* In short, technology is not only an enabler of global communication and access to information, but the effective use of it can develops skills that are increasingly necessary for living and working in a digital, connected world.

Recommendations for education in a post-2015 development agenda

Focus on quality basic education as the foundation and access for all: Moving forward, there were clear suggestions about the need to make extra effort to **re-introduce quality of education** on the international development agenda, particularly as previous education goals have favoured access. The quality of education is crucial to ensure that learners acquire the foundational skills and knowledge *on which* to build. Before we can talk about gaps in curricula in terms of global citizenship, work and life skills, there is a **need to address the general gaps in quality of education**, which often result in students departing schools without even basic skills - denying them means to provide for own livelihoods, or to fully take their place as global citizens.

"Well planned and implemented policies and strategies for inclusive education improve the quality of teaching and learning for all children, including, but not only, the marginalised. **Sightsavers**

Future education goals should encompass the right to **free education for all**, with **quality** incorporated throughout the education system, including early childhood and beyond primary school, as well as in education for work skills, including tertiary. The notion of *addressing inequality* featured prominently in the discussion. Contributors agreed that **schools should provide inclusive environments and special efforts need to be taken to reach marginalized groups of population,** including the poor, women and girls, the disabled, children without adequate parental support or limited learning opportunities, those in need of a second chance, and young people in conflict situations including ex-combatants. As it was mentioned by one of the contributors, this is important due to "[...] *inclusive education's emphasis on individual needs and learning styles, as well as its inherent recognition of diversity."* *(Sightsavers)*

Establishing education for global citizenship, life-skills and work-skills in education systems: Many contributors agreed that governments should build education for global citizenship, life and work into the **sector plans and school curricula – with accessibility, equity and lifelong learning in mind.** There were a number of calls for stronger inclusion in the formal education sector as well as through informal provision. Taking education for global citizenship and skills, non-traditional vocational training seriously requires stakeholders to be open to change their mindsets and approaches. Some specific suggestions from the contributors included:

- *Global citizenship:* Exposure to the world and other cultures should be encouraged in education, both through **international, cultural or academic exchange programs, language education, as well as making curricula more focused on analysis of current world affairs, including sustainable human development and elimination of all kinds of discrimination**. Schools should incorporate global citizenship into their mission statements, and develop long-term plans to train students, design challenging courses, and evaluate programs through feedback from students themselves. *"Global citizenship is often seen as a 'nice to have' option rather than an essential attribute. The sort of global citizenship education we want is the sort that endures beyond school." (Graeme Scott, ISB)*

- *Life-skills:* Both central and local governments have vital roles to play in terms of shaping constructive policies and legal frameworks, and community leaders, parents and teachers can help integrate life-educational topics in society. **Comprehensive education on gender and sexual and reproductive health** should be incorporated in the curriculum, as part of a broader move to strengthen the quality and relevance of education. Such education should include targeted work with men and boys to promote gender equality and healthy, respectful relationships.

  "Actions and initiatives include the development of curricula on sexual and reproductive health and rights including all relevant stakeholders, supported by relevant training for teachers." **Marianne Haslegreave**

- *Skills for jobs*: Whilst often already present in curricula, there may be a need for reforms to include **more tailored and qualitative approaches to work-skills** in education (per country; per region; local contexts; marginalized groups). This could include innovating curricula and teaching methods (i.e. to incorporate transferrable skills) in order to render education much more relevant to professional environments, as well as to students themselves. The inclusion of skills needed for finding or creating jobs is also important and a number of respondents discussed enterprise skills, considering this a much neglected area.

- *Approaches:* **The learner should be put at the centre, and be actively and meaningfully engaged,** for instance through peer-to-peer education, participatory education, and through inputting to the design of the education agenda as a whole. Students could receive practical support, for instance through career-mentoring and life-coaches. *"[...] need to learn how to put the learners at the centre. For example, how do we genuinely listen to the marginalized youth, if we already have preconceived notions of what they need to learn? How do we honour the learners' existing competencies and not to start from a deficient perspective?" (Carolyn Medel-Anonuevo)*

Rights-based education: Education for global citizenship must include learning on human rights. **Teaching should be rights-based, including practices more respectful to the rights of the child.** The case for bringing comprehensive gender and sexual and reproductive health education fully into the curriculum was strongly made by many contributors. Equipping both girls and boys with knowledge of these rights can help transform attitudes with an impact on reducing HIV and AIDS rates, early pregnancies, gender-based discrimination and violence, and promote more equitable and healthy relationships between boys and girls, both by creating awareness and influencing more respectful and tolerant mind-set.

Investing in teachers: **Valuing teachers and teaching is key.** Some comments touched on the importance of ensuring integration of these elements into the teacher training curricula, as well as providing ongoing relevant support for teachers. There was also a comment about the importance of *who* teachers are, and the argument for high and relevant entry standards to the teaching profession (as already exists in many places). This should be reflected in **fair wages and improved teaching conditions,** which would make the teacher profession more appealing, attract professionals that provide quality education to learners, and increase continuity. Emphasizing teacher training could entail training of teaching methods that encourage students to participate and ask questions, methods to work with marginalized youth, and support from peer networks.

Recognising learning: With regard to the ways to measure learning outcomes in skills for global citizenship and for life-building, there was a sense that some measurement methodologies are known, while more may need to be developed. In measuring learning outcomes for education for global citizenship, there were arguments that this is about "hearts, hands and minds", and that it

cannot be measured according to traditional assessment approaches. Some said learners' peer reviews and feedback should play a role; others called for the international community to work together to identify internationally comparable targets and metrics, including one in which the extent of collective responsibility would be assessed. Others also suggested that learning required for global citizenship is highly complicated and relies on a strong community-based foundation. Educational systems need to be flexible enough to accommodate differences and complexities found in communities on local, national and regional scales. The importance of community involvement was also stressed in terms of schools that needed to work and to become involved with the whole community, not just school-aged children. Comprehensive gender and sexual and reproductive health education can be measured though socio-economic and health indicators and biomedical markers, as well as through attitudinal and behavioural changes in gender relationships and to human rights and life planning.

Roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders

Responsibility of governments: There was somewhat strong consensus by the contributors that governments should lead the way by making comprehensive reforms to improve skills development in formal and informal education, in setting education standards (which some felt should be international), as well as in ensuring implementation and correct use of sufficient resources. Governments must work together with schools, the private sector including local businesses and chambers of commerce, with civil society and other partners to create an enabling environment and use available research on what skills and attributes students will need to be successful.

Stakeholder participation: Whilst governments should lead, others must be involved too. Given the inter-linkages between skills for global citizenship, work and life, education for these skills requires a holistic approach in which all stakeholders – governments, teachers, schools, parents, communities, the media, the private sector, civil society including youth organizations, and students themselves – actively engage.

These stakeholders should have the courage to review and update current appraisal systems to reflect the value of skills education. Parents and communities are vital actors who need to be included in making fundamental changes to benefit skills education and learning. Citizens should be trained and encouraged to participate in policy dialogue to influence education planning and legislation in democratic dialogue spaces with governments and others. There is consensus from several respondents that skills-systems should be effectively linked to labour market institutions and policies, not least because thinking about youth jobs and skills require an understanding of the changes that shape the labour markets in specific country contexts.