



## What do children think about poverty, inequalities and interculturality?

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### Introduction

Children are growing up in an increasingly **complex, diverse, and interdependent world**, characterized by growing migration, economic inequalities and rates of poverty.

**Global competence** is considered a fundamental capacity to cope with current real-world problems that we face as a global society. This **multidimensional construct** encompasses:

1. Critically analysing the interconnected and changing world;
2. Understanding and respecting different perspectives or world views;
3. Interacting with different people in an open, appropriate and effective manner;
4. Taking action for collective well-being and sustainable development

(Asia Society/OECD, 2018; Boix Mansilla & Jackson, 2011)

Although the importance of introducing real-world global issues into the curriculum is increasingly recognized, assessment measures to capture children's global competence are lacking, particularly in primary school. To properly plan, implement and assess classroom experiences targeting the development of global competence, it is important to first **learn about children's perspectives on issues of global significance**.

**Goals:** to understand children's perspectives about two global topics  
(1) **poverty & economic inequalities** and (2) **interculturality**

### Method

#### PARTICIPANTS:

20 children (10 boys), between 8 and 10 years old ( $M = 8.65$ ;  $SD = 0.67$ ).

#### PROCEDURE:

In individual interviews, children were presented with stimulus situations and answered open-ending questions:

#### Poverty and inequalities

- Causes of poverty and ways to help people in poverty – based on Mistry et al. 2016  
*Why are his/her parents poor? How can we help?*

#### Intercultural situations

- Situation based on a case of the European Court of Human Rights – child who wants to wear a Sikh turban and the school doesn't allow it
- Intercultural conflicts between a person from a minority religious/cultural background (e.g., Jehovah's witness who doesn't celebrate birthdays) and a person from a religious/cultural majority background (e.g., child who invites friend to his/her birthday) – based on Schwarzenhal et al., 2019

*Why does person A/B behaves this way? What would you do in this situation?*

#### ANALYSES:

Answers were fully transcribed and categorized using an iterative process between both bottom-up and top-down analytical procedures.

### Results

#### POVERTY AND INEQUALITIES

##### Causes for poverty:

##### STRUCTURAL CAUSES



"the presidents are not very good and don't let people earn money"  
"they did not have as many job opportunities as we sometimes have"

##### INDIVIDUALISTIC CAUSES



"they spent [the money] on things that were not useful and then they became poor and cannot get more money"  
"they may have committed a crime and lost their money"

##### Ways to eliminate poverty:

##### CIVIL & POLITICAL ACTION



"maybe we should go to the parish council and ask them to give more money to the poor, do whatever they can"

##### SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL HELP



"we can support them and not make fun of them, like we are richer than them, we are better than them"  
"play with them, help the family"

##### GIVING MONEY & GOODS



"we can give them toys or clothes we don't need or food or that, so that they can have a better life and use the goods"; "give them money"

#### INTERCULTURALITY

##### Causes for the person's behaviour:

##### RELIGIOUS/CULTURAL MOTIVES



"it's part of the history from where he is from, it's part of his religion"  
"because it's the rules of his religion and maybe he didn't want to disappoint his homeland"

##### INDIVIDUALISTIC MOTIVES



"he wants"  
"it makes him happy"  
"he doesn't like parties, he is scared"  
"he is embarrassed and doesn't want to ask to play"

##### Ways to act in intercultural conflicts:

##### ACKNOWLEDGING BOTH PARTS OF THE DILEMMA IN THE SOLUTION



"I would play with the girl and then ask the other children to join us"  
"I would tell Rita (...) to go to her house in another day and play together"

##### SUPPORTING PERSON BELONGING TO ETHNIC MINORITY



"I would protect him from the people who make fun of him"  
"I would accept her like she is"

##### ASKING FOR ADULT HELP



"I would let the teacher decide"  
"maybe I would talk to her parents"

### Conclusions:

- Children are able to position themselves and express their perspectives about social topics of global-to-local significance, when faced with developmental and contextual appropriate scenarios.
- Children's answers are of diverse nature, from more complex to more basic causes/motives and solutions.



#### Next steps on assessing global competence:

- Conduct a large scale study – collect more data
- Analyse and develop a quantitative scoring system based on bottom-up and top-down analytical procedures
- Analysing children's global competence in what concerns two important global issues