

# Crosscutting Issues in Global Education 2015

An Analytical Framework  
For Policy Learning

SHARED LEARNING EXCHANGE  
DATA POLICY ANALYSIS THEME  
HUMAN RIGHTS NEWS TRUTH COUN-  
TRIES RESPONSIBILITIES GLOBAL  
EDUCATION RESULTS STANDARDS  
CAPITALS EUROPE THE WORLD  
SKILLS KNOWLEDGE INNOVATION  
DEVELOPMENT PISA CURRICU-  
LUM CHANGE EDUCATION POLICY

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## 1. Introduction

GENE – Global Education Network Europe has been bringing together policymakers in the field of Global Education for 15 years. Part of this process has involved the periodic identification (twice or three times a year) of cross-cutting, cross-border issues in Global Education that of significance to the quality of the provision, coordination, funding and policymaking in Global Education at national level in Europe.

This brief paper – further details of which are provided in the GENE publication *The State of Global Education in Europe 2015* - provides an overview of cross-cutting issues identified by GENE in 2001 and again in 2015. This historical contextualisation of current and contemporary cross-cutting issues provides a backdrop for analysis both perennial and newly emerging issues.

GENE has sought to provide a critical analysis of cross-cutting issues for some time. But does the GENE process lead beyond issue-identification, beyond policy sharing or borrowing, to real policy learning? Based on the burgeoning literature of policy learning, this policy paper moves from issue identification and historical analysis, to provide some pointers towards an analytical framework.

## 2. Analysis of cross-cutting issues

This section outlines cross-cutting themes that have arisen for European policymakers in the field of Global Education at the national level. Starting with a brief historical context, Section One outlines issues as they were identified in 2001. It then goes on to outline issues identified by policymakers in 2015. Drawing on the fields of policy studies, the chapter concludes with some brief hints towards a conceptual frame, and some issues which may inform the network as it develops the frame for policy analysis regarding cross-cutting issues that emerge in subsequent Roundtables, and for the next State of Global Education Report, in 2016.

### From an historical perspective: Cross-Cutting Issues in 2001....

When GENE began in 2001, bringing together 6 Ministries and Agencies, a focus on national reports, international context, and cross-cutting themes was already in evidence. At GENE Roundtable 1, which took place in Strasbourg in 2001, emerging issues from the national level were identified and categorised as follows to enable national realities to inform the international debate and as well as shared learning at the European level:

1. National issues
  - Political issues
  - Strategic issues
  - Policy-making issues
  - Funding issues
  - General issues
  
2. European issues

The priority was and remains the identification of cross-cutting issues in a direction that moves from the national to the European. GENE rejected from the start the notion that an international network could engage in analysis from the centre that was then divulged or promulgated to the national level. Instead, analysis was built from the national to the international level. Based on the categorisation above, a number of issues were identified at the national level.

#### **Political issues**

- Developing political strategies that work.
- Navigating the relationships between government, NGO's, civil society structures and the GENE participant bodies.
- Working with parliamentarians to build consensus.

#### **Strategic Issues**

- From the perspective of Ministries of Foreign Affairs or their Agencies (all those involved in GENE in 2001 were such): relationships with Ministries of Education – strategies for creating space for curriculum development.

- Formal and Non-formal sectors curriculum strategies.
- Non-education sector integration strategies: Business, Trade Unions, Cultural Institutions, Scientific Community, etc.

### **Policy-making issues**

- How to find a happy medium between the rules required by transparency and accountability, and the flexibility required to grow support.
- Developing policy at national level – models and methods.
- Definitions: global education, development education, etc.
- Too much policy?

### **Funding issues**

- Adequate levels of funding to development education – how?
- The role of national agencies in sectoral, regional and local funding.
- How much funding should be devoted to capacity building and the strengthening of structures?
- How can funding be used to control quality and to strengthen co-ordination?
- How to strengthen civil society through funding?
- Funding of firms, including non-profit firms

### **Other General Issues**

- How to foster, develop and grow new target groups?
- How to develop initiatives in the field of culture?
- National organisations as EU funding conduits – pros and cons.

### **European issues**

- EU development education policy – coherence between EC and national levels, and coordinating the influence of GENE participants in this regard.
- Relating to European and Global structures – a role for GENE?
- Reversing the downward trend in ODA funding – implications for national development education budgets.

### **...to a contemporary view: cross-cutting issues in 2015**

A reading of the reports provided by national policymakers to GENE in 2015 suggests that the following issues were foremost among those considered crucial to those with

responsibility for policymaking, support, coordination and funding at national level in the field:

- The overarching political context – a changing Europe in a changing world – all provided the immediate political context for Global Education efforts with questions of solidarity, global concern, public support for common cause, the response to terrorism globally and in Europe, and the European response to the arrival of refugees crossing the Mediterranean.
- More specific international political processes were also identified as an important context to the work of Global Education, including the finalisation of international agreements such as the Sustainable Development Goals – particularly SDG 4 – in September and the Paris Agreement on climate change – COP21 – in December, as well as the first European Year for Development.
- A growing focus on the need for conceptual clarity in the field was in evidence, as initiatives emerged in some countries to develop a national concept agreed among stakeholders and used to integrate global education into systems and structures.
- Some fine examples are emerging of the development of national legislative frameworks, national strategies and strategic initiatives; national policy frameworks for global education in a growing number of European countries.
- There are also a number of countries in which national structures of support are changing, either in terms of their relationship with, or within, Ministries of Foreign Affairs or Development Agencies; or between Ministries and Agencies.
- There are prominent examples of how GE is being strongly integrated into core curricula, and of initiatives to ensure greater integration and embedding across sectors, in formal education, in school books, within ITE and teacher CPD, etc.
- National strategies – their development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and renewal – feature prominently as issues of immediate concern to the growth and improvement of GE in several countries.
- Changes to the way in which MFAs and MoEs support, financially and otherwise, the involvement of CSOs and other actors in the field is also to the fore in a number of countries.
- Peer Review, and the use of GENE Peer Reviews to strengthen policy, provision or national strategic development of the field, is highlighted.
- The relationship between national strategies, national funding, call for proposals, particular strategic partnerships and the use of funding and calls for proposals for leverage of strategic goals – balanced with the freedom of initiative of CSOs and other stakeholders as well as the need for and sources of innovation, etc. are clearly of concern to policymakers during 2015.
- Funding is a concern for all. The picture emerging is complex:
  - small but consistent increases in funding for DEAR in some countries;
  - the challenge to maintain funding levels for DEAR in the face of cuts in ODA and other budgets in some countries; and

- deep and significant cuts in funding in a small number of countries, are also in evidence.

## A Brief Analysis of Cross-Cutting Issues

Since Roundtable 1, over the past 15 years there is clear evidence of a vast change in vision and approach across Europe, as Global Education and DEAR have moved from being a minor area of interest to policymakers, to becoming a significant area of policy and cooperation as policymakers have developed a more universalist, right-based approach to GE. There are significant changes in policy development, inter-ministerial cooperation, evaluation, standard-setting, integration into education systems, reach and spread. There has also been a significant change in the nature and level of international policy learning.

Some perennial issues still recur: the nature and extent of political support; challenges around funding levels and funding mechanisms; structural change; and conceptual challenges. At the same time, it is instructive that some of the issues that GENE is dealing with, and is planning to tackle over the next three years, were identified 15 year ago (for example coherence between national and EC levels, innovation, relating to global structures, using funding to leverage increase and improvement, etc.).

## 3. 15 Years of Policy Learning – an analytical framework

Since GENE was founded, in 2001, there has been a burgeoning of work in the field of policy studies, including a focus on policy learning, and policy networks. While it would be foolhardy to attempt to summarise the richness of the literature here; we are so bold as to draw some insights from the literature that might prove useful to GENE's work of policy learning, and to the way in which policy, strategy and processes at national level are shared, issues are analysed, and trans-border crossing of policy insight is developed in the field of Global Education.

A plethora of theories of policy change have emerged in the past 15 years, or have coalesced from earlier work. As Lucie Cerna of the OECD puts it "lessons from the policy change literature suggest that theories have become more sophisticated over the years..."<sup>1</sup>; Cerna outlines 10 different schools of thought in the field<sup>2</sup>, and concludes that theories of policy change are better at analysing past change than describing current or future change. She suggests that we must look at policy change in conjunction with models of policy implementation – top-down, bottom-up and combined approaches. We will return to this latter point momentarily.

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<sup>1</sup> Cerna, L. The Nature of Policy Change and Implementation: A Review of Different Theoretical Approaches. Paris, OECD/CERI 2013. P.16

<sup>2</sup> Cerna deals with the following ten models or theoretical frames: path dependence, advocacy coalition frameworks, policy learning, policy diffusion, policy equilibrium, institutional change, multi-level governance, policy networks, disruptive innovation, politics of change and reform.

Peter Nedergaard – whose work on policy learning among Nordic policymakers informed GENE’s inception – also looks specifically and in detail at the workings of committees of policymakers in the process of policy learning. Drawing on a complex understanding of learning, and on the experience of an EU policymakers grouping<sup>3</sup>, he suggests and tests 5 hypotheses regarding policy learning in policymaker committees such as GENE:

1. Learning is more likely when a committee meets regularly...
2. Learning is more likely when a committee is insulated from direct political pressure
3. Learning is more likely when a committee is confronted with indisputable evidence of policy failure [or policy success]...
4. Learning is more likely ...where individuals are willing to reach a common position...
5. Learning is more likely when a Committee includes an authoritative member [deemed to be relatively neutral] with analytical capabilities or experience...<sup>4</sup>

Nedergaard concludes that “existing analysis...underestimates the degree of learning that takes place. ...this does not mean that the potential for learning cannot be increased, and attempts to do so ought to be made”<sup>5</sup>. Again we will return to this point below.

Professor David Raffe, in a critique of the 2010 McKinsey report on “improving Education systems”, which he describes as a “policy borrowing” approach, argues, instead, for a policy-learning approach. He outlines the difference; the table below is an interpretation of his approach<sup>6</sup>:

Policy Borrowing	Policy Learning
Searching international experience League table approach Focus on unique, transferable ‘best practice’ Tends towards a single ‘model’ of best practice Tends towards trajectory Tends to be top down, or Assumes diffusion from the centre to the periphery	“Uses international experience to enrich policy analysis, not to short-cut it”. “Looks for good practice, not ‘best practice’”. Does not focus only on successful systems or practices. Uses international experience to understand one’s own national system. Learns from history – including national history, global history, and the history of policy in the field.

<sup>3</sup> Nedergaard, P. Policy Learning in the European Union: the case of the European Employment Strategy. Policy Studies, vol. 27, no.4, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p317-318; square brackets added interpretation drawn from text of article.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.320

<sup>6</sup> Table based on Raffe, David Policy Borrowing or Policy learning? How (not) to Improve Education Systems. Centre for Educational Sociology, Edinburgh University: CES Briefing Paper no. 57, October 2011. Last accessed 1<sup>st</sup> June 2016 <http://www.ces.ed.ac.uk/PDF%20Files/Brief057.pdf> Interpretations the editors own.

Drawing on these and other insights from the field of policy studies we might suggest, somewhat self-critically that:

GENE has, over 15 years, developed a common space for shared policy sharing, supported the forging of common visions in differing and incomparable national contexts, and developed a common language that provides a framework for national policymaking and strategy development.

There are, however, a number of questions to be asked of the process of sharing national reports and cross-cutting issues:

GENE has been involved in policy dissemination, policy-information, and the development of some common terms – but is this policy learning? Leading learning requires some responsibility for the outcome or fruitfulness of the learning. GENE has disseminated and diffused, is it now time to track the learning? To follow implementation?

Nedergaard's work in regard to what works in policy learning committees has influenced GENE's work, and particularly the sharing of national reports at Roundtables, since the start. There is regularity, there is a space free of direct political intervention; GENE provides a relatively neutral (though far from value-free) facilitation, and GENE participants have been open to developing common positions. But GENE, and the GE movement in Europe as a whole, (largely because of funding reliance), has been more focused on highlighting success, than on indisputable evidence, and there is little focus on evidence of policy failure. If policy learning is most fruitful where there is clear evidence of failure, should the bravest of Global Education policymakers and practitioners be looking to explore the data around policy failure, and to learn from it?

Professor Raffe's critique of "policy borrowing", does not, we would suggest, apply to GENE Roundtables and the national reports shared therein, both of which work from the bottom up to identify priorities and enhance the national and international debates. The GENE Peer Reviews also provide a deeper national context analysis that is one of the hallmarks of policy learning in Raffe's analysis. Nevertheless, the cross-cutting themes identified in this report require a move beyond identification to more detailed comparative analysis. Raffe hints at the need also to move beyond a focus on the successful – to analyse and learn from the unsuccessful. This could be a feature of future analysis. Raffe's proposal to focus also on the historical is one that requires attention<sup>7</sup>.

Finally, returning to the field of policy studies and in particular, to policy change in education, Andy Hargreaves and Dennis Shirley propose a "fourth way". They outline a series of models that have failed in terms of educational policy change: a first way of innovation and inconsistency, a second way of markets and standardisation, and a third of performance and partnerships. They suggest, instead, in a phrase, that the complexity of the policy change and learning process requires "a democratic and professional path to improvement that builds from the bottom, steers from the top, and provides support and pressure from the sides"<sup>8</sup>. This spatial metaphor for the complexity of the policy learning process – not top-down, not bottom-up, nor simply combined, but recognising a "force-field" which can be led by bottom-

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<sup>7</sup> GENE has begun a process of conversation with some of those who have spearheaded the field in a variety of countries, with a view to developing a series on national histories of GE in European countries.

<sup>8</sup> Hargreaves, A. and Shirley, D. *The Fourth Way: The Inspiring Future of Educational Change*. London: Sage. 2009. P. 107

up approaches (such as the right to independent initiative of CSOs and LRAs employed in many funding strategies), steered by enlightened top-down approaches (such as the strategic use of funding to increase and improve provision across sectors and among citizens) and supported or challenged or changed through pressure from a variety of stakeholders – is apt for the field of Global Education.

GENE is the network of Ministries and Agencies with responsibility for Global Education in European countries. GENE is working towards the day when all people in Europe have access to quality Global Education.