NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN THE FRAMEWORK OF GCDE IN NGDOS' WORK IN PORTUGAL: STRENGTHS, CONCERNS, AND FUTURE ACTIONS - BRIEF



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Technical Sheet and Acknowledgments

Title: Non-Formal Education in the framework of GCDE in NGDOs' work in Portugal: strengths, concerns and future actions - Brief

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The study "Non-Formal Education in the framework of GCDE in NGDOs' work in Portugal: strengths, concerns and future actions" ", was conducted by a research team from CIIE – Centre for Research and Intervention in Education of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Porto for the Portuguese NGDO Platform and funded by Camões – Instituto da Cooperação e da Língua, I.P.

This study was prepared in a period of particular importance from the point of view of the political framework and national policies¹ with implications for national NGDOs, notably with the approval of the Portuguese Cooperation Strategy 2030, and with the conclusion and evaluation of the current Development Education National Strategy (ENED) 2018-2022 and the transition to the next cycle of this policy. The update of the national GCDE policies coincides with the publication of important strategic documents for the expansion of GCDE, namely, The European Declaration on Global Education to 2050 (Dublin Declaration). It is also important to note, for the first time since its creation in 2005, the largest increase in the funding budget available for NGDOs' Development Education projects granted by Camões, I.P., the main national co-financing instrument for this area, an important step that has been a long-time request by the Portuguese NGDO Platform.

In terms of **methodological design** the study comprised several survey moments with NGDOs that were members of the Portuguese NGDO Platform and had Global Citizenship and Development Education (GCDE) as one of their areas of intervention at the time of the study. Overall, a group of 14 member NGDOs and 18 professionals contributed to the study. The study covered two dimensions, respectively, *characterization and mapping, and problematization and analysing effects* of **non-formal education (NFE) within the scope of GCDE (NFE/ GCDE)**, through the analysis of relevant documentation, interviews with practitioners from the NGDOs, organizational profiling, and focus group discussions with NGDOs' practitioners.

A possible portrait of NFE/GCDE in NGDOs in Portugal combines elements from the various moments of data collection, and reflections are structured around the *situation*, *perspectives and orientations; effects; and challenges and proposals to this field*. The focus group discussions that took place complemented the reflections already generated through the survey moments, allowing a better understanding of the identity and nature of NFE, the importance of (the political) valuing NFE, the current conditions for NFE, and the specific circumstances of NFE.

¹ A summary of the most relevant national and international milestones for GCDE in Portugal in recent years is available in the Development Education National Strategy 2018-2022 and the GCDE Thematic Infosheet (PPONGD, 2018a), whose reading is recommended. As such, the study mentions a selection of the main changes that have occurred since the publication of these documents in 2018 or that are more relevant for its purposes.

Overall, the study aimed at understanding, in the **dimension of characterization and mapping**, (i) how GCDE, NFE and social transformation are conceived by the NGDOS; (ii) how NFE practices are characterized within the scope of GCDE in NGDOS; (iii) what is the profile of the NGDOS working in GCDE and what framing is considered relevant for the development of their action; and, in the **dimension of problematization and analysing effects**, (iv) to what extent does NFE/GCDE in NGDOS contribute to social transformation and what are the challenges, processes and meanings of this articulation; (v) to what extent NFE/GCDE has effects on the NGDOS promoting it; and (vi) to identify recommendations for consolidating NFE within the scope of GCDE.

Given the configuration and conditions for the study and the impossibility of evaluating the impact of NFE/GCDE in such terms, the focus was placed on identifying organizations' and GCDE practitioners' perceptions regarding its possible effects. From the triangulation of theoretical and empirical elements of the study, a set of conclusions and recommendations was produced summarizing main strengths, concerns, and suggested action for **understanding and envisioning the future of NFE within the scope of GCDE**, presented below.





In what concerns main Strengths the study suggests:

1. NFE is the broader matrix of the work and identity of NGDOs in terms of educational intervention, and it has a structuring character that is important to consolidate and expand.

2. NFE/GCDE has a range of expressions, and this diversity is central to its flexibility and a key element to be promoted. It is key to have an in-depth understanding of the characteristics, assumptions, and implications of each of these expressions, namely from the point of view of a coherent articulation between NFE and GCDE.

3. NFE/GCDE has made an important contribution in terms of raising awareness and promoting training around global challenges in formal education, namely within the framework of the curricular area of Citizenship and Development, which is important to deepen. 4. The expansion and consolidation of NFE/GCDE action in extra-school contexts and with non-school audiences represent a desired investment and is considered a priority by and for NGDOs. It is important to consider the specificities of such intervention and explore favourable conditions for this endeavour.

5. Regarding effects, NFE/GCDE seems to enhance aspects of personal and organizational transformation. It is essential to deepen and expand the comprehension of such contribution, based on a solid investment in evaluating the impact of NFE within GCDE allowing for and the understanding and consolidation of collective and social transformation.

Regarding main Concerns the study suggests:

1. The current NFE/GCDE granting model is perceived as unadjusted to the national reality and insufficient for its proper consolidation.

2. The current configuration of NFE/GCDE limits the continuity and sustainability of practices and their effects, representing an intrinsic contradiction and a permanent tension with the affirmed purpose of social transformation.

3. The current configuration of NFE/GCDE may contribute to its "curricularization", limiting the understanding and realization of its non-formal educational potential and the educational mission of NGDOs as non-formal education actors.

4. The specificities of NGDOs have a relevant impact on NFE/GCDE, whose acknowledgement in terms of political, organizational, and practice (intervention, training, and research) levels is important.

5. Within the framework of NFE/GCDE in NGDOs, there has been a predominant tendency to communicate, intervene and relate to a delimited core of actors, which it is important to expand, namely, towards realizing the scope, range, and educational potential of this field in the public space.

6. The difficulty of evaluating the impact of NFE/GCDE is a major concern for NGDOs, for whom capacity building and the development of evaluation processes and tools suitable for understanding its nature, possibilities, limits, and effects are key priorities.

In terms of Action Paths the study recommends:

1. Strengthening NFE/GCDE at the political and organizational levels, particularly within the framework of the next Development Education National Strategy (ENED): this recommendation aims to consolidate the role of NFE in the next ENED and to ensure that the specificities of NFE are more broadly considered, based on: (i) the reinforcement of measures aimed at and providing means for the articulation between NGDOs and the Strategy's Subscribing Entities whose sphere of action focuses on NFE; and (ii) promoting the consultation of NFE/ GCDE actors (Subscribing Entities and respective member organisations, when applicable) regarding the most appropriate ways of reporting NFE actions in terms of monitoring and evaluating the next ENED.

2. Reinforcing, with the main funding entities, a work of political awareness in terms of public funding mechanisms, towards increased territorial expansion, efficiency, and sustainability of the educational intervention of NGDOs within the scope of GCDE, aiming to: (i) incorporating the possibility of articulation between core/programmatic funding components (medium and long term) and funding of actions/projects (short and medium term); and (ii) changing models and co-financing criteria for the NFE/GCDE intervention of NGDOs, considering the ambivalent effects generated by financing logics that tend to value the overlap between European and national funds and to favour intervention in school context and in the short term. Instead, it is advisable to introduce criteria that take into account the nature of the proposing entities, the territorial scope and target-groups of their intervention, the sustainability of the action and the effective measurement of its effects.

3. Promoting the introduction of criteria and logic that are more sensitive to the specificities of NFE/ GCDE in NGDOs in the currently existing granting mechanisms for GCDE concretely through: (i) the allocation of a small part of the budget available for the pre-application phase, in order to enable, stimulate and value NFE/GCDE projects based on processes previously co-constructed with the target communities/target-groups, particularly in interventions in non-school contexts; and (ii) valuing the continuity of actions, accepting as valid the replication of logics, focuses and actions with the same target-groups between different funding cycles.

4. Promoting, supporting, and providing the means to carry out a mapping of the experiences of member NGDOs in what concerns obtaining external granting for the NFE/GCDE: to overcome the existing limitation related with a more systematic understanding of existing conditions for NFE/GCDE. This knowledge can contribute to understanding in which national and international co-financing programs have NGDOs invested, what have been their priorities, the difficulties experienced, and the type of support seen as necessary by them. A particular focus should be placed on supporting diversification of funding outside the specific scope of GCDE and on crossing GCDE with other socio-educational areas, agendas, and priorities.

5. Promoting broad and ongoing reflection on NFE/ GCDE in NGDOs to know and understand, from a broader perspective, and a logic of systematizing learning between peers, how NFE/GCDE has been configured in NGDOs in Portugal and which action paths will be important for its consolidation. Extended and continuous reflection will allow: (i) to gather a set of essential information for understanding the characteristics, contexts, practices, perceived effects, difficulties, and mitigation strategies adopted in NFE/ GCDE; (ii) follow up on its eventual transformations over time and guarantee its relevance and timeliness; (iii) contribute to the improvement of practices; and iv) contribute to affirming the space of NFE/GCDE as a priority for organizations (and, to that extent, with a greater possibility of gaining relevance among the actors with whom they relate).

6. Promoting critical reflection on the identity of NGDOs as actors in the formal education system:

it is recommended that this extended and ongoing reflection consider: (i) greater self-recognition of NGDOs as educational actors; (ii) understanding the characteristics of NGDO activities on the frontier between NFE and formal education contexts (in which entities develop most of their work); (iii) the affirmation of its role in these contexts and the identification of strategies to mitigate existing difficulties; (iv) optimizing the NGDO's knowledge on NFE/GCDE in the school context, to develop institutional recognition processes that globally facilitate the participation of NGDOs in the context of the educational system, aiming for a globalized educational action; and (v) the importance of maintaining critical vigilance over the autonomy of NFE within the framework of GCDE in schools, given the trends towards its schooling and curricular configuration.

7. Expanding and diversifying, in a strategic and concerted manner, the intervention of NGDOs at the level of NFE/GCDE in non-school contexts and with non-school audiences: recommending as fundamental steps to expand the conditions of sustainability of this area: (i) enhancing the intervention capacity in non-school contexts and with a diversity of participants, through establishing partnerships with strategic actors, namely with local authorities and other spheres of social action, articulating the possibilities of NFE within the scope of GCDE with territorial political agendas; (ii) reinforcing the articulation between global and local both in educational intervention and in strategic reflection on the role of GCDE in facing local problems; (iii) expand thematic horizons and new agendas for which GCDE is directly relevant; (iv) explore non-school GCDE spaces already present in communities as contexts for priority investment at the level of NFE/GCDE; (v) focus on the broader development of NFE/GCDE intervention processes with local actors, from the design phase to completion.

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8. Promoting, supporting, and providing the means to carry out a broad "mapping" of NFE in the social sector in Portugal: to map the conceptions, practices, potentialities, difficulties, and specificities experienced at the level of non-formal education in organizations from the social sector with socio-educational intervention. This initiative will expand available knowledge and contribute to a more comprehensive and articulated debate between peer and similar organizations, which pursue similar purposes even if in different realities. This evidence is key to build an educational agenda that prioritizes NFE and mitigate current challenges.

9. Support NGDOs in reflecting and building capacity to produce and search for the means and tools for evaluating the impact of NFE/GCDE and in following the development and experimentation of the evaluation of NFE/GCDE's effects: aiming to a continued support to the evaluation of NFE/GCDE, it will be important to invest on training NGDO professionals in evaluating non-formal educational intervention in the short, medium and long term, concerning school and non-school contexts. To this end, it will be important: (i) the creation of a broad team, composed of key players, national and international, from NFE, GCDE and educational evaluation, dedicated to thinking about and supporting the evaluation of NFE/GCDE in Portugal, on an ongoing basis; (ii) the constitution of an "evaluation bank" composed of examples of NFE/GCDE evaluation practices, processes and devices in school and non-school contexts, already implemented previously, at national and international level, that can support reflection and implementation; (iii) investing in the training of professionals on practices, processes, devices and effects of evaluation in NFE/GCDE both based on collaborative forms of training and the involvement of other relevant actors; (iv) the creation, in the medium term, of robust and adequate evaluation mechanisms for different actors and expressions of GCDE relevant to the national context; (v) periodic monitoring of data from the intervention resulting from these mechanisms, aiming for understanding its effects and processes over time; and (vi) the promotion of spaces for broad public debate on the subject. Given its comprehensive nature, it will be important to prioritize the integration of this recommendation in the next ENED, with its own budget allocation.



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