



Country report

GLOBAL EDUCATION IN FORMAL SCHOOL SETTING, *STATUS QUO* AND RECENT CHANGES - THE CASE OF BULGARIA

The present text is divided in two parts. The first one make a short review of the *status quo* of the Bulgarian school context as defined by the state dispositions in education, in the perspective of global education. This part reviews some of the Bulgarian (State) educational requirements and how do they organize the incorporation of global issues in teaching in formal school setting. The second part summarizes how and why global education topics and methods are made popular in Bulgarian school setting and who are the change agents for promotion of Global education among youngsters.

According to the Law on Education, the teaching goals for the preparation of the students are defined by the Bulgarian (State) educational requirements. They are elaborated at central level – by the Ministry of education. Based on them, centrally, is elaborated the curriculum. Schools do not have the autonomy to define their own curriculum. They have choice among different already approved by the Ministry manuals within the same curriculum, they have choice on how to present the lesson in order to achieve the predefined goals by the State educational requirements.

In Bulgarian schools, **citizenship education, global citizenship or development education** are not studied as separate topics. Here, as an example, we describe how few topics of global education are incorporated in the Bulgarian (state) educational requirements and thus in the school curriculum. For the purpose of this paper and in order to illustrate the level and mostly, the quality of integration of global issues in the curriculum, are taken into consideration the humanitarian school subjects from primary to high school.

Citizenship education is a horizontal topic at all school levels, incorporated in several subjects. Citizenship education content is mainly directed to building national or European identity in the students. The main goal of the material thought is for the students to build skills for respect of human rights as per the democratic laws. In this is included knowledge about the laws of the state, the structure of the state and interstate unions etc. Crucial topics of Global education, such as interconnectedness in the global world, or skills for critical thinking and analysis are not even mentioned.

Knowledge about **sustainable development** in the curriculum is incorporated only in the context of the respect of the environment. Environmental problems are simply studied as part of the preservation of the natural resources. No connection

to any other component of the sustainable development (social or economic development) is made in the curriculum.

Global citizenship and international cooperation – the notion of citizen of the world is introduced in secondary school level without making further connection to the problems of development or to the global solidarity. Only at high school level is introduced the notion of the role and responsibility of Bulgaria in solving global problems. Even though knowledge about some global issues is provided to students, little or no time in class is dedicated for them to develop global citizenship skills. The international cooperation is reviewed under the perspective of world conflicts, limited resources, and international organizations. The topics of development education and the world processes however, are not thought.

The challenges of developing countries are incorporated in a very narrow manner in the classes of Geography, while students learn about natural resources, economic development and demographic processes in Asia, Africa and South America.

These are examples of how few topics, relevant for Global education are incorporated in school curriculum. The level at which they are studied is very low, the knowledge is limited and partial, and very often far from what real Global education opts for. Students remain passive learners thus, they are not enabled to be active global citizens who know their roles and responsibilities, nor do they understand how the processes of globalization interconnect us all at different levels. There is still a lot to desire for the achievement of authentic Global education and Global teaching.

At present in Bulgaria **Global education topics and teaching methods** are promoted and introduced in the formal educational setting mainly through the work of NGOs in partnership with schools. Due to the centralized elaboration of the curriculum, NGO work is directed to offer alternatives in teaching, that can easily be adapted and insert in the formal school setting – either in the normal school hours or in the extracurricular activities that every school offer to their students.

At the core of the motivation for the schools that take part in these initiatives, offered by the NGOs stay: the possibility for the teachers to diversify the traditional teaching methods and the traditional teaching topics; the opportunity for the school to offer to its students a higher added value of their education, this of Global education.

From one side, teachers recognize the need to motivate students in a different, new way to study and they see the Global education as an alternative which at the same time is also close to the state educational requirements to which teachers have to stick. Teachers recognize that Global education offers a very strong platform of ideas, methods and innovation from where teachers can take and apply in their school teaching.

From another side, students are no longer the traditional learners – they are much more engaged with social topics in their free time, they are much more open toward the information flow – they are no passive receivers, but active searchers of information and knowledge, at much earlier age they communicate across cultures.

All these new conditions create a new school setting where the hierarchical teaching and the subject division are seen as old fashioned for both students, and teachers.

The teachers that have been involved in NGO initiatives have almost all underwent some sort of training by NGO experts, or by their teachers - colleagues that have been previously trained.

Even though not included in the current legislation on education, or in the Bulgarian (State) educational requirements, Global education is increasingly becoming popular. Different forms of initiatives have been realized in order to introduce to the students, through their teachers, to topics of international importance and with global meaning. Most of them have been funded by the EC, through the Europeaid program. Since these are groundbreaking activities for both NGOs and schools, it is pertinent that the initiatives not only continue to develop, but also increase in number. This will allow for the good practices in promoting Global education in schools to multiply and to achieve also change at higher, Ministry, level. The long term goal is to transform the Bulgarian (State) educational requirements and to incorporate the global perspective at all school levels and subject, where it is possible. Additional advocacy initiatives of the NGOs with the Ministry of education are sought.

School partnership is a method used by schools within the borders of the EU. This is done through various programs run by EACEA, as well as through the website <http://www.etwinning.net> . No school partnerships with schools outside of EU are known to us. A municipality partnership between Bulgarian and Cameroonian cities under Europeaid has been developed in the past, within which a school visits have been organized.