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Teachers and Education for Global Citizenship in a Mexican University

Abstract

Since the turn of the century, universities have to cope with demands of internationalization; and more recently to cope as well with demands to educate for global citizenship, especially after the United Nations Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative (GEFI) launched in September 2012. This paper reports an experience of training teachers to promote these aspects in a Mexican university. More precisely, to explore how far a group of university teachers, that were trained to promote internationalization, were from the main principles of global citizenship education. Their answers to a questionnaire specially designed for this purpose, were compared with the answers of a group of teachers, from the same university, who have not been trained in the mentioned matter. A test "U" of Mann-Whitney showed a significant difference between the two sets of answers, from which some reflections are derived and related actions are suggested for training university teachers.

Keywords: education for global citizenship, internationalization of education, international education

Introduction

Universities are incorporating an international dimension in their activities for two main reasons: on the first hand to improve and sustain quality by promoting collaboration between institutions from different countries; on the other hand, to promote education as the main tool for the construction of a strengthened and benign social system, as expressed by Ban Ki Moon (Secretary General of the United Nations Organization) when introducing the Global Education First Initiative (GEFI).

For UNESCO, the promotion of global citizenship involves researchers, teachers and university administrators, as well. According to Cobern (1991), Lovett (2008), and Miller and West (1993), programs of global education help teachers and students to acquire a better comprehension of human existence and a better perception of social, cultural and economic factors that impinge in populations around the globe (Torres & Dorio, 2015).

The Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas (UAT), a public state university in North-East Mexico, with the support of the Ministry of Education, devised a course for training teachers to become internationalization promoters in their schools and academic units. The purpose was to increase the work of internationalization that is usually concentrated at the corresponding administrative department of universities.

The deans of faculties and academic units were asked to appoint a member of the faculty to become part of a group to be trained for that activity, in such a way that the group was mainly integrated by full time professors who, in many cases, had the opportunity to earn a graduate degree from abroad.

This group went through a Diploma Course for the Professionalization of University Promoters of Internationalization. It was designed and implemented by the Organización Universitaria Interamericana (OUI), through the Colegio de las Americas (COLAM), with the purpose that the university actors appropriate "concepts and tools for the management of projects for international cooperation and research".

Later on, especially after the Incheon Summit, universities, as part of the education systems were demanded to educate for global citizenship, but as this institutions usually don't have enough resources to hire personnel with all kind of profiles, questions arose about the possibilities that the same teachers who were commissioned to internationalization activities could also cope with student's education for global citizenship. Hence, our research question was whether the group of teachers who earned the Diploma as Promoters of Internationalization were aligned with the principles related to education for a global citizenship?

Theoretical elements

The research question deserves some reflections, since there are different theories that suggest divergences between international education and education for global citizenship that could interfere in the alignment of both sets of activities and could make difficult for the teachers to participate in both of the working lines. Next paragraphs are dedicated to explore the concepts.

The term internationalization of education is used in different ways in the literature. Different approaches can be identified: comparative international education; internationalization of higher education; international schools; international educational research; and some authors use it interchangeable with global education.

The international education includes internationalization of education, globalization of education and international expansion of education institutions (Dolby & Rahman, 2008). Courses on international education at universities have the objective to develop knowledge, abilities and attitudes that are foundations to participate in a world characterized by cultural diversity, inequity, interconnectivity, cooperation and conflict (McFadden, Merryfield & Reeves-Barron, 1997, p. 8).

It is clear that internationalization of education is no longer exchange or mobility, but promoting an international dimension of the university activities at large. The structure of institutional management should facilitate the interaction of universities from different countries to promote collaboration for enhancing quality in programs of education, research, extension and services. The term internationalization *in-situ* is used to refer to curriculum development, research networks, activities oriented towards comprehension of different cultures, inclusion of diversity and respect for difference (Navarro-Leal, 2017).

Some authors (Navarro Leal & Navarrete Cazales, 2016) suggest that internationalization and globalization are not convergent terms. From the perspective of the former, students learn that there are respectable national sovereignties in the interactions between countries; from the perspective of the latter students learn that there are world systems with no national boundaries. This argument challenges the idea that international education and global citizenship education are convergent pedagogical approaches, and furthermore, this can

jeopardize the possibility that the same teachers may develop educational activities to promote divergent perspectives.

But if we look at the discourse of education for global citizenship we can find that it is not so divergent, as the above paragraphs raise it. In a world where it is widely accepted an intensification of social relations that connect remote localities, in such a manner that local events are influenced by events happening thousands of miles away (Giddens, 1990), an interconnected world imposes on individuals adaptation requirements. Adaptation to a world with a wide diversity of values and of living styles, capacities for interaction with people from different cultures, abilities to response to new demands of quality and flexible requirements of work, to be aware of social and environmental consequences of consumerism, political individuals who think globally, global citizens (Diendorfer et al., 2012). A new education is needed, and this new education is the education for global citizenship.

Education for Global Citizenship is a pedagogical field internationally acknowledged. In the English speaking world the term citizenship is the most important category in civic education, just in the same way it is in education for democracy in German speaking countries (Diendorfer et al., 2015).

UNESCO (2013) assumes that Education for Global Citizenship aims to empower teachers and students to get involved and take active roles either in local or global levels to face global challenges to become a proactive agent for a more pacific, inclusive and sustainable world. For potential areas are identified as relevant: educational policies and the introduction of global citizenship education; organize committees for the design, development and promotion of education programs; training teachers of basic education, training of multiplayer's out of the schools; research and development; multidisciplinary teaching, international collaboration between schools; transnational school projects.

Methodology

As it can be seen, in theory there is not a big gap between pedagogical perspectives of internationalization of education and education for global education, which is precisely the point to explore through empirical procedures. To test the alignment of the teachers who earned the diploma in internationalization with the principles of global citizenship education, some methodological steps were carried out: 1) the sections related to values and behaviors of a questionnaire designed by Torres and Dorio (2015) for the UNESCO Chair of global education citizenship, were applied; 2) their results were compared with the results obtained by another group of teachers from the same university who did not take the diploma course; the hypothesis was that the former would obtain a better score; 3) since in the diploma group was a number of teachers who had studied abroad, their answers could bias the results, so that the whole of the data was reorganized in two groups: the group of teachers who have never been abroad and the group of teachers who have been abroad for academic purposes, regardless of having or not the diploma on internationalization. The hypothesis was that the latter would score higher.

Once the questionnaire was applied to both groups, a Shapiro-Wilk Test allow to find out that there was a significant difference between the two groups, and the hypothesis was accepted with a 95% of confidence. The diploma group was more aligned with education for global citizenship. Additionally, as it was explained, to

check a possible bias resulting from the number of teachers who have been abroad for academic purposes, the comparison between the group of those who have been abroad and the group of those who have not, resulted in a lack of difference, hence the null hypothesis could not be rejected.

A non-parametric test "U" of Mann-Whitney for two independent samples was used to determine whether there was a significant difference in every one of the items of the sections of values and behavior of the questionnaire. The only differences were found in five out of twenty items of "preparing for civic life", "diversity of religion", "involvement in religious services", "involvement in meditation", "boycott to trademarks"; but when a global analysis was made, results were different, either for values or for behaviors. Diploma holders had a more positive perception towards education for global citizenship.

Conclusions

Despite the exceptions of the individual analysis of the items, the global analysis has shown a remarkable difference between the teachers who earn the diploma and those who don't, proving that there is a high sense of global awareness on those who went through the diploma. It can be said that the diploma course has promoted on them a sound initiation in education for global citizenship, and that it would be a good idea to continue offer this diploma course to more teachers and staff of the university.

It is to highlight that in the Diploma group 7 out 26 teachers have not been abroad, the other 19 do have. Meanwhile in the non diploma group, only 2 have not been abroad while 18 do have. Anyhow there was not a significant difference when comparing answers of those who have gone abroad against those who have not.

This empirical exploration suggests certain kind of closeness, or maybe a complementary relation between internationalization of education and global citizenship. After all, it would be a deplorable display of spiritual poverty to limit the mission of universities to a simple training of professional labor force with capacities to work in international or global markets. The end of internationalization of universities makes sense when the collaboration among universities looks for intercultural comprehension and for reciprocal attention to cope with common problems.

The purposes of international education are related to education for global citizenship and the findings suggest that particular and common issues be identified to be especially promoted as relevant factors for implementing global citizenship education. One of the elements of the latter that should never be absent is the promotion of an attitude supported by the comprehension of the multiple levels of identity and the potential for building a collective identity to go beyond cultural, religious, ethnic, or any other individual differences; a deep knowledge of universal values such as justice, equity, dignity and respect; behavioral capacities to act in a collaborative manner and to be responsible with finding solutions to global challenges and to the search for the collective good. It is in this point that bridges have to be built between internationalization of education and education for global citizenship. For higher education institutions, internationalization acquires a wider and relevant sense in which case the diploma course could be reoriented to training teachers to act as educators for global citizenship.

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