

WORLD CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: FROM CONCEPT TO REALIZATION

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"Most nation-states focus on helping students to develop nationalism rather than to understand their role as citizens of the world." [Banks, 2001, 57]

Purpose

This paper highlights my experiences as World Citizenship teacher at a public school in the Netherlands, comprising a student population of second generation immigrants with a Turkish background. It shows how the concept and course of world citizenship has evolved since its inception three years ago. The paper also reflects what we, as teachers and students, have learned.

While world citizenship is in one form or another included in many schools throughout the Netherlands, the way we have approached it at our school has been a process of much reflection and learning. In its conceptualization, our approach may be a unique contribution to the Dutch curriculum.

Introduction

In May 2006, I responded to a vacancy at a public high school in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, which was looking for a French teacher. I was at the beginning of my teaching career and I had not yet found the school that would fulfill my expectations.

The school was under construction but it already had an internet site which appealed to me because of the strong, idealistic vision it conveyed. World citizenship occupied a prominent place, the school formulating her mission as "to make of each of her students a world citizen". That made the school immediately very attractive to me. I had never heard of it before, but was looking for challenges in my carrier: a new school with such a vision was certainly worth the try. At the end of the interview, the director said that I perfectly fit the profile: I was in.

In August 2006, the school opened its doors. The paint was not overall dry, but a group of 15 persons making up the teaching and administrative staff welcomed our 88 first students. Most of students and staff had a Turkish background.

The school was run by a 'core' team which comprised the principal, a team leader and a group of teachers. After a few months, I became the first teacher with a non-Turkish background to be included in the core team.

Fitting the Dutch educational system

Dutch public schools are financed by the Ministry of Culture and Education and Science, but they have to compete among themselves and have to provide programs that attract students. The Dutch educational system allows public schools a certain amount of freedom in the way they organize their curriculum, but certain values and norms have to be maintained to obtain the Ministry of Education's financial support. Each year, the Ministry publishes an assessment of each school, and their funds can be reduced or even stopped if they do not conform to the stipulated norms.

Right from the start, our school has used the usual Dutch curriculum, adding an extra bilingual class in which half of the courses are given in English instead of Dutch. Besides, our school has actively tried to

implement project-education within its curriculum. This would have a significant influence in the development of world citizenship.

The core team was having frequent meetings and every other week, world citizenship was on the agenda. It quickly became clear to me that no one had any idea how to give shape to world citizenship and how to implement it at our school. Having started a new school from scratch, we were all very busy with our tasks and no one really had the time and the necessary peace of mind to think about something as complex and intricate as how to define and organize world citizenship for a group of 12-15 year old students.

World citizenship education at Dutch secondary schools

As the months passed by, the idea of what a world citizenship course would consist of was becoming clearer to me. Having traveled extensively, I was fascinated by the infinite interpretations of reality I came across all over the world. I envisioned a course that would convey an anthropological approach of the universe, a course that would allow students to discover how diverse our world is and that would teach them to approach its diversity with respect.

However, I did not know how to implement such content in the school curriculum. World citizenship was – and still is – a new concept in Dutch education, and though gaining slowly in popularity, it has not yet obtained any official endorsement in school's curricula whatsoever.

Of the different approaches to world citizenship that have been tried in Dutch schools, I will summarize here a few that were put into practice at the time we started our school.

The most popular approach was certainly to introduce a "project-week" at the end of every term. Three to four times a year, the regular curriculum was put aside during that week and the whole school participated in activities organized around central themes dealing with science, environment, language, etc. It was the easiest way for schools to implement an alternative to the classical form of education while promoting certain philosophical or ethical topics. During those weeks, topics referring to world citizenship were instigated, with students working on themes like hunger, water, education, child soldiers, millennium goals, etc.

Some schools have introduced world citizenship as an extracurricular activity that takes place all year round. It gives them the possibility to

motivate students to participate in long-term projects on a voluntary basis.

More recently, some schools have used topics like sport, science, art, or world citizenship to attract new students: first-grade pupils can choose between a 'world' class, a 'sport' class, an 'art' class, etc., each of these classes proposing activities related to an array of specialties.

Finally, world citizenship has this last decade received much attention from European agencies, which subsidize schools that promote active citizenship on the local, national, and European levels.

I found none of these approaches satisfying: either students are sporadically involved with the themes of world citizenship, or the activities that are permanently organized are limited to a small group of individuals on a voluntary basis. As to the more globally oriented and structurally implemented active citizenship, it misses the philosophical and ethical aspects of world citizenship as I understand it.

For our school, the difficulty of the task resided in the fact that we had to develop a program combining a 'holistic' content and a stable structure in order to bring world citizenship to our students and to make sure that no one would be left behind.

Project education and transfer of knowledge

At our school, project-education was introduced right from the start. The first year, we did so by organizing a project-week at the end of every term, just as described here above, revolving around scientific questions. It did not work. Students criticized the experience as being too disconnected from their everyday occupations. Teachers complained that they had to coach students during activities that had nothing to do with the courses they taught.

The second year, scientific project-education was transformed into a fixed module in the weekly schedule of the students: all pupils were given a compulsory 2-hours science-class as a permanent element of their weekly agenda. (See table 1)

At our school, project-education can be characterized by the following:

- Students work in group of 4
- Gender in every group is mixed

- Groups are established at the beginning of the school year and change only once at mid-year
- Each group has a chairman/chairwoman
- The role of the teacher is that of a coach. He/she helps students realize and achieve their project. There is no classical transfer of knowledge and instructional intervention is minimal
- The content of the course is interdisciplinary: the subjects that are handled within 'science' can contain elements of mathematics, biology, physics, chemistry, technology, etc.

Aside from the knowledge that students acquire while researching their subject, they also learn to distribute and organize the different tasks among the members of their group, determining who does what, and when it has to be done.

Personal Vision of World Citizenship

Right from the start, I had an idea of what a world citizenship course would be like: during their research, student will discover many facets of the world, approaching those just like an anthropologist would do, with respect and understanding for diversity and complementarity. Eventually, all the acquired knowledge will help students develop a holistic vision of the world endowed with a "global conscience" [Arnot, 2009] allowing every cultural expression a place of its own.

The main difficulty was finding a structure that would give students the possibility to acquire this knowledge. In classical education, knowledge is transferred from teacher to student: the product – knowledge – is delivered by the teacher and taken in by the student that has to understand and assimilate it.

However, this type of transfer did not fit the way I was envisioning world citizenship in the classroom. In first instance, writing a course that would gather the necessary knowledge to develop such a holistic vision – if in any way possible – would take an enormous amount of time and energy. More importantly, such a course would not entice students to participate actively at the development of their own *weltanschauung*. In other words, transferring knowledge in this way will not take into account the existing differences between students, be it in the form of their own limitations or of their cultural background. Respect for diversity and complementarity will certainly not be achieved by imposing a normative knowledge!

Project education brought a solution to this situation: on the one side, no transfer of knowledge but a coaching role for the teacher; on the

other side, an active participation from the students. In other words, the teacher guides the student in his/her learning process while the student is the one who ascertains and defines the knowledge he/she gathers.

This gave me the possibility to shift the responsibility for the transfer of knowledge from the teacher onto the student. Each student will thus define what he/she learns and, more importantly, each student will access the level of knowledge he/she is able to handle: being determined by the student, the acquired knowledge will be adapted to the student's core knowledge and to its individual capacities. This last aspect was providing me with an acceptable answer to the challenge of making of all our students world citizens: everyone would participate in its own way, according to its own capacities.

In the spring of 2008, I wrote a concept of my plan for world citizenship in which I described the general guidelines, the structure and the content of what would become our world citizenship course. I proposed that a compulsory 1-hour a week world citizenship class be introduced in the curriculum of the first-grade pupils the following school year, starting September 2008. And just like the course 'science' was interdisciplinary for the 'beta' (scientific) disciplines taught at school, world citizenship was meant to function as an interdisciplinary course for 'gamma' disciplines, which comprise history, geography, economy, art, culture, and civics.¹

Conceptualization of World Citizenship

The first step in the process of developing a course for world citizenship was to define the goals and the structure of such a course, so that it would acquire clear fundamentals.

First of all, I wanted to present students with different approaches of the world. I wanted to open up ways for them, to let them discover places, peoples, and ways of living they had never thought of.

In my view, there is no comprehensive definition of world citizenship, there is no vision of the world that defines world citizenship, there is no key knowledge to be acquired, and there is no general truth to be uncovered. Instead, everyone has to discover the way to realize world citizenship according to one's skills and capacities, according to one's

¹ A year later, I applied the same reasoning and principles to the third group of disciplines, languages, and introduced a third interdisciplinary project-based course: alfa. (See table 2)

experience and education, according to one's intelligence and expectations, according to the context in which one lives.

Neither do I want to impose on our students the problems of our contemporary world. Every generation has to deal with problems of its own, set in very specific contexts. The issues that our students will ultimately have to tackle will take place 10 to 20 years down the road, when they will be in charge, when they will have to make choices and take decisions. Then they will be able to apply what they are learning today. The task of the teachers is to equip these students with the tools that will allow them to solve the problems that will confront them when they will be adults.

In conceptualizing world citizenship, I came to understand that it revolves around one key ingredient: respect. Respect is a sentiment that is generally based on reciprocity: if one shows respect, one gets respect in return. But how can a sentiment like respect be taught?

"Multicultural education assumes that with acquaintance and understanding, respect might follow." [Banks, 2001, 46]

There are two ways to stimulate respect: through experience or through knowledge. While experience is very difficult to share, conveying knowledge is what school is all about. The course world citizenship could play this role by extending the knowledge of these students and integrating it to a vision of the world based on respect:

A last point to make in our concept of world citizenship is to distinguish 'world citizenship' from 'world citizen'. The first one deals with a vision, while the second one conveys this vision into action. The goal of our school is to make world citizens of our students. I can only hope that the knowledge they will uncover during the course will help them develop into active world-citizens down the road.

Setting the Goals for World Citizenship

In the film *Casablanca* [Michael Curtiz, 1942], a group of visiting German officers ask Rick Blane (Humphrey Bogart) his nationality. He replies: "a drunkard". Captain Renault (Claude Rains) adds: "That makes Rick a citizen of the world."

In a time where the bad guys represent the in-group, to be a world citizen has little value. Seventy years later, in a reviving nationalistic situation and among critical environmental developments, it is

important to activate a holistic vision of the world in which one comprehends the diversity as well as the complementarity of all manifestations of life, in its natural as in its cultural representations.

The goals on which I based the world citizenship curriculum are twofold:

- developing a holistic vision of the world in our students
- expanding their analytical and critical thinking abilities

With world citizenship, students will learn

- to respectfully approach the diversity of lifestyles and cultural expressions that exist (or have existed) in the world
- to integrate human rights, democracy and citizenship in their vision and to discover their own involvement within these areas
- to evaluate tensions, problems or conflicts on different levels: locally and globally, individually and socially, etc.
- to position themselves as individuals and as citizens, but also as consumers and as members of different social networks
- to appreciate the multiple facets of our world

As a result, the course will have to cover fields belonging to several disciplines – history, geography, economy, religion, culture, arts, etc. – but also fields and disciplines that are not integrated to the Dutch education system such as human rights, democracy and identity.

This interdisciplinary combination will also give me the possibility to motivate teachers from different fields to teach world citizenship.

Content of World Citizenship

Organizing the content of the curriculum, I discerned two main age-groups. During the first three years (junior high school), the tasks will revolve around concrete queries, students building up contextual and factual information. During graduation years, research will become abstract and will refer to more ethical issues.

Another aspect I had to take into consideration is the very homogenous and mono-cultural nature of our student-population, 90%

of these children having a Turkish background and being Muslims. I had to adapt the themes and subjects to their cultural needs.²

Each term, students deal with one theme. The themes are divided among three main categories: identity - cultural diversity - human rights.

- Identity regroups aspects concerning individual and social identity:
 - In a first step, students explore their own identity. They discover that they possess various identities, and that their *"identity is multiple, changing, overlapping, and contextual, rather than fixed and static"* [Banks, 2008, 133], changing according to the context in which they find themselves. A few of these contexts refer to their identity as citizens (civil), as consumers (political) or as part of a network (social). [id, 129]
 - Besides their own identity, students discover a number of individuals like Aung San Suu Kyi, Diderot, Henry Dunant, Martin Luther King, etc. They investigate what these persons have done and why they are considered to be world citizens. The accent is put on the choices and commitments that these individuals have made during their life.
 - Finally, students focus on the development of their identity as responsible consumers (sustainability), as active citizens (democracy), and as world citizens (human rights).
- Cultural diversity is addressed in several ways, the objective being to expand the knowledge of the students by taking them along several 'exploratory journeys'. These journeys relate to
 - a geographical entity, a country or a city (i.e. China, Sahara, Venice)
 - a people or a population group (i.e. Inuit's, Maoris, nomads, refugees)
 - a specific cultural expression such as religion, music, food, sport, etc.
- Because we deal with students aged between 12 and 15, human rights issues that are addressed in the first years of the curriculum are mainly contextual. Students explore topics such as diseases,

² Ethnic minority students "tend to emphasize their ethnic identities and to develop weak attachments to the nation-state." [Banks, 2008, 132]

famine, poverty, water distribution and rights, child labor, right to education, gender and racial violence, etc.

This approach aims at developing a vision of the world that will help students defining their role and contribution in the future they will shape.

Implementation of World Citizenship

Year 2008-2009

After submitting my project to the director and getting his approval, I formed a team consisting of five teachers including myself, each with a different specialty: history, art, geography, biology and French.

During our first meeting, after having presented my plan for the course, I introduced the idea of a revolving team: my colleagues would have to switch classes every other week. The reason behind this idea was that every one of us came with his own experience and knowledge, and that disseminating this pool of knowledge through all the classes would enrich the content of the course.

The following weeks were spent defining the way we would organize the course. To give it a good start, we decided that each teacher would keep the same class during the first four weeks. We would then rotate classes every two weeks

We decided that the first theme would be a research on the words 'world', 'citizen', and 'citizenship'. The students will be given three tasks to be done on three different supports:

- 'World': each group will have to search information about a people (Touaregs, Maoris, Inuit's, etc.) and make a presentation of its findings to be held in front of the class
- 'Citizen': students will have to write a individual report about different facets of their identity (as consumer, as citizen, as part of different networks)
- 'Mr./Mrs. World Citizenship': each group will have to deliver a collage which illustrates a few aspects of the life of a famous world citizen (Gandhi, Erasmus, etc.)³

Each teacher got the responsibility of one class: he will make sure that the deadlines are respected and he will have to assess the tasks of his

³ For this task, the art teacher will introduce the technique of the collage to all the classes.

own class. We agreed to devote a meeting at the end of the term to determine how to assess the work delivered by the students.

Finally, the new school-year started and, after a few weeks, we realized that our students did not appreciate having a different teacher every other week. They did not understand the purpose of this rotation and probably missed the standard relationship student-teacher where expectations play an important motivational role.

Another aspect that had a negative influence on the rotating teacher idea was that our school was entering its third year of existence and our teachers' team was not robust enough to speak with one voice and to present a united front. The students were quickly able to use the gaps between us to their own advantage. The idea of a rotating teacher team was abandoned after the first term.

At that time, one of our colleagues left the team and a new teacher joined us. It confirmed the idea that any teacher could 'give' this course. Later, one teacher told me that he did not know anything about the theme that we had chosen for the third term "world music instruments". I told him that it did not really matter: he would learn from his students! In project-education, the capacity to motivate students is certainly more important than the knowledge the teacher possesses.

During that school year, the students had to work on the following themes:

- World + Citizen +
Mr./Mrs. World Citizenship ⇒ identity/citizenship
- China ⇒ cultural diversity
- World Music Instruments ⇒ cultural diversity
- World Diseases ⇒ human rights

At the end of that year, students passed a test in which they had to answer questions about all the subjects they dealt with during the year. Because of the substantial amount of information they had handled, and because it wasn't our goal to make them learn this information by heart, I surprised them by letting them have in advance the questions that they would get for the test. They were also allowed to use a 'cheat sheet' with the following strings attached: it would not exceed one A4, and all of it had to be handwritten (no copy allowed).

Having to individually write everything down was a way to make sure that every student, with no exception, would review all of the studied material.

Moreover, I noticed that some students were having poor marks for world citizenship. At the end of the year, they might not be promoted to the following grade because their bad marks for this subject would be added to those for other disciplines.

Giving marks was an effective way to integrate this course into the curriculum, showing students (and teachers) that world citizenship had to be considered as any other course. Giving marks was also a way to stimulate students to excel, to surpass themselves. On the other hand, I regarded world citizenship as being a discipline in which it is not the content but the doors it opens that matter. With this test, I was giving the students the possibility to summarize and consolidate the work of the whole year and for some to compensate the bad marks they might have acquired.

Year 2009-2010

In 2009, we started world citizenship classes for our second-grade students, while welcoming a new batch of first-grade pupils for which I used, with a few adaptations and variations, the same program as the year before.

For our second-grade students were new themes introduced:

- World and Citizens ⇒ identity/citizenship
- Hunger ⇒ human rights
- World Cities ⇒ cultural diversity
- NGOs ⇒ human rights

Just like the previous year, we ended the second year with a general test, asking students to scan, gather and organize all the subjects they had worked on that year.

The school-year 2010-2011 served as a consolidation year and we decided to wait another year before completing this course with our third year of world citizenship in the curriculum. The themes and subjects that will be used in the third year will bring back the research of the first two years to the forefront and will integrate it in a more refined and holistic vision.

At the end of the third year, students will receive a diploma serving at establishing their participation to the course and as conclusion to this part of the curriculum.

Feedback and Evaluation

At present time, it is difficult to have a general idea of the influence the introduction of this course has had on our students. We can however reflect upon some aspects that have emerged as a consequence of this course:

- Most students consider world citizenship classes as 'normal', indicating thus that it has been integrated to the curriculum in a very natural way. When some of them ask why other schools do not have world citizenship classes, I point out that we do not teach religion, while many schools do.
I've also heard students presenting themselves to visitors as 'world citizens': being a world citizen has become a part of their identity.
- Students have to deal with a general knowledge that is absent from the classical curriculum. As an example, they discover the scope of diseases such as tuberculosis and malaria, or that colors have a different meaning in different cultures; they find out which minorities live in a given country and realize – in our own specific case – that their own minority status is not unique; they research what the meaning of human rights is and what motivates individuals to sacrifice their own wellbeing for an ideal, etc.
- Students have to learn to search for and gather the proper information. All of them know how to use the Internet but their skills are limited to an automated daily use and they have yet to develop their skills to find relevant information and to translate it into a database or a word-processor.
- Students have to become engaged with the topic in ways that show their degree of acceptance, enthusiasm and interest for this topic. After a year, it became obvious that some subjects attracted more girls than boys and the other way around. More generally, girls responded more favorably to this course than boys: as an example, 'world diseases' was very positively approached by girls while I only saw a similar reaction from boys in the second year, when we introduced the theme 'world cities'.
- Although a few parents were not convinced that this course could be of some utility for their child, most of them have reacted positively. A mother told me that, helping her daughter in her research, she found it very difficult to obtain information on musical instruments from Oceania, but admitted that it was very interesting.

- Finally, inspectors of the Ministry of Education came to visit the school. Much attention was given to the course 'world citizenship', the only course which could be used as a vehicle to some other purpose: with our predominantly Muslim student population, the government had to make sure we were not having a 'hidden' religious agenda. They were fully satisfied with the guidelines and the material I had provided for the occasion.

Challenges

As I mentioned earlier, the course will fully come to conclusion at the end of next year. It will then be possible to evaluate the path that has been covered.

Until then, a few challenges await us:

- The fact that we have to deal with a student population that has a homogenous mono-cultural background⁴ obliges us to adapt our material to their needs. It also makes it difficult to evaluate how they receive and understand respect for diversity and complementarity. This difficulty mainly comes from our ignorance of the context in which these children are raised. On the one hand, having a strong attachment to their former homeland, speaking Turkish and watching Turkish television at home, spending almost all of their holidays in Turkey, practicing their religion in an exclusively Turkish environment, give these students a totally different vision of the world than that of the 'standard' Dutch child. On the other hand, our school being a public school, we have to develop a 'standard' material with respect to the values and the norms of the dominating culture, represented by the remaining 10% of our student population that does not share this Turkish background.
- We will have to extend this course further into high school and shift our focus on more abstract subjects.
- Besides this course, we are aiming at integrating world citizenship in all disciplines by creating for each of them a compendium in which possible applications of world citizenship will be described. This compendium will help teachers become aware of the opportunities existing for the application of world citizenship in their classes.

⁴ Most of our students could be considered as "culturally and ethnically encapsulated". A few of them have attained the stage of "biculturalism". [Banks, 2001, 44/135-136]

- We will have to balance the themes to make them equally attractive for boys and girls by introducing subjects that have more appeal to both genders.
- We want to expand the range of possible supports (graphs, interviews, etc.) that students may use to bring their subject to fruition.

As a final point, the school management has decided to launch a global evaluation of the three interdisciplinary courses that implement project education. (See table 2) This evaluation will rest upon a survey of the students and of the teachers giving those classes.

The real outcome of this course will only be apparent over many years, when these students will have become adults and will have to “make decisions and take actions in the global interests that will benefit humankind” [Banks, 2008, 134]. World citizenship is not about the world of today but that of tomorrow. It certainly is pretentious to place our aims so far away, at such a distance in time, but only then will the vision we try to convey be put into practice. For our school today, it is clear that we cannot afford not to teach these students what world citizenship is about, if only for the reason that it provides them with incentives for their own future career development and raises questions that help them procure a better life.

References

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- CURTIZ Michael (1942): *Casablanca*. Warner Bros. Pictures

TABLE 1

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1		Mathematic	Dutch	French	Mentor
2		Dutch	Mathematics	English	Geography
3	<u>World Citizenship</u>	English	Dutch	<u>Alfa</u>	History
4	English	Biology	<u>Science</u>	Biology	French
5	Dutch	History	<u>Science</u>	Geography	
6	French	Physical Education	English	Art	
7	Mathematics	Physical Education		Art	
8	Dutch	Mathematics			

Table 1 shows the actual weekly schedule of a first-year student. Project-education classes are underlined.

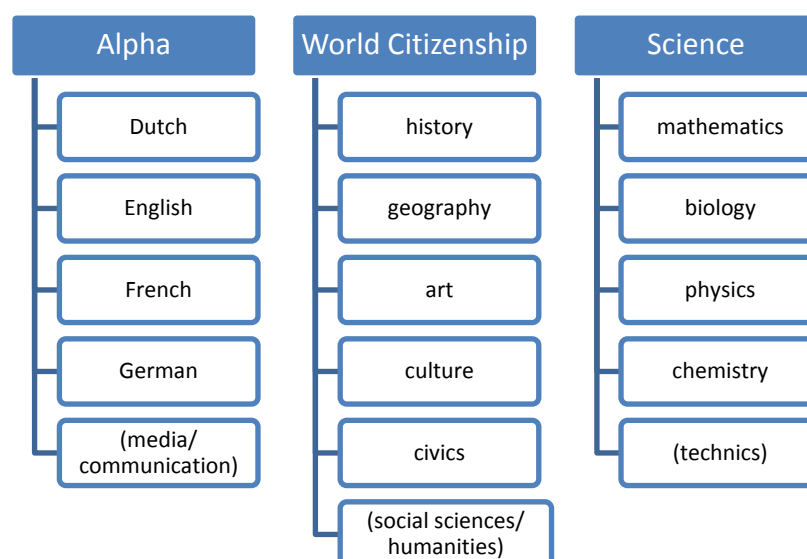
TABLE 2

Table 2 represents the main three groups of discipline and their related project-based courses (on top).

world music instruments



Name _____

Name _____

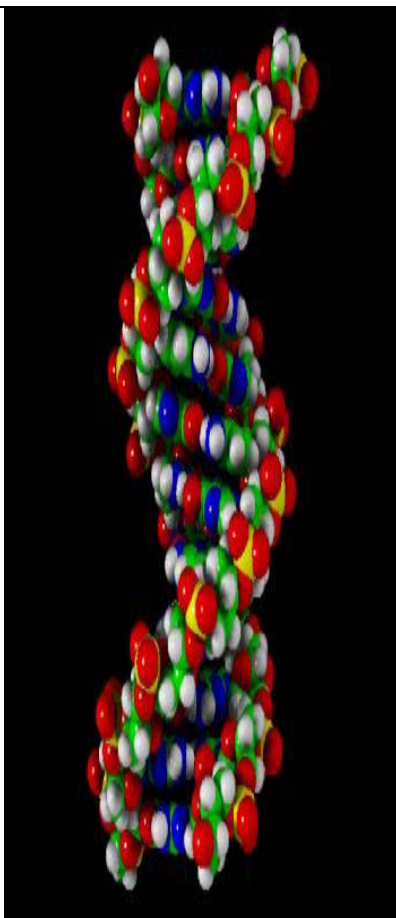
Name _____

Name _____



3rd PERIOD 2009-2010 CLASS _____

World diseases



Theme

world diseases

Workform

group work

Final product

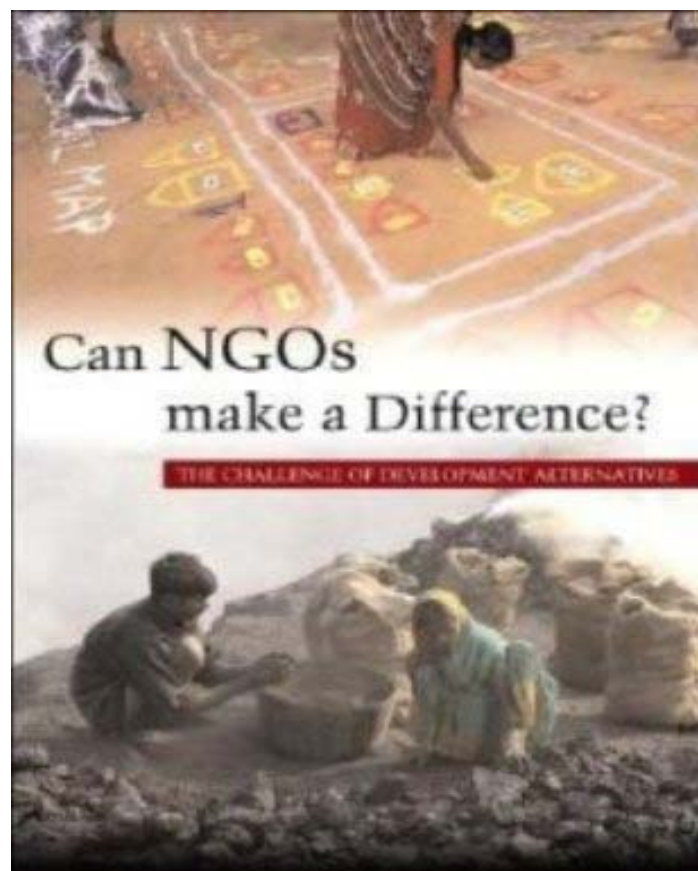
presentation

Due

11th-25th May

4th PERIOD 2010-2011 CLASS _____

NGO's



3rd PERIOD 2010-2011 CLASS _____