



THE ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION - POSITION PAPER FROM THE CENTRE FOR AFRICAN STUDIES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PORTO

The research group in Education, Development and Global Citizenship of the Centre for African Studies of the University of Porto (CEAUP), within the *DE Synergies: Strengthening the link between research and practice in Development Education in Portugal*¹ project,

Recognising the importance of

the documents issued by international institutions such as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UN, 1948); the *Global Education Charter* (North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, 1997); the *2063 Agenda - The Africa we want* (African Union, 2014); the *New Partnership for Africa's Development*, the *2030 Agenda* (NEPAD, 2014); the *Global Citizenship Education: Topics and Learning Objectives* (UNESCO, 2015) and the *Sustainable Development Goals* (UN, 2016),

the documents produced by European institutions, such as the *Maastricht Global Education Declaration* (Council of Europe, 2002); *The European Consensus on Development* (EU, 2007); the *Recommendations from the 2nd and 3rd Congresses on Global Education*, from the *North-South Centre of the European Council* (Lisbon, 2012 and Zagreb, 2015) and the *Paris Statement on Global Education to 2030* (Paris, 2016).

the documents produced by Portuguese institutions, such as the *Constitution of the Portuguese Republic* (1976) and its revisions; *National Strategy for Development Education 2010-2015*

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(IPAD, 2009), the *GENE Peer-review on Global Education in Portugal* (GENE, 2014); the *Strategic Concept for Portuguese Cooperation 2014-2020* (CICL, 2014) and the *Development Education Guidelines* (Ministry of Education, 2016).

It considers that Development Education takes on a privileged role for reflection and action in proposing concepts, methodologies and practices within educational contexts, as a reflective learning process with critical appraisal based on the principles of equality, social justice, solidarity and horizontality.

It follows the national debate, which is part of a larger European one, on concepts depicting these concerns, assuming the concept of Development Education as being the most commonly employed concept on an institutional basis in Portugal. To better understand this choice, it is important to understand and be aware of the context from which this concept emerged – linked to Development Cooperation – and the main entity which promotes and funds it – the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It stresses the need of a constant dialogue with other commonly employed concepts in European and international agendas, such as *Global Citizenship Education*, now confirmed in the Sustainable Development Goals by UNESCO, *Global Education*, with a long lasting tradition in the European Council and even *Global Learning*, commonly used by northern European countries. It is recognised that these concepts share a common critical view of current global problems, the search for the roots of their causes, the reflection on possible alternatives, and the commitment to taking action for change; the defence of a holistic and inclusive education which is multidimensional and articulated in various social dimensions; the critical questioning of development and of cooperation models; and the interdependence and permanent relationship between what is local and global.

It acknowledges that Development Education permits the interception of diverse social issues, questioning, for example, the issue of power asymmetries, their different ranks and dimensions. Thus it considers that it is important to channel reflection and practice in Development Education towards the most recent situations and events, such as the resurgence of nationalism and authoritarian and populists solutions, forced migration, the financialisation of the economy, the market economy's hegemony, the asymmetries of opportunity whether related to geography, gender, cultural or ethnic identity, religious beliefs, environmental degradation, the possible fragmentation of the European Union, the need to enforce the right to education and the urgency of a true sustainable development, among others.

It reaffirms, in view of the urgent need for comprehension, reflection and debate on the solutions for the complex issues of the modern world, the indispensable role of Development Education, as a civic practice based in the acknowledgement and understanding of global issues, in the critical thinking about them, as well as in the deconstruction of prejudices, myths and fear. It reaffirms, also, the need to build a more “intense” and participative democracy, aiming to eliminate inequalities, to promote openness to diversities through a holistic learning. This research group sees Development Education as a continuous practice fostering change and social transformation.

It stresses the transversal and multidimensional nature of Development Education, recognising the importance of active participation from Civil Society Organisations and Higher Education Institutions in its promotion. The critical approach inherent to Development Education can become highly relevant as a

generator of an epistemological reflection in these institutions, fostering greater articulation between theory and practice, thus questioning and promoting the shift in the assumption of the supremacy of scientific knowledge over the importance of a multitude of knowledge. In spite of their distinct natures, as well as diverse fields of interest, goals, roles, timeframes and methods, these organisations may, based on a perspective of Development Education, benefit from an open and horizontal alliance, aiming to enhance their complementarity, namely in the co-creation of knowledge. This articulation may reinforce mutual and collaborative learning which will revert to improving the performance of both types of entities, promoting existing knowledge in Civil Society Organisations and improving their practices, allowing Higher Education to question and reinvent approaches and more participatory methodologies for creating, transferring, validating and disseminating or sharing knowledge, as well as complying with their civic role in society, presenting the “university extension” as a privileged context to provide common responses to the complex challenges of the modern world. Only through collaborative work will we be truly able to dismantle and reconstruct a discourse of knowledge production which may, in the end, become useful for the consolidation of democracy and social change.

Porto, 24th April 2017²

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² Version reviewed and updated at 31st July 2018, after sharing and debate in several collective moments.