



***“Enhancing Life-relevant Competencies in the Curriculum: Integrating Preparation for Life and Work, Poverty Alleviation and Peace Education”***

Seventh international project seminar

**Curriculum Innovations, Peace Education and Poverty Alleviation in Sub-Saharan Africa**

Organized by the International Bureau of Education (UNESCO IBE) in cooperation with GTZ/BMZ

**Geneva, Switzerland (UNESCO IBE, 15, route des Morillons)**

**30 March – 03 April 2009**

**CONCEPT PAPER**

## 1. Seminar background and rationale

From 2004 to 2008, UNESCO IBE and nine African Sub-Saharan African countries (Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Congo, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger and Rwanda) carried out the first phase of the project “*Curriculum Innovations and Poverty Alleviation*” which aimed to explore the role innovative teaching and learning content and methods can play in personal and community development, especially in basic education.

Given the urgent need to fight against poverty in the context of Sub-Saharan African countries using all possible means, including and especially education, the project scope was considered highly relevant and of patent priority. While many international studies underline the positive correlation between increased levels of education investment and improved services on the one hand, and economic growth and social cohesion on the other, it is nevertheless true that the complex links between the curriculum provisions (why, what, how and how well students should learn at different stages) and the development of competencies in learners to face life and work challenges successfully have not been adequately researched.

The project was supported by the Spanish Government (Ministry of Education and Science), the Swiss Department for Cooperation (DSC) and UNESCO (UNESCO HQ, UNESCO IBE and UNESCO Offices such as UNESCO Windhoek and UNESCO Bamako). It involved decision makers, curriculum specialists, researchers and university professors from the nine African countries mentioned above, as well as from other countries, including Switzerland, Brazil, South Africa, Romania and Belgium.

During this first phase, several sharing and capacity development seminars took place in Africa and Europe. Based on these initial meetings, participants in the project collaboratively developed and implemented several curriculum analysis tools focusing on exploring aspects of the basic education curriculum that can be linked with poverty alleviation. The results of these analyses were presented in the context of comprehensive country reports, including the contextual scanning of the national education systems, the discussion of several “good practices”, as well as lessons learned in terms of obstacles to overcome and needs for capacity development at local, national and regional levels.

The project also encouraged inter-regional and South-South-North cooperation, as well as the dissemination of the project scope, activities and outcomes at national and local levels. Several publications were issued documenting the project approaches and outcomes, including issue no. 146 of *PROSPECTS* (“Poverty Alleviation and Inclusive Education: Transforming Schools in Sub-Saharan Africa”, June 2008).

In 2008, a new phase of the project was launched, integrating the peace education dimension as a means of fostering the development of competencies for life and work under the broader concept of “Learning to Live Together” (LTLT). The new project phase was officially launched in Kigali (Rwanda) in October 2008, and the name of the entire project was expanded to “Curriculum Innovations, Peace Education and Poverty Alleviation in Sub-Saharan Africa.” In addition to the nine initial project countries, five

new country teams (Botswana, Guinea Conakry, Kenya, Malawi and Senegal) participated for the first time with the support of GTZ/BMZ

The Kigali international workshop aimed at taking stock of previous developments as well as exploring conceptual and methodological aspects related to the integration of peace education and poverty alleviation in the formal and non-formal curriculum. The Study "*Preparation for Life and Work...*" (Georgescu et al., 2008), as well as the no. 146 issue of PROSPECTS were used as important reference materials for the discussion of how meaningful curriculum innovations can contribute to enhancing the preparation of children and young people in developing Sub-Saharan African countries, as well as in other countries and regions of the world, for life and work.

At the Kigali seminar it was decided that throughout 2009, the participating countries and their international colleagues shall be involved in the collaborative development of a capacity building Tool, "*Enhancing Life- and Work-Relevant Competencies in the Curriculum*". The Tool will be designed to address real needs in terms of experience sharing and capacity development as well as to provide decision makers, curriculum specialists and teachers (as well as other stakeholders, such as community facilitators) with context-relevant examples of effective practices for integrating the development of competencies for life and work and the Learning to Live Together dimensions in the formal and non-formal curriculum.

It was further agreed that the Tool would be developed based on three international seminars and technical workshops, namely a first seminar in Geneva (March/April 2009), followed by a technical workshop in Kenya (tentatively June 2009) and a final seminar in Germany (tentatively October 2009). Following the Kenya technical workshop, the draft Tool should be field-tested in several countries and the results of this field testing used for validation and finalization of the Tool in the fall of 2009.

## **2. Seminar objectives and expected outcomes**

The first international seminar in 2009 will take place in Geneva at the IBE premises from 30 March to 3 April 2009 (see AGENDA attached). It is jointly organized by UNESCO IBE and GTZ/BMZ with the support of the Spanish Government (Ministry of Education and Science), the Swiss Department for Cooperation (SDC) and the UNESCO Offices Windhoek and Bamako. More than 30 participants from 12 countries are expected (Angola, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Congo, Kenya, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa) to interact with colleagues from UNESCO IBE and other international resource persons (Jean Bernard, USA; Lynn van der Elst, South Africa; Ann Le Diraison, International Baccalaureate Organization/IBE and Saâd Zian, World Scout Bureau).

### *Seminar objectives*

Over the five working days, it is expected that the participants will:

- Explore values, principles and concepts such as ‘life- and work-relevant competencies’, ‘Learning to Live Together’ (LTLT), ‘peace’ and ‘peace education’;
- Analyze the pedagogical implications of integrating those values, principles and concepts in the curriculum of formal and non-formal education;
- Develop a preliminary structure and content outline of the Tool ,“*Enhancing Life- and Work-relevant Competencies in the Curriculum*”;
- Define elements of the follow-up process in 2009 leading to the finalization of the Tool and its implementation.

### *Expected outcomes*

Based on participants’ intensive work in plenary sessions and smaller groups, as well as in the different field visits and the usage of different inputs (i.e. resource materials), it is expected that, by the end of the seminar, the following main outcomes will be achieved:

- Shared understanding of the values, principles and concepts underlying the development of life- and work- relevant competencies, Learning to Live Together and peace education;
- An overview of the situation of countries, based on their reports, with regard to the development of life- and work- relevant competencies, Learning to Live Together and peace education;
- Agreed preliminary structure and outline of the Tool, reflecting effective strategies for enhancing preparation for life and work in the basic education curriculum;
- Follow-up plan for 2009 – especially in view of preparing the technical workshop in June 2009.

### **3. Conceptual challenges: developing working definitions of ‘life- and work-relevant competencies’; ‘Learning to Live Together’ (LTLT) and ‘peace education’**

Since the launching of the Delors Report by UNESCO (1996) ‘Learning to Live Together (LTLT)’ has increasingly been eyed as “the most essential pillar of education” at the core of UNESCO’s programmatic action “to support and facilitate international understanding, co-operation and the advancement of fundamental rights and freedoms” (Georgescu and Bernard, 2007, p. 8).

As stated in Sinclair (2004, p. 7), ‘Learning to Live Together’ can be understood as “a synthesis of many related goals, such as education for peace, human rights, citizenship and health-preserving behaviors.” Rather than concentrating exclusively on ‘knowledge’ objectives, the LTLT dimension focuses specifically on “the skills, values, attitudes and concepts needed for learning to live together.”<sup>1</sup>

While ‘Learning to Live Together’ may entail multiple education goals, it is important that decision makers, curriculum specialists and teachers identify for their own context relevant aspects and priorities, such as “peace and conflict resolution, respect for human rights and humanitarian norms, gender equality, active citizenship, environmental sensibility, and the practice of health-preserving behaviors, including HIV/AIDS prevention.”<sup>2</sup> Many other dimensions can, of course, be added, such as interfaith and intercultural understanding and preparation for life and work more broadly.

To navigate through such complex and very often overlapping concepts is surely not easy, also because different international organizations, as “trend-setters”, while promoting international values of Human Rights, peace, sustainable development and intercultural understanding, express nonetheless their preference for some specific foci. For instance, UNICEF is putting an accent on the development of ‘life skills’, while the Council of Europe is stressing Human Rights Education (HRE) and education for democratic citizenship (EDC). The North-South Centre of the Council of Europe with its seat in Lisbon mentions ‘global education’ (GE) as the core of its mandate, while explaining that a more “operational” definition of GE includes Human Rights and citizenship education in and from a global perspective (i.e. global citizenship; global inter-dependencies), as well as education for sustainable development, social justice and fairness (i.e. anti-racist and anti-discrimination education), and intercultural understanding. In the United States, many programmes and projects dealing with ‘global education’ address mainly education for sustainable development, including awareness of environmental issues, fair trade and international cooperation to eradicate poverty and disease.

The fact that all these concepts have their own history also has to be taken into account. Historical perspectives facilitate the understanding of the emergence and dissemination of specific major education topics and priorities, such as peace education in its different forms after the First and Second World Wars; gender issues and intercultural education in the 1970s and 1980s; and Human Rights Education (HRE); education for democratic citizenship (EDC) in the 1990s; a new emphasis on post-conflict reconstruction, intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding as important dimensions of LTLT after 2001.

Major curriculum trends, such as the ‘competency-based approach’ have contributed substantially to an increased interest over the last decades in integrating the development of ‘competencies for life and work’ and the ‘Learning to Live Together’ (LTLT)

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<sup>1</sup> Idem, p. 7

<sup>2</sup> Idem, p. 9.

dimension in the formal and non-formal curriculum in the form of both subject-related teaching and learning as well as cross-cutting (including extra-curricular) approaches.

Ever since antiquity, schools (especially formal schooling systems) have been criticized for not providing appropriate preparedness for life and work. Despite some notable efforts to overcome such shortcomings especially through innovative, learner-centered pedagogies in the twentieth century, that criticism is still quite relevant for today's schooling. However, the new focus on competencies is supposed to enhance the relevance of schooling to the needs of societies and individuals by (among other things) offering an alternative to a teacher- and content-driven learning process. But what are competencies and what can be done to foster their development in learners in an efficient and sustainable way? What is the added value of such a (relatively) new approach?

As stated by Rychen (2004, p. 21), competencies integrate both internal mental structures as well as the proven ability to meet “complex demands successfully or to carry out an activity or task”:

“This demand-oriented or functional definition, however, needed to be supplemented by an understanding of competencies as internal structures of abilities, capacities and dispositions embedded in the individual. Thus, each competence corresponds to a combination of interrelated cognitive and practical skills, knowledge (including tacit knowledge), motivation, values and ethics, attitudes, emotions, and other social and behavioral components that together can be mobilized for effective action in a particular context”.

Competencies however should be demonstrated in real-life contexts, not just in formal situations of assessment and evaluation, such as examinations and/or testing. As they are understood more broadly as the capacities individuals possess to face challenges (and solve problems) by mobilizing their knowledge, values, skills and attitudes in an appropriate, efficient, responsible and autonomous way, competencies constitute a key element for individuals to face changes and adjust to new levels of complexity in today's (and tomorrow's) world. As ‘knowledge-in-action’, competencies rely on relevant and up-to-date information, as well as on values, constructive and pro-social attitudes, and skills (i.e. operational ‘know-how’). Since Learning to Live Together is envisaged by many as THE major challenge of our times, it goes without saying that competency development should be framed by values such as Human Rights, peace, tolerance and respect, solidarity, fairness and social justice.

Preparation for life and work is being increasingly envisaged as an education outcome for which both formal and non formal settings are considered accountable. From the perspectives of life-long learning and Learning to Live Together, the mission of schools implies the development of learning to learn skills, as well as social and emotional skills. Such functions ought to be considered equally important as the more ‘traditional’ ones, namely cultural transmission and the acquisition of socially-accepted values, norms, behaviors and knowledge. Competency development has to be supported by meaningful learning content as well as innovative teaching and learning methodologies and learner-friendly learning environments. They require more effective links between theory and practice, and between schools and communities.

In order to adjust education efforts to their specific contexts and challenges in the best way possible, country teams are invited to reflect upon relevant aspects and priorities of competency-development for life and work and the integration of the LTLT dimension in different education stages in both formal and non-formal settings. The capacity building Tool the envisaged as a concrete result of the project to produce should reflect the countries' options and priorities without exhausting necessarily the whole range of possible aspects that could be tackled.

### **3. Working methodology**

The Geneva seminar relies on the previous work carried out in Kigali (October 2008) analyzing the different country contexts and needs related to the integration of peace education and poverty alleviation in the formal and non-formal curriculum. Since the discussion in Kigali targeted more specifically the 'contextual scanning' of national education systems, with reference to the specific situations and needs of the participating countries, the Geneva seminar will allow for a more in-depth analysis of the possibilities for integrating competencies for life and work and the LTLT dimension in the basic education curriculum. The different Agenda sessions were designed with a view to feed the reflection on the capacity development Tool structure and outline that should be afterwards further elaborated and refined in the context of a technical workshop to be held tentatively in June 2009 in Kenya.

In order to maximize the interaction among the participants and facilitate productive exchanges, the working methodology consists of different elements, such as:

- *Interactive plenary presentations.* The country teams and the international resource persons will focus on conceptual aspects, as well as concrete cases and examples of learning content and methods contributing to the preparation for life and work and the promotion of Learning to Live Together;
- *Hands-on group work.* The participants will have a chance to work in small groups on different tasks, especially for refining the Tool draft structure and outline.
- *Resource materials.* In their groups, the participants will have different resources at their disposal that should inspire their work on the capacity development Tool. In addition, a comprehensive list of resource materials (i.e. books, papers, videos, CDROMs, websites) will be put at their disposal.
- *Task Force/Writing Committee.* The country teams will be asked to designate one member to be part of the Task Force/Writing Committee directly in charge with the comprehensive development of the Tool in the context of the forthcoming Kenya technical workshop (tentatively June 2009). The other member(s) will be also involved in specific manners in the Tool development, as well as its field testing and finalization by the end of 2009.

- *Field visits.* In order to facilitate their contact with the Swiss and IBE learning and working environment, the participants will be participating in two school visits and a visit of the IBE Documentation Centre (afternoon of Tuesday, 31 March 2009).
- *Daily summaries and feedback.* As in the case of the previous international seminars, the participants are invited to give daily summaries by focusing also on suggestions for improving different aspects concerning plenary and group work, as well as access to facilities and leisure time issues.
- *Simultaneous translation.* The working languages of the seminar are English and French with simultaneous translation being provided in the plenary and consecutive/simultaneous translation in groups (depending on the location).
- *Access to working stations and Internet.* The participants will have access to different working stations provided with Internet connection.
- *Cocktail and city tour.* Evenings are generally free. The participants are invited to a Cocktail offered by GTZ/BMZ and the IBE on the evening of Day 3 (Wednesday, April First, 2009, 18:00 hours). A Geneva city tour is being organized on Thursday, April Second, 2009 (14:15 to 18:00 hours), after which the participants are invited to explore the city on their own.

## **5. Detailed overview of the AGENDA**

**Day 1 (Monday, 30 March 2009)** is devoted to conceptual clarifications. It will start with a formal opening of the seminar, followed by the introduction of the participants and the sharing of their expectations, as well as special needs and interests. An Agenda overview will be provided and links will be made with the Kigali seminar (October 2009).

A panel of international experts will then introduce the discussion on conceptual clarifications of terms such as ‘Competency development for life and work’; ‘Learning to Live Together’; ‘Peace’ and ‘Peace Education’.

In the afternoon, a video session will follow with a view to document some concrete practices of interactive pedagogies supporting the development of competencies for life and work.

The day will end with an overview of the IBE programs and projects provided by the IBE director and program coordinators.

**Day 2 (Tuesday, 31 March 2009)** will start with the presentation of country reports based on the Guidelines sent out to the participants (see Guidelines for country reports attached). The reports will focus on three main questions, namely:

- What education/curriculum solutions are being considered in your country to foster the development of life- and work- relevant competencies and the Learning to Live Together dimension?
- What are the main achievements and obstacles in the process of developing life- and work- relevant competencies and the Learning to Live Together dimension?
- What capacity development needs can be identified for decision makers, curriculum and textbook specialists and teachers?

The discussions on the reports, as well as the conclusions to be drawn next day, ought to inspire the Tool development based on highlighting relevant capacity building needs and priorities.

In the afternoon participants will be visiting in smaller groups two schools in Geneva that were selected with the support of the Geneva Department of Education (Sécheron school and des Palettes school). After the school visits a plenary discussion will take place at the IBE, focusing on lessons learned. The participants will then be invited to visit the IBE Documentation Centre.

**Day 3 (Wednesday, April First, 2009)** will provide the space for continued discussion of the remaining country reports followed by summaries and conclusions to be considered for the drafting of the Tool structure and outline. A panel of international and national experts will follow focusing on methodologies and capacity development tools in support of integrating the development of competencies for life and work and the Learning to Live Together dimension in the formal and non-formal curriculum.

Based on the conclusions from the country reports and the concrete examples provided by different resource persons, the participants will then discuss about how all those aspects can feed the development of the Tool draft structure and outline.

By the end of the Day, Ms Jean Bernard, senior consultant, will come up with a preliminary Tool structure and outline reflecting the lessons learned so far, based on which the participants will work during the next day in small groups.

**Day 4 (Thursday, April Second, 2009)** continues with group work. The participants will be split into three smaller groups working each on the same task, namely amend and refine the preliminary tool structure and outline that resulted from the previous day's discussions. The groups are requested to submit their written proposal by the end of the day.

In the afternoon, all participants are invited to a Geneva city tour to explore especially the old town, the Léman Lake vicinity and the international organizations area.

**Day 5 (Friday, April Third, 2009)** will start with the reports from the three groups followed by the establishment for the Task Force/Writing committee. Afterwards two paralleled sessions will follow:

1. The Task Force/Writing Committee will prepare an agreed proposal of the Tool's preliminary structure and outline to be further on developed during the Kenya technical workshop (tentatively June 2009);
2. The other participants will take part in a side event on progress made with the Study "Preparation for Life and Work" in view of its revision and publication by the IBE in 2009.

The closing session will consist of several discrete sequences, namely:

- A presentation of the Report by the Task force/Writing Committee followed by discussions (questions and comments);
- Presentation of follow-up issues and a preliminary work plan until the end of 2009;
- Overview of the seminar outcomes by the general rapporteur (Ms Dakmara Georgescu);
- Closing remarks by the IBE, the Spanish Government and GTZ/MBZ;
- Seminar evaluation based on individual evaluation forms and a collective assessment exercise.

The seminar will be formally closed at 17:00 hours.

## References

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