

UNESCO: Global Citizenship Education – Topics and learning objectives

This publication is the first pedagogical guidance from UNESCO on global citizenship education. It is the result of an extensive research and consultation process with experts from different parts of the world. This guidance draws on the UNESCO publication *“Global Citizenship Education: Preparing learners for the challenges of the 21st century”* and the outcomes of three key UNESCO events on global citizenship education.

This publication is available here:
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002329/232993e.pdf>

Feedback from the Francophonie Summit

By Ficeméa



26 and 27 November 2016 will be remembered as a major victory for supporters of high-quality public education. At the summit in Madagascar, the 57 Member States of the International Organisation of La Francophonie adopted the Antananarivo Declaration which explicitly refers to the the problems associated with the commodification of education. This is the strongest statement ever made by heads of State against commodification

and in support of public education and regulation. It is a sign that efforts by civil society actors to raise awareness on the matter amongst State representatives and international bodies have been successful. It also shows how important all of our joint efforts in recent months have been.

The declaration included the following paragraph *“Recognising the development of commercial schools and educational institutes and supporting high-quality public education provided free of charge to everyone, we call upon the IOF and the Conference of Ministers for Education in the States and governments of the Francophonie (Confémen), in cooperation with civil society, to continue the discussions started at the Kinshasa Summit (2012) and to take measures to promote effective institutional mechanisms for regulating private actors in the education sector in order to guarantee the quality and fairness of education services.”*

Whilst the fact that so many Heads of State expressed such a clear position on the issue is an important step in itself, it is now essential that national authorities are held accountable for the implementation of this declaration.

Commodification of education – a multifaceted process

In recent years, the international community has witnessed

unprecedented growth in the role of private actors in the education sector, with the result that education systems have been totally transformed in both the “South” and in the “North”. This also includes actors offering low-cost, poor quality services which target emerging and poor countries. Many investors, and multinational companies in particular, are involved on a large scale in the highly lucrative education “market”. The commodification of education is an insidious process that takes various forms and impacts both the formal and non-formal education sectors. It results in business ventures offering academic support, study coaches, ready-made “kits” for coping with dyslexia or dysorthographia, “educational” digital software etc.

This multifaceted phenomenon impacts the quality of educational content and knowledge acquisition. It leads to segregation between different areas of countries and different socio-economic groups, further widening social inequalities. As a result, it puts the right to education itself at risk.

The commodification of education is defined as the transformation of education into a profitable commodity. There are two types of commodification. First, the privatization of education, which is defined as increased control of the education sector by private actors. Secondly, it entails privatization of the educational methods used, i.e. the introduction of methods and approaches used in the private sector into the public education system.

Three major consequences can be identified:

- *Basic education becomes inaccessible and social inequalities are widened.* A recent study [\[1\]](#) by Solidarité Laïque and the Global Initiative for Economic Social and Cultural Rights, in partnership with associations in Haiti, including the Ceméa Haiti, analyses the situation in a country where 84% of schools are private schools: “Policies on access to education

have not been the much hoped-for catalyst for equal opportunities, but rather have helped further widen the inequalities that already existed.” One of the reasons for these inequalities is the cost of enrolment, which mainly affects the poorest households as it constantly increases. According to 62% of households, these excessively high costs and other financial barriers are the main reason that children aged between 3 and 16 years are not sent to school. More than 90% of Haitian households also said that they either did not have or barely had sufficient resources to cover their basic needs, which means that children’s education is in jeopardy. »

- *Standardization of teaching methods.* For example, the number of ‘Low Cost Schools’ is growing. Bridge International Academies Ltd (BIA) is a US-based profit-making company. It is the largest private business school chain in the world. Bridge International Academy schools are funded by Pearson, the Bill Gates Foundation and Facebook. These ‘low cost schools’ have been set up in Liberia (20 schools), Kenya (400 schools) and Uganda (63 schools). The concept is based on two keywords: rationalization by economies of scale and standardization. The Bridge Academy has designed teaching tools linked to lessons read out by the “teacher” from a tablet. The teacher becomes a simple ‘coach’ who is given a class after five weeks of training. The same content is taught in the same way in all schools at the same time. The Ugandan government has taken legal action to close Bridge schools because they did not meet minimum teaching standards. However, the company still hopes to reach 10 million students by 2025.
- *Replacement of public funding (national and international) by partnerships granted to private companies* which are more focussed on profit targets than

educating the population. Let's take the partnership between the Ministry of Education in France and Microsoft as an example. Since the financial stakes are high, the big digital companies – GAFAM (Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, Microsoft) in particular – try everything they can to impose their standards and their products, not only in terms of the equipment schools use but also, and above all, through teaching practices.

Combatting this commodification is a major challenge for all involved in defending the right to education for all, throughout life.

The statement by the IOF against commodification – a joint response at international level and a tool for advocacy

It is in this worrying context that a group of non-governmental organizations, trade unions, researchers and educational movements, including the Fédération Internationale des Ceméa, have created an international consortium to reflect on and take action on this issue. These actors are coordinating research and advocacy activities and also working on a methodology to identify the impact of privatization on human rights.

The Francophone members of this consortium have written a joint appeal from civil society that speaks out against the commodification of education and education systems. The text aims to alert public authorities and civil society actors to the issue and to raise their awareness of the inherent dangers connected with this process of commodification of education. It also urges them to take action to counter this process.

Today, our Appeal Against the Commodification of Education was signed by 302 civil society organizations from 38 countries.

This appeal now needs to be passed on, heard and debated. States, regional institutions such as the European Union and the African Union must, like the UN[\[2\]](#) and the IOF, protect

and boost education as a genuine public good, and promote a vision of education as a driving force for individual, collective and social empowerment.

At national level, we have to call upon the various ministries in every country to take action, mobilize actors involved in educational matters and make proposals because the solutions exist.

We are able to link the local and international levels that are at play in our democracies. International policy guidelines should not be controlled by experts and technocrats alone. They are part of the public debate and must not be disconnected from everyday realities. Our role as actors on the ground and educators is to work with people on these fundamental issues. We must enable citizens to take ownership of national, regional and international policies in order to participate in the debate, understand the issue and be able to act on the policies that shape the future of our societies.

Education is not a commodity it is a right! We want every individual to be able to exercise it.

Sonia Chebbi,

Permanent Delegate at the International Federation of Centers for Training in Active Education Methods (Ficeméa)

The mission of the International Organization of La Francophonie (IOF) is to embody the active solidarity between its 84 member states and governments (58 members and 26 observers). It is a community that shares the same destiny and is conscious of the links and potential that come from sharing a language, French, and universal values.

The IOF aims to improve the living standards of its populations by helping them to become actors in their own

development. It provides member states with support to develop or consolidate policies and implements international policy and multilateral cooperation activities, in accordance with the four main missions adopted at the Francophonie Summit:

- • promote the French language and cultural and linguistic diversity;
- • promote peace, democracy, and human rights;
- • support education, training, higher education, and research;
- Develop cooperation activities that support sustainable development

[\[1\]](#) Study [in French] entitled *Haïti, enseignement privatisé, droit à l'éducation bafoué* [Haiti, privatized education, right to education ignored], an alternative report supported by 10 Haitian and international organizations published on the occasion of the Universal Periodic Review of Haiti in November 2016.

[\[2\]](#)[\[2\]](#) In a resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council in July 2016, the United Nations urges States to “address[.] any negative impacts of the commercialization of education”.

UN: Sustainable Development Goals – Information and

guidance for volunteer organizations

This document is part of the products of the UNV post-2015 project, which supported the positioning of volunteerism in the post-2015 process. Through the project, UNV enhanced the UN system-wide efforts to shape the new development agenda beyond 2015 while highlighting the specific contribution of volunteerism to sustainable development, in close coordination with global and national stakeholders.

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The document is available here:
http://www.unv.org/fileadmin/docdb/pdf/2015/Resources/UNV_Q_A_on_SDG_2015_web.pdf

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African Union Commission: African Gender Scorecard

The African Heads of States and governments proclaimed, 2015 as the Year of Women's empowerment and development towards Africa's Agenda 2063. It is to support the year that the African Union Commission (AUC) decided to develop the African

Gender Scorecard. The aim of the scorecard is to measure national progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment in seven core sectors (health, employment, the business sector, access to credit, access to land, women in politics and decision-making, education at secondary and tertiary levels). The scorecard also seeks to amplify the call for the collection, analysis, storage and dissemination of sex and gender disaggregated data to support gender analysis of policies and programmes within the framework of the on-going data revolution in Africa.

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The publication is available here:

http://au.int/en/sites/default/files/documents/31260-doc-2015_auc_african_gender_scorecard_en.pdf

UNDP Youth Strategy 2014-2017: Empowered Youth, Sustainable Future

Worldwide, youth face myriad challenges in terms of access to equal opportunities to jobs and having a voice in decisions which affect their lives. In response to the worldwide phenomenon of young men and women calling for meaningful civic, economic, social and political participation, including in recent consultations on the post-2015 development agenda, UNDP's Youth Strategy identifies development challenges and issues facing youth today, and more importantly offers forward-looking recommendations for strategic entry points and

engagement of a broad range of partners, including young people themselves, in addressing youth empowerment issues around the world.

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The strategy is available here:
<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/youthstrategy/>

UNESCO Operational Strategy on Youth 2014-2021

Around the world, young women and men are driving change and claiming respect for fundamental freedoms and rights; improved conditions for them and their communities; opportunities to learn, work and participate in decisions that affect them. At the same time, due to persistent crises, they are faced with acute challenges affecting important aspects of their lives. More than ever, it is now time to improve investment in research, policies and programmes to create an enabling and rights-based environment where youth prosper, exercise rights, regain hope and a sense of community, and engage as responsible social actors and innovators.

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The strategy is available here:
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002271/227150e.pdf>

Education for sustainable development – UNESCO Green Citizens Project

As the lead UN agency for Education for Sustainable Development, UNESCO has developed, within the framework of the COP21 the UNESCO GREEN CITIZENS, a project consisting of a multimedia platform and a travelling exhibition which aim to highlight the remarkable work of men and women who work every day to transmit best practices to future generations. The “UNESCO GREEN CITIZENS: Pathfinders for Change” exhibition showcases eight emblematic projects on education for sustainable development while the sharing platform allows educators from all around the world to share their best practices. More than 100 project holders have already shared their initiatives.

You can also share your initiatives here:
<http://en.unesco.org/greencitizens/your-stories>

« COMPASS », a manual on human rights education with young people – Council of Europe

Human rights cannot be defended by legal texts only. They need to be protected and taken care of by everyone, young people included. This manual provides young people with opportunities

to understand and speak human rights. It also provides youth leaders, teachers, educators, professionals and volunteers with concrete ideas to motivate engage and involve young people to take action for human rights in their own way, in their own community.

The manual is available here:
<http://www.eycb.coe.int/compass/en/contents.html>

Access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights – Recommendation of Ministers of the Council of Europe

Non-formal education/learning and youth work have again and again proven effective in helping young people to find approaches and solutions to overcome the disadvantage they experience and to become active and constructive contributors to the development of their communities and society as a whole. Yet, youth work and non-formal education/learning as well as their providers, youth organizations and more generally youth workers tend to suffer from poor social and political recognition, and are often considered low-status professions. The following measures increase the value of youth work and non-formal education/learning and contribute to community development across Europe.

The recommendation is available here:
<http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Publications/2>

Breaking – The UN says UK development aid to commercial private schools could violate children's rights

