
SINERGIAS – CREATING A SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL ON DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION BASED ON AN EXPERIENCE OF COLLABORATIVE WORKING

Abstract

The idea of creating an on-line scientific Development Education (DE) journal was developed from the first sketch of an “action plan” for working on DE in academic teaching and research at the second work meeting between the Centro de Estudos Africanos da Universidade do Porto (African Studies Centre of the University of Porto) and the Fundação Gonçalo da Silveira (Gonçalo da Silveira Foundation), in May 2012. The idea was developed, built on and completed until it finally materialised in an on-line peer-reviewed scientific journal called “Sinergias – diálogos educativos para a transformação social” (“Synergies – educational dialogues for social transformation”), Portugal’s first specialized journal in DE. The first issue was completed in December 2014. This article describes the process, lasting two and a half years, of the joint development, discussion, planning and execution of this scientific journal. Firstly it puts the journal in context in the framework of DE in Portugal and then provides an overview of the relationship of partnership between the two institutions responsible for the journal. The article ends with a set of conclusions arising from the process of creating the scientific journal and by identifying some challenges that the new journal will face after the end of its development and launch phase.

Key words

Development education, global citizenship education, higher Education, scientific journal, civil society, collaborative work.

¹ “Sinergias ED: Conhecer para melhor Agir – promoção da investigação sobre a ação em ED em Portugal” (“DE Synergies: Knowledge for better action – promoting research on DE action in Portugal”) project team, jointly promoted by Fundação Gonçalo da Silveira (Gonçalo da Silveira Foundation) and by Centro de Estudos Africanos da Universidade do Porto (African Studies Centre of the University of Porto), co-funded by the Camões Institute for Cooperation and Language and by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Development Education (DE) is a major need in today's world to contribute *“towards eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development through educational approaches and activities”* (European Consensus on Development, 2007). By making it possible to tackle complex issues in global development in an integrated, dynamic, critical and on-going manner including the promotion of values, principles, attitudes and actions to create a more just, inclusive, fair and sustainable world as its main objective it forms part of the path towards more just societies, where everyone can enjoy their rights as citizens and find spaces for exercising their citizenship (Coelho et al. 2014).

As the result of different perspectives and multidisciplinary approaches, the concept of DE is not static, but instead moves with changing historical contexts and the evolution of the concepts of education and development. In the world of education, non-formal education strategies have become more highly valued, introducing new participatory and interventional action methodologies in the establishment of working strategies; in the field of development, the distance between the idea of development and that of economic growth became clear and the promotion of measures and common standards with civic origins was encouraged, by, for example, valuing principles of participation and dignity, and the pursuit of social cohesion and the sustainability of initiatives (Afonso, 2005).

It is, therefore, important to situate the concept of DE in its historical and conceptual context in order to determine its relevance in today's world, to define the concept and to discover its methodologies and also aspects that are relevant to its practice. In this way, it is possible to establish its boundaries and forms of operationalisation so as to avoid confusion with other forms of intervention, such as fund-raising or Education in the area of Development Cooperation (Mesa, 2011).

Since the 1990s, according to Manuela Mesa's theories (2011), we have been in the fifth generation of DE; this generation is known as “DE for global citizenship” and is strongly marked by the context of globalisation. Mesa highlights the fact that global interdependencies make the stereotypes of so-called *developed* and *underdeveloped* countries obsolete – indeed, the most recent crisis had its epicentre in the regions regarded as *developed* – and emphasises the need to reconsider concepts and models of development and of participation by citizens in social and political life. Furthermore, this new approach clearly affects the concept of DE: while on the one hand its content is recast, creating a critical understanding of the phenomenon of globalisation, on the other hand the connection between development, justice and equality is

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strengthened. Civil society organisations become privileged actors in social action, and all citizens are encouraged to participate in the political and cultural debate, being urged to participate in discussion, analysis and critical reflection in order to create a 'global citizenship', with a more comprehensive sense of development that is informed and aware of global dynamics.

In Portugal, the concept of DE spread very late, first of all because of the background of dictatorship and the limited expression of civil society organizations until the 1970s. In fact, the context of "censorship, repression and international isolation prevented the normal development of civil society, drove off and destroyed many of the most dynamic actors (individual and collective) and reduced the world to a set of territories over which the regime exercised political and economic power" (CIDAC, 2004: 13).

The 1974 Revolution led to the emergence of social movements, especially ones supporting social participation and equality. In March 1985 thirteen Non-Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs) founded the Plataforma Portuguesa das ONGD (Portuguese NGDO Platform) that appeared from the combination of members' idiosyncrasies and their need to establish themselves as privileged interlocutors for governmental and supra-governmental bodies in the construction of development and cooperation policies². Accessing this new space gave the Platform's members greater proximity to the working areas in DE that existed at a European level, making it possible for them to benefit from contact with a wide variety of experiences, actors and knowledge in the area, as well as allowing them to start to participate in groups discussing European politics and in actions to influence international politics, particularly by participating in the structures and activities of the Liaison Committee of European NGDOs (CLONG), now called CONCORD³ (CIDAC: 2006). The establishment of the first permanent Working Group dedicated to DE, within the national platform in 2001 resulted from this proximity. This group was responsible for a number of training, discussion and reflection meetings, having organised the first "Escola Nacional de ED" ("National DE School"), held four times up until 2005, and also the first "Escola de Outono de ED" ("Autumn DE School"), based on the European model of the "DE Summer School". The group also participated in the preparation and in the advocacy initiatives for the approval of the resolution on Development

² See <http://www.plataformaongd.pt/plataforma/quemsomos/>

³ CONCORD (CONfederation for COoperation of Relief and Development NGOs) is the European Confederation of Relief and Development NGOs, a nonprofit institution created in 2003 by European NGDOs with the aim of acting as the main interlocutor alongside EU institutions and of the various decision-making groups on development policies. At present it comprises 27 national associations, 18 international networks and two associate members, representing over 1800 NGOs. Available at: <http://www.concordeurope.org/about-us>.

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Education, by the EU Council of Development Ministers. This resolution was passed in 2001 and has an important role in raising the awareness amongst public opinion in Europe in favour of development cooperation. When this document was approved, the group from the Portuguese platform sought institutional contact and the mobilisation of national authorities (namely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Youth) to back the emergence of DE and the need of it to be recognised (CIDAC, 2004)⁴.

The year 2002 was especially important at a national and international level, once the process of reflecting on and defining the concept of DE had been reinforced in Portugal, and the need and urgency of strategic national guidance for work in this field had been discussed. As far back as 2002, the Portuguese NGDO CIDAC started to participate as a Portuguese body in GENE - *Global Education Network Europe* (a European network comprising representatives from Ministries, Agencies and other national entities from States interested in sharing their visions and experiences in the area of support, financing and development of policies in the field of Global Education/DE). At the EU level the 1st European Global Education Congress was held in Maastricht where representatives gathered from governments, local authorities and some civil society organizations, including a Portuguese delegation. At this congress an important conceptual and strategy guidance document known as “The Maastricht Declaration” was drafted.

The following years were marked by the promotion of a number of initiatives by national NGDOs, involving strengthening the role of DE in Portugal and ensuring that the work performed and the conceptual and organizational quality in the field were recognised. In 2005 DE was defined as one of the priorities of the national Cooperation policy in the document “Uma visão estratégica para a Cooperação Portuguesa” (“A Strategic Vision for Portuguese Cooperation”), from the Instituto Português de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento (“Portuguese Development Support Institute”, IPAD, formerly the ICP). In the same year, the IPAD launched the first source of co-funding for DE initiatives by NGDOs.

Portugal’s close relationship with GENE made it possible to hold a seminar in Lisbon that brought together actors from Portugal and representatives from the governments of Austria, Ireland and Finland to share concepts and methodological strategies on the process of drafting the respective national DE strategies. The process of preparation of

⁴ Until then, the Portuguese state had not recognised ED. Initiatives undertaken in this field were supported by NGDOs or, sporadically, by the Instituto Português da Cooperação (Portuguese Cooperation Institute, ICP), as the existence of a national funding line for ED had not been established, something that, amongst other consequences, considerably hindered the co-funding of projects approved by the European Commission (CIDAC, 2004; CIDAC, 2006).

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the Estratégia Nacional de Educação para o Desenvolvimento (National Strategy for Development Education, ENED) started in 2008, led by the IPAD in collaboration with other relevant actors in this area, namely governmental bodies and NGOs.

After various different phases and processes, in November of the following year ENED was published in the *Diário da República* (national official gazette), by joint order of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and the Secretary of State for Education. In this document was defined to create an ENED Monitoring Committee, comprising the current Camões Institute, IP (formerly the IPAD), the current Directorate General of Education (formerly the DGIDC), the Portuguese NGDO Platform and CIDAC. In April of the following year, the Plano de Ação da ENED (ENED Action Plan) was approved, with 14 public bodies and civil society organizations signing up to it⁵.

The ENED is the key document that guides DE action in Portugal. Its main objective is to promote global citizenship through learning processes and by raising awareness of development related issues in Portuguese society, in a context of growing interdependence, and focusing on action leading to social change. The ENED is organised around four specific objectives that, in turn, correspond with four areas: (i) capacity building, dialogue and institutional cooperation; (ii) formal education; (iii) non-formal education; (iv) awareness raising and political influence.

More recently, between 2012 and 2014, a peer-review process on the situation of DE/Global Education in Portugal took place, led by GENE. We highlight some of the main observations and recommendations of this document: i) recognition of the strong on-going political support and significant commitment towards DE in Portugal, reflected in the composition of the various working groups that took part in the ENED; ii) the very positive evaluation of the ENED, notably its highly participatory drafting process and follow-up, as well the strong sense of ownership by the institutions involved and the interest in improving the system in practice; iii) its focus on the need for institutional capacity building in order to guarantee the continuation of the good

⁵ Organizations that subscribed to the Collaboration Protocol and signed up to the ENED Action Plan:

- Public Institutions: APA - Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente (Portuguese Environmental Agency); ACIDI - Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e o Diálogo Intercultural (High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue); CIG - Comissão para a Cidadania e Igualdade de Género (Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality); UNESCO National Commission; Conselho Nacional de Educação (National Educational Board); Direção Geral da Inovação e Desenvolvimento Curricular (Directorate General for Curriculum Innovation and Development); IPAD – Instituto Português de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento (Portuguese Development Support Institute); IPJ - Instituto Português da Juventude (Portuguese Youth Institute).

- Civil Society Organisations: APEDI - Associação de Professores para a Educação Intercultural (Association of Teachers for Educational Involvement); CIDAC – Centro de Intervenção para o Desenvolvimento Amílcar Cabral (Amílcar Cabral Centre for Development Intervention); CPADA - Confederação Portuguesa das Associações de Defesa do Ambiente (Portuguese Confederation of Environmental Defence Associations); Comissão Nacional Justiça e Paz (National Justice and Peace Committee); CNJ - Conselho Nacional da Juventude (National Youth Council); Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation; Plataforma Portuguesa das ONGD (Portuguese NGDO Platform).

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work that had already been carried out; iv) the evidence of the progresses already made regarding work on DE in Portugal and the quality and potential of the ENED, taking into account the country's economic and financial restrictions; v) the need to strengthen the sector's funding to make it possible to harness all of the potential and opportunities created by the ENED; vi) achieving integration of DE into the curriculum across all disciplines in the formal educational sector and the need for a coordinated strategic response regarding teacher training; vii) the need to establish wide-ranging partnership projects between NGOs and other civil society institutions; viii) the general population's limited knowledge and recognition of DE/Global Education and the imbalances in the geographic distribution of DE actions (GENE, 2014).

2. AN OPEN SPACE

As we can see, ENED is currently the key document guiding action policies in this area in Portugal, and it comprises a wide variety of social actors that signed up to its Action Plan to design, reflect on and carry out their activities in accordance with the principles and measures stipulated in the document, establishing itself as “an essential instrument ultimately to enable universal access to quality Development Education (DE) and so contribute to consolidating the commitment of all people with the necessary response to the inequalities and injustices that appear at local and global levels” (Order no. 25931/2009).

The ENED contains two specific measures that identify the connection between action and research as a priority: measure 1.4 covers the “creation of opportunities and conditions for research and knowledge production that is relevant for DE actors' capacity building”, subordinated to the objective of training and institutional dialogue and broken down by type in activity 1.4.1 that refers to the “promotion of projects to produce knowledge of DE, including joint initiatives by higher education institutions and civil society organizations”; measure 2.5 is part of the objective relating to formal education, and focuses on the “promotion of DE related research work DE in higher education institutions in connection with international peers from the Global North and Global South”, corresponding to activity type 2.5.1 “promotion of research projects into DE, preferably with international participation” (ENED Action Plan, 2010).

These two measures give the field of research the prominence required for opening the space to create a nucleus for discussion and reflection and to create well-founded and recognised DE knowledge in Portugal. However, these measures have a low level of coverage, according to the Relatório de Acompanhamento da ENED (ENED

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Monitoring Report)⁶. This issue is always a reference in the conclusions of these documents: “promoting research in the field of DE and the recorded reflection of the activities stands out as one of the most fragile areas” (ENED monitoring Report, 2012: 66). In view of this observation, the same report recommends that “the types of activity that have received the least attention should be reinforced (...), namely: (...) research in the field of DE” (*idem*: 67).

As a result of this lack of connection between research and action, we have identified various constraints that have an impact on the quality of DE intervention in Portugal, as well as limiting the number of actions/initiatives that are designed in this area, namely:

- The continued presence of conceptual confusion regarding the concept of DE and its role in the development process, a confusion that cuts across the sectors of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), as well as other public and private actors;
- The difficulty for DE agents in accessing solid conceptual and theoretical bases that they can use as support for planning, implementing and evaluating their strategies and actions;
- A lack of systematisation and reflection of experience gained in the field and from work in DE done by the organisations;
- Some inconsistency and lack of strong conceptual and theoretical bases in DE training.

In effect, these constraints contribute to a low valuation and some fragility of DE, not just at the level of Portuguese society, but also, and in particular, with national actors linked to the area of development. These consequences occur at the public, institutional and private levels. For example: for HEIs, the instability of lines of research as well as the bureaucratic and funding issues in the academic world affect the trajectory of DE work which is already little known and/or recognised in this world and that is often overshadowed by “other bigger areas”, such as Economy, Cooperation, International Relations, etc.; for NGOs, not only is DE not universally recognised as a specific area for intervention, also it is not uncommon that the understanding of the concept and its practice in the field to be incomplete, being DE contents and methodologies often transformed in the organizations design of strategies and work actions in function of other areas with greater weight and institutional investment; in the national context, and in from a broader view-point, the near absence of opportunities for national funding (public and private) and the detachment of most Portuguese CSOs from European funding can still be seen.

⁶ Both in the one relating to 2010-2011 and in those relating to 2012 and 2013.

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Despite these constraints shaping the development of DE and its national valorization, three factors stand out that deserve a positive highlight, in particular because they are linked to academic research in this field. The first is the elaboration of the ENED Monitoring Reports, pioneering documents in the world of DE, including at the European Level. These documents help to monitor the execution of the objectives and measures stipulated in the ENED for the period covered (2010-2015), making it possible, based on their continuous analysis and evaluation, to present systematically conclusions and new recommendations for actors working in this area. Indeed, this process of follow-up, monitoring and evaluation of the ENED is, in itself, a fundamental intervention in the area of knowledge of the reality of DE in Portugal owing to the collection and interpretation of data that it entails. Secondly, the large number of DE practices with relevant documentary evidence that could be the target of further development and scientific reflection, connected to the fact that some NGOs, although only a small number, already have some sort of culture of reflection and academic connection on the DE work that they carry out. Finally, the Resource Centres with a specific DE component that exist in Portugal also have a positive role in this field, through the dissemination of the bibliography on DE in the country and their offer of various resources.

2. WORKING IN SYNERGY

In January 2012, when the Centro de Estudos Africanos da Universidade do Porto (Centre For African Studies of the University of Porto, CEAUP) and the Fundação Gonçalo da Silveira (Gonçalo da Silveira Foundation, FGS) met for the first time, the clearest work outlook appeared to be the opportunity for a researcher or student from the CEAUP to take an interest in systematising the experience of the FGS's first 5 years of work in DE, helping the NGO to prepare its work record in this area, essentially relating to intervention in the school environment and with awareness raising and mobilisation for the Millennium Development Goals, in particular regarding the second goal relating to access to education. The directors of the CEAUP showed an interest in starting to consider DE more systematically, with a wish to be participating actors in the sense of supporting and improving existing activities in this area.

This interest rapidly moved towards two more wide-ranging interconnected matters: the first was the theoretical and conceptual questions relating to DE and the need for further work on them in more depth by the national actors in the area of Development, and the second related to the lack of recognition of DE in Portugal, not just at the academic level, but also within NGOs themselves. At this stage a

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hypothesis was proposed that related the two subject areas presented: is the lack of knowledge production and scientific reflection in this area in Portugal one of the causes of this lack of recognition?

Within the two institutions shared perspectives, it quickly became apparent that there were several common points, raising the possibility of building a joint path:

- A vision of the importance of DE as a fundamental field and discipline for an integrated vision and action in development, as well as the need identified to strengthen this idea in Portugal through work to pursue scientific research in greater depth and to promote a closer relationship between Universities and NGOs in this particular field. If this were achieved, it was felt that space would open for the creation of a win-win relationship based on mutual learning and strengthening of their actions, following European experiences already underway, and responding to a need diagnosed by the ENED⁷.
- Recognition of the need for alternative scientific research methodologies, setting aside the more traditional and vertical research, dominated exclusively by academics, with organisations and actors in the field as simple objects of study, and instead focussing on research based on collaboration between these actors, with a horizontal logic of reflection and joint knowledge production that is intended to be involved and have practical implications as the driving force behind the transformation and credibilization of actions in the field.
- A belief in the possibility that promotion of the value and relevance of DE could be a sign of resistance by NGOs and HEIs to the general situation of crisis and austerity in the country and to the dominant political positions.

In this framework, some ideas started to appear, although still undeveloped: i) the creation of a course or specific training, jointly developed by HEIs and NGOs, to link DE and Cooperation; ii) the possibility that the CEAUP's scientific journal, *Africana Studia*, would start to include articles on DE and could devote one of its issues to this subject; iii) sharing these interests with the DE Group of the NGO Platform, of which the FGS is part; iv) the need to involve partners from the "Global South" in this process.

Despite the enthusiasm resulting from meeting, the informality of the process and the limited availability of the participants, as well as the geographical distance between them⁸, meant that the second meeting only took place 4 months later. Even so, the importance of the subject had not left anyone indifferent and the various ideas and exchanges made at the first meeting were still relevant. Consequently, it was possible

⁷ As previously demonstrated.

⁸ The CEAUP has its headquarters in Porto, while the FGS is based in Lisbon, with a distance of 300 km between them.

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to systematise shared ideas and objectives and also sketch an initial “action plan” for working on DE at the level of teaching and academic research that was subsequently developed at distance. Its final version envisaged three phases:

- phase 0 envisaged the involvement of other institutions, the collection and dissemination of major works and authors in the field of DE and identifying the *State of the Art* of DE at a national and international level;
- phase 1 anticipated working on the “DE curriculum” at the level of higher education, producing case studies, establishing a research team in the field, holding an international conference on DE research and creating an on-line scientific journal;
- phase 2, considered carrying out a research project and the production of materials were as possible activities in a longer-term horizon.

As well as outlining this plan, this meeting also emphasised the fundamental importance of integrating the active participation of the “view from the Global South” in the planned phases and actions, as well as the ability of the whole process to strengthen DE as a means of promoting alternatives (economic and life-style), adopting a role as a countervailing power. One area that was not envisaged in the plan, but was latent, was training “DE agents”. As a result of this exercise it was concluded that it would be vital to obtain funding for some of these activities.

Although this funding was not obtained immediately, implementation of the defined plan moved forward, even though availability constraints continued to limit the pace of the process, making it slow and time consuming.

The third meeting was held 4 months later, and, on this occasion it was decided to hold it remotely instead of face-to-face, taking advantage of new technologies. Under the circumstances, it was clear that a decision should be taken to proceed with phase 0 of the plan and, in particular, to focus on the objective of systematising knowledge in the field of DE and structuring it and making it available for others, so that it could be more easily used in teaching and research as well as in the existing practice of actors working in DE activities. Consequently, it was deemed important to start by carrying out a bibliographic selection of some of the leading works and authors in the field of DE, and then making this available to the public with an interest in the subject. It was also decided that it would be useful to complete the presentation of this bibliographical selection with reviews of some of the works, facilitating the desired access to and dissemination of the knowledge. Of special importance during this phase was the relationship between some researchers from the CEAUP and the Gabinete de Estudos para a Educação e Desenvolvimento (Department of Studies in Education and Development, GEED) of the Escola Superior de Educação do Instituto Politécnico de Viana do Castelo (College of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo,

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ESE-IPVC). The second of these bodies is establishing a Resource Centre on this subject as part of the “Capacitação da Escola Superior de Educação do Instituto Politécnico de Viana do Castelo em Educação para o Desenvolvimento (ED) e em matéria de planeamento, acompanhamento e avaliação da Estratégia Nacional de Educação para o Desenvolvimento 2010-2015 (ENED)” (“Training by the College of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo in Development Education (DE) and in the field of planning, monitoring and evaluation of the National Strategy for Development Education 2010-2015 (ENED)”). This project, financed by the Camões Institute for Cooperation and Language (CICL), enabled the drafting of an agreement with the body mentioned, to allow the access that was provided to the bibliographical collection.

During the process of bibliographic selection and production of the first reading records, CICL, the public institute with responsibilities on development cooperation, opened its funding line for DE projects. At this stage, it was clear that FGS and CEAUP wanted to make an application for this funding line based on the reflection and work already carried out throughout this first year of informal collaboration, and so the “Sinergias ED: Conhecer para melhor agir – promoção da investigação sobre a ação em ED em Portugal” (“DE Synergies: Knowledge for better action – promoting research on DE action in Portugal”) was born. This project was approved in August 2013 and officially started in December 2013, almost 2 years after the first meeting between the two organisations who were now partners and co-promoters of the project.

Result of a more mature thought and vision, the “Sinergias ED” project aims to strengthen the links between research and action in the field of DE in Portugal, creating opportunities and conditions to establish connections between researchers and activists to produce DE knowledge and train actors involved in this area, thereby aiming to contribute to promote the quality of DE intervention, the final objective without which all of this would be no more than a theoretical exercise, far removed from reality and with no impact on it.

With a 2 years duration (December 2013 to November 2015), the project intends to link HEIs and CSOs and their staff, researchers, teachers and students, in a collaborative learning process, with a view to create an institutional dialogue and cooperation dynamics that shall strengthen the synergies and complementarities around research and action in the area of DE. Simultaneously, the project addresses the concern with strengthening the DE capacity building of these actors and their interconnection with conceptual and theoretical basis. To foster this intervention an enhancement of research into DE is envisaged, as is organising relevant meetings and conferences on the subject and reinforcing the means of information and dissemination of DE knowledge.

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The project's most important activities are: a) the creation and consolidation of a research line in DE, supported by the production of primary sources by performing a survey on DE perceptions and practices in Portugal; b) the creation of a peer-reviewed on-line scientific journal that publishes national and international articles and essays reflecting on concepts, subject matters, methodologies and experiences regarding DE; c) the production of research works carried out in partnership by CSOs and HEIs, as well the creation of an environment of connection between the actors involved based on the realisation of face-to-face meetings and maintaining mutual long-distance communication; d) the creation of a website that shall support the dissemination of the results of the activities, as a vehicle for promoting DE and as a catalyst for debate and reflection⁹; e) organising an international conference; f) creating theoretical and practical referentials on training in the field of DE for the purposes of training the CSOs and the HEIs, incorporating the results of the knowledge production process that this projects proposes.

The balance of the first year of the project is very positive. The clear interest shown by HEIs and the CSOs regarding the project stands out, reflected in a much higher than expected number of these institutions committing to the idea of working jointly around the project proposals: as well as almost twice of the institutions initially expected became involved in the project (10 HEIs and 11 CSOs when had been expected the involvement of 6 HEIs and 6 CSOs), the dynamics created was inspiring and shown great potential insofar as most of the institutions have, in this process of connection, accepted a growing involvement and commitment and some institutions have even participated in and contributed to other activities in the project. The joint work has, thanks to the motivation of the partners, strengthened the creation of an embryo of a network/community of interest, committed not only to collaborative work between HEIs and CSOs in this area, but also to sharing experiences, events, new ideas and projects. The results attained with the creation of the on-line scientific journal on DE are also very positive, as is discussed below.

4. CREATING A SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL ON DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

As is discussed above, the idea of creating an on-line scientific journal on DE came about in May 2012 as part of the first draft of an "action plan" for working on DE in teaching and academic research at the second working meeting between the CEAUP and the FGS. This idea has continued to be developed, built on and integrated until

⁹ See <http://www.sinergiased.org/>.

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finally materialized in the specialized peer-reviewed on-line scientific journal, “Sinergias – diálogos educativos para a transformação social” (“Synergies – educational dialogues for social transformation”), which first issue was completed in December 2014. The two and a half year process of creation, debate, planning and execution of this journal that “aims to establish itself as an international platform for discussion and reflection on concepts, methodologies and practices in the field of education for social transformation (regardless of its different names), serving as a vehicle for the production and sharing of knowledge in this area”, as well as by “integrating and combining different visions, voices and practices in the fields of the Social and Human Sciences, namely on DE, Global Citizenship and Development, recognising the diversity and appropriation of this area in contexts inside and outside Europe” (Sinergias, 2014), is examined below.

Owing to the constraints presented above, the creation of an scientific journal being an activity envisaged for Phase 1 of the aforementioned “action plan”, it was only through the “Sinergias ED” project’s application process for the CICYT’s funding line for DE projects that there was another chance to reflect on and develop this idea with a view to future realization. In the submitted application, Activity 1.4 “Creation and publication of a peer-reviewed digital scientific journal on DE”, was envisaged as one of the elements leading to Result 1 “Promoting research works on DE with international participation” that, in turn, aims to contribute to Specific Objective 1 “Create opportunities and conditions for connecting research and action in knowledge production in DE”. Some important stipulations regarding the future journal stand out in the application document, adding greater detail to the more general initial idea. For example:

- as well as confirming the idea of only publishing the journal on-line, it states that it will be free, with the aim of the widest possible dissemination and access of the journal;
- the journal’s biannual frequency was confirmed, being anticipated the publication of 3 issues over the 2 years of the project;
- it establishes that the journal will be peer-reviewed, in order to validate the desired quality references and ensure its credibility;
- it was intended that the journal’s Scientific Council would not only comprise researchers with experience in the field of DE, but also other actors with practice of recognised value, trying to link the areas of research and action, the academic and civil society worlds;
- it stated that the Scientific Council should include national and international actors;
- it stated the intention to index the journal in the *Latin Index*;
- it noted that it is hoped that the journal will continue to be published after the end of the project, becoming CEAUP responsibility.

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After this preliminary exercise of establishing the initial concept, the CEAUP and FGS would again focus on this matter during the official start of the “Sinergias ED” project in December 2013. It is also worth noting that since then this subject has always been present on the agenda of the meetings of the project team that have been held to date.

Re-examining the records and minutes of the team’s initial meetings, it is clear that these first steps helped to organise the later work. Specifically, the first questions to be tackled were related to the criteria for selecting the different Councils (Scientific, Editorial, Peer-review) and the type of call (internal or open). It was, on the one hand, considered vital to start by gathering around the journal a group of major national and international actors, and also creating the necessary conditions to be able to start receiving articles. At the same time, a concern for planning and programming the different steps of the process was denoted, as well as for consulting other publications from the field of DE and Global Citizenship Education in order to provide basic ideas about what an DE journal should be like in Portugal, both in content and form.

After reaching a consensus for establishing criteria and identifying the actors to invite to make up the different Councils, the project team started to dedicate to questions relating to the structure of the journal. In this phase, fundamental decisions were again taken:

- each issue of the journal should have a thematic focus; it seemed natural that the first issue would be dedicated to conceptual and epistemological questions in DE;
- the journal would accept articles for publication in three languages: Portuguese, English and Spanish. Articles written in other languages would also be accepted, if accompanied by a translation into one of the languages of publication;
- the basic structure of the journal would comprise: a) a thematic dossier (with 5 to 7 articles); b) critical reviews of recent works; c) the presentation of a key document in DE; d) in-depth interview; e) project/activity outlines; f) abstracts of master and PhD theses in the field of DE.

Activities connected to the journal then entered a transitional phase, in which actions started being carried out to put these decisions into practice, although at a not very intense pace, not just because of a (false) belief that there was a lot of time to complete the different steps planned but, above all, because the model of joint work and connection between HEIs and CSOs proposed for the “Sinergias DE” project started to demand more time and availability than expected from the project team, owing to the greater than initially expected number of participating institutions.

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During this period of around 4 months, the composition of the Scientific Council was settled; a decision was taken to identify and invite reputable authors with acclaimed work on the journal's subject matter and/or significant articles already published, not opening a public call for papers (it should be noted that all of the invitations were accepted by the authors); progresses were made with the preparation of the other elements of the journal; the name of the journal started to be established; the graphic design process began, first defining the graphic line of the project and only afterwards the graphic design of the journal and of the website.

From July, and following the project's intermediate evaluation exercise (in which a general overview of the project was carried out and the second semester was planned), the pace of preparation and completion of the tasks required to make publication of the first issue of the journal increased. This started by completing some outstanding matters: selecting the journal's name, followed by a process of consultation with the participants in the different activities in the project that resulted in a high level of participation; the final decision on the structure and on which different contributions to include in the first issue regarding the articles and the other sections.

In this phase, a delay in the graphic design and layout of the journal became clear. This fact, linked to the delay in preparing and building the website where the journal would be available, and without which launching it would make no sense, required a rescheduling of the process and the prioritisation of these two tasks, while attempting to maintain the pace of work of overseeing and mobilising the authors and the reviewers of the articles. It is worth noting that the relationship with the different contributors, despite some of the usual delays in deadlines and responses, was always smooth and productive.

The process of revision and subsequent pagination of the journal also turned out to be much delayed, due to the scarce resources available for this purpose as part of the project, what required a temporary strengthening of the team. The decision was therefore taken to postpone the launch of the journal until December in order to guarantee that the whole process could proceed with the necessary rigour and attention to detail, without fundamental steps being omitted that might compromise the final result.

During this process, two pre-presentations of the journal were carried out at different times: the first, in October, at the first edition of the Fórum ED, organised by the Comissão de Acompanhamento da ENED (ENED Monitoring Committee) and held in the Assembleia da República (National Assembly) with the journal being disseminated

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in the informal spaces existing for this purpose; the second was in November at the 3rd meeting between the HEIs and CSOs connected to the project, where a preview version of the journal was presented to all participants as an item of the meeting's agenda. Despite the necessary distances and differences, in both moments the interest shown by the participants was encouraging. The enthusiasm and strong sense of ownership shown by members of the HEIs and CSOs linked to the project in the present ation of the November meeting was very striking. One of the objectives of this meeting was to receive suggestions from participants on the next steps to take in the project in the medium term. It is worth noting that the scientific journal was the item that received most contributions: apart from focusing on the need for international circulation of the journal, those present suggested holding presentation sessions of the journal at the HEIs connected to the project, something that had not been envisaged in the project but that was added after this meeting. It was also possible to carry out the planning of the second issue of the journal jointly in an exercise that made it possible to settle fundamental questions such as the theme (DE in formal education) and to continue to make direct invitations to write articles, with three possible authors and articles being suggested immediately.

These two pre-launch presentations of the journal also made it possible to alert the project team of the need to consider and prepare a communication plan for the launch of the first issue of the journal, a task with which the communication officer from the FGS helped. This plan defined not only the publics but also different forms of approach and responsibilities for sending information.

With the first issue of the journal almost complete at the start of December, it was decided that it was necessary to postpone the launch of the journal until mid-January, partly as a result of the delay already identified in building the website, but also as it was felt that the festive period was the least appropriate time for disseminating the journal. The actual launch took place on 27 January 2015, with the complete pdf version and the html version, both available at the project's website.

Comments on the journal at both the national and international level were very positive, the journal having been publicised through several national and international newsletters and websites. It was also possible to obtain some attention from the specialised press in Portugal, with the publication of the press releases sent to the media in some press agencies and news websites and by holding two interviews, one for the written press and another for a radio station broadcasting in Portugal and in the other Portuguese-speaking countries.

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5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

In general we consider that the process of creating the on-line scientific journal “Sinergias – diálogos educativos para a transformação social” and publishing its first issue, has had a very positive balance. The following aspects are clear:

- the national and international interest and involvement in the different steps of this process: a very high level of involvement of the research and action community in the field of DE was evident. A prime example of this was the fast involvement and availability of almost all of the national and international researchers invited either to form part of the Scientific Council, or to write and/or review articles;
- the growing levels of ownership and involvement displayed by the participants in the meetings between HEIs and CSOs linked to the “Sinergias ED” project;
- the high interest raised by the journal and the levels of response and involvement, that seem to indicate that the scientific journal “Sinergias” did, indeed, answer a real need felt by actors from the world of DE, with special prominence for national actors, but also for some international actors;
- the positive relationship that the process of creating the journal established with other activities linked to the “Sinergias ED” project, in particular regarding the connection between HEIs and CSOs, it being clear that this had real and positive effects on the journal: three researchers from this group joined the Scientific Council after the 1st meeting between HEIs and CSOs was held; the high level of participation in the process of deciding on the name of the journal; more recently, the participation in defining the theme of the second issue and the proposal of carrying out journal presentation sessions in some of the HEIs connected with the project;
- the recognition that the journal, while being specialized, does manage to be wide-ranging and include other subjects related to the questions of “education for social transformation”, not just restricting itself to DE but instead responding to the concerns and reflections of the project team, that arose throughout the different processes of the journal and was explicitly visible in the decision about its name;
- the value for the process of the fact that the two institutions promoting the project were, originally, from different fields (the academic world and NGOs), promoting complementarity in the practices and knowledges and the diversity of visions, and making it possible to approach the two key aspects of both the project and the journal: action and research in DE.
- the high level of interrelation between the two partner institutions, related to the fact that the process of dialogue initiated long before the submission of the application for the project and its formal start.

The following lessons and other general conclusions also stand out:

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- the continuous presence of the process of creating and publishing the journal throughout the first year of the project: while there were moments with more intensive work than others it was clear that this is a process that is present all the time and demands great dedication as there are always tasks to be carried out;
- the importance of the national and international contacts network of the two institutions responsible for the scientific journal, both at the level of the contributions to the journal, and with regards to the impact and reach of its dissemination;
- the underestimation of some tasks by the responsible team, mainly the process of building the website where the journal is hosted (something that should have been started several months earlier) and the time for revision and pagination of the texts as well their edition for the html version; consequently, the launch of the first issue of the journal took place 5 months later than initially planned, this being the most significant constraint encountered so far in this process;
- the importance, for the scientific journal to become a reality, of the approval for co-funding of the “Sinergias ED” project by CICL. This approval accelerated the pace of the collaborative work, providing the necessary resources for it to attain a level that would have been impossible to reach without this support.

Finally, are identified some challenges that the new journal will have to face after the conclusion of its creation and launch phase, in the short, medium and long terms:

- Maintaining an active rhythm of dissemination and communication, ensuring that the journal continues to circulate and is read in the time before the launch of its second issue;
- Increasing the involvement by the “Global South”, attaining a broader base of “non-western” authors, reviewers and readers, who can bring different perspectives and world views, with particular emphasis on countries where Portuguese is an official language;
- Enhancing the participation and know-how of the group of institutions associated with the “Sinergias ED” project, ensuring that it can continue along the road it has travelled so far;
- Finding sources of funding and ways of managing the available resources to ensure the journal’s financial sustainability after the end of the project, envisaged for December 2015;
- Finding ways to be able to evaluate not only the most immediate results in terms of adherence to the different issues and articles of the journals, but also possible specific impacts that it might have on actors in the field and on the actions in which they are involved;
- Being internally coherent by creating synergies with other journals and similar dynamics at a national and international level. ©

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