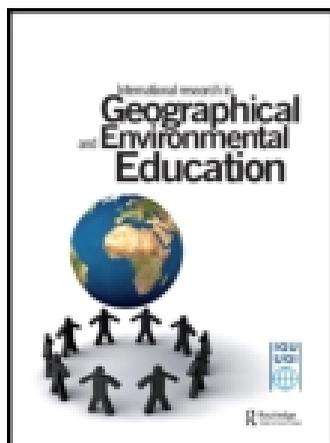


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Young people's world-mindedness and the global dimension in their geography education: a comparative study of upper secondary school students' ideas in Finland, Germany and the Netherlands

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Young people's world-mindedness and the global dimension in their geography education: a comparative study of upper secondary school students' ideas in Finland, Germany and the Netherlands

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Geography is one of the most important school subjects for the development of global awareness and international understanding. Curricular concepts and pedagogical strategies for developing global awareness through geography abound. What is largely unknown, however, is how young people make sense of the world in which they are growing up and if this has any relationship with their geography education.

In this cross-national research project, we compare students' worldviews and ideas about the global dimension in their geography education in Finland, Germany and the Netherlands. To analyze the students' worldviews, we use a world-mindedness scale as a methodological tool. Despite differences in national contexts, the students from each of the three countries show very similar outcomes. Specifically, the students are open to the world and possess a sense of curiosity, seeking cultural experiences and the opportunity to meet other people and see other places. At the same time, they prioritize their own and national interests over wider global interests, such as sharing welfare and giving up specific rights. These answers do not show much regard for responsibility or solidarity with the world. In regards to their opinions about their own geography education, the students recognize the attention for global issues and themes but have problems identifying the teaching and learning approaches associated with global education. We wonder if their dual position toward the world should be a perspective that is incorporated into geography education when developing global awareness.

Keywords: geographical education; world-mindedness; young people; Finland; Germany; the Netherlands

1. Global dimension in geography education

Children and young people grow up in a world today where their everyday environments are connected with global issues in many complex ways. This local–global link has been dealt with in diverse ways in both geography and geographical education (e.g., Blum, Bourn, & Edge, 2010; Bourn & Leonard, 2009; Lambert & Morgan, 2010, 91–93; Nordström, 2008; Robertson, 2009). When the local aspect is emphasized in teaching, for example, by concentrating on students' regional and national identities, the global aspect is often viewed as a threat to specific features of local settings. Thus, globalization is often thought of as either a process of ongoing homogenization or a process through which Western economic, social and cultural values gain increasingly large influence on society (see e.g., Carter, 2000). At the same time, however, it has been argued that globalization is not a

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one-way process and can actually encourage heterogenization (Hopkins, 2010, p. 160). It is therefore important to pay attention to both the multifaceted nature of this local–global nexus and its effects on young people’s thinking.

Many individuals in the geographical education community share uneasy feelings about using quizzes and tests to determine (young) people’s basic level of geographical knowledge, such as in the well-known National Geographic and ROPER tests (National Geographic & Roper Public Affairs, 2006). The role of assessment in geography education and its challenges have been analyzed by many researchers (see e.g. Butt, 2000; Weeden, 2010). In response to the fact that many test takers may struggle to locate important countries on a world map, geography educators would say that such quizzes reinforce the public notion that geography is simply about topographical knowledge and that geography education is about more than just getting the ‘basic knowledge’ right. As van der Schee, Notté, and Zwartjes (2010) have noted, geography helps students not only by providing facts about the world but also by helping them to understand everyday life in the world. Geographical education is supposed to provide young people with learning experiences that help them to develop geographical understanding, geographical skills and generic attitudes and values for their personal, professional and general life as citizens in an increasingly globalizing society (Geographical Association, 2009; Lambert & Morgan, 2010; Morgan, 2011). Most geography educators would agree that learning geography in school should make a difference in the development of young people’s ‘worldviews’. Specifically, the term ‘worldview’ is a relatively ambiguous concept that implies attitudes and values, such as inclusiveness, respect for others, concern for human rights and justice and a predisposition toward sustainability (or indeed the lack of all this). The traits that educators tend to measure – knowledge, understanding and skills – may provide the framework for learners’ evolving worldviews, but the developments of these traits are not the ultimate goal of the subject. The truly educational aspect of school geography is its contribution to young people’s worldviews. Or, in the words of Reinfried and Hertig (2011, p. 5): ‘Geographical education not only aims at promoting pupils’ knowledge of the world and developing basic geographical skills, but it feels committed to cultivating learners’ personal development and encouraging attitudes conducive to full participation in adult life and society’.

Certainly, geography education will not always mold young people’s worldviews in the direction that we as educators might consider desirable: toward a more inclusive, respectful, curious, global-minded and context-rich way of thinking and feeling about the world. Instead, many psychological and environmental factors influence the formation of a person’s worldview. There is some common ground, however, in academic thinking about how education can contribute to the development of more inclusive, respectful and globally minded worldviews. Merryfield, Tin-Yau Lo, Cho Po, and Kasai (2008), for example, studied the practices of successful teachers in Hong Kong, Japan and the United States to determine how they were able to get their students to become more ‘globally minded’ (not just in geography). The authors found five common threads in their teaching and learning approaches: (1) knowledge of global interconnectedness; (2) inquiry into global issues; (3) skills in perspective consciousness; (4) open-mindedness and the recognition of bias, stereotyping and exotica; (5) intercultural experiences and intercultural competence (Merryfield et al., 2008, p. 8). The authors claim that this mix of goals and approaches is supported by the global education literature ‘across time and disciplines’ (p. 8).

There is very little research about the contribution of geography education to geographically enriched worldviews; specifically, worldviews that are globally minded, link the local to the global, respect geographical diversity, possess awareness of interconnectedness and show concern for global issues. Torney-Purta’s (1986) somewhat dated study of the

predictors of global awareness and global concern did not provide convincing results. In the study, students who had taken world geography or area studies classes generally showed higher levels of global awareness than those who did not, but they did not necessarily show increased global concern. In regards to the development of global concern, Merryfield et al. (2008) suggested that pedagogical practices are probably more decisive than content; however, empirical evidence (related to geography education) for this conclusion seems to be lacking. As our contribution, we propose an international research project that tries to discern the ‘global-mindedness’ present in students’ worldviews and the nature of school geography that students have experienced (both in terms of substance and pedagogy).

2. World-mindedness

One might argue that geographically informed worldviews are probably more ‘global-minded’ than worldviews that have not been influenced by any form of geographical education. The term world-mindedness was central to the work of Sampson and Smith (1957), who designed a scale for measuring it. They loosely defined world-mindedness as ‘a value orientation, or frame of reference, apart from knowledge about, or interest in, international relations. We identify as highly world-minded the individual who favors a world-view of the problems of humanity, whose primary reference group is mankind, rather than American, English, Chinese’ (Sampson & Smith, 1957). Their measuring instrument, which they and other researchers extensively validated, consists of 32 items (statements) that relate to eight dimensions. Specifically, the eight dimensions include religion, immigration, government, economics, patriotism, race, education and war. The statements are very broad and, in a sense, timeless. Responses to the statements are on a six-point scale, ranging from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’.

For example, four items are quoted here (Sampson & Smith, 1957):

- Our country is probably no better than many others (item 5, dimension patriotism);
- Our schools should teach the history of the whole world rather than of our own country (item 23, dimension education);
- Immigrants should not be permitted to come into our country if they compete with our own workers (item 2, dimension immigration);
- Our country should not cooperate in any international trade agreements that attempt to better world economic conditions at our expense (item 12, dimension economics).

Although proven to be a valid instrument for measuring world-mindedness at large, the scale’s consistency at the level of each of the eight dimensions was not investigated until recently. Brokaw, Achenreiner, and Elfessi (2007) used factor analysis to evaluate large-scale test results of the Sampson and Smith test, and they found a number of factors across the eight dimensions, which they labeled as ‘world government’, ‘race, religion, and rights’ and ‘quality of life’.

A more recent scale is Hett’s (1993) ‘global-mindedness scale’. Hett defined global-mindedness as ‘a worldview in which one sees oneself connected to the world community and feels a sense of responsibility for its members’ (Hett, 1993). Based on extensive interviews with people from nine nationalities, she identified five relevant dimensions of global-mindedness: responsibility, cultural pluralism, efficacy, global-centrism and inter-connectedness. From there, she designed a 30-item scale that went through a process of statistical validation. Many of her items trigger a more personal, reflective or emotional response than the issue-based items found by Sampson and Smith (1957).

Again, we quote four examples from the scale (Hett, 1993):

- Americans can learn something of value from all different cultures;
- I generally find it stimulating to spend an evening talking with people from another culture;
- I am very concerned about the lives of people who live in politically repressive regimes;
- I have very little in common with people in underdeveloped nations.

Just like Sampson and Smiths' (1957) world-mindedness scale, Hett's (1993) global-mindedness scale was applied and tested in research by others. Examples include its application to the Thai socio-cultural context (Lawthong, 2003), the use of the scale in measuring the effects of study abroad programs (Kehl & Morris, 2008) and the interesting combination of Hett's scale with Stanley's Attitudes towards Cultural Diversity and Pluralism test in a research study focusing on Ohio agriculture students (Stanley, 1996; Zhai & Scheer, 2004).

The point is that various instruments are available that might help education-focused geographers measure the dimensions of learners' worldviews that might be expected to relate to their geographical education; specifically, these dimensions include: taking the global dimension into account; connecting the global and the local; having concern for issues of human rights, distribution, peace and conflict, or sustainability; an openness toward and an interest in diversity; and feelings of interconnectedness and responsibility. One important problem with instruments, such as the World-Mindedness Scale, the Global-Mindedness Scale and the Attitudes towards Cultural Diversity and Pluralism Test, is their bias toward axiomatic positions, which are considered to be politically correct or 'good' (see for example: Vassar, 2006). Academic debates about globalization and sustainable development make clear that well-informed opinions about these themes are very diverse (Hall, 1995; Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 1999; Massey, 1994). Hyperglobalists, for example, argue that further global market integration would be to the benefit of all people in the long run and that shocks along the way should be handled by lean, transparent and democratic governance. Skeptics, however, have strong arguments in favor of internationalism (not globalism) and believe that states should be the key actors in directing globalization (not 'global governance'). Some experts convincingly put forward the case of 'sustainable growth' with the help of technological innovation; others argue that the growth logic is exactly the problem with (non-)sustainability.

As a result of the obvious differences in opinion across the right-left political spectrum, global-mindedness and worldview tests should avoid focusing on the substance of arguments about the world and instead focus on the fundamental, generally accepted values and the richness of learners' (geographical) imaginations. A geographically informed worldview would then include considerations of scale and interconnectedness; variation and difference; relationships between society and nature; and values related to access (equality), diversity, sustainability, justice and efficiency. The validated scales and tests at our disposal are a valuable resource for designing an instrument that could measure the extent to which young people's worldviews are geographically informed.

3. Context of the study

As a school subject, geography is, by its nature, well-placed to make a significant contribution to global citizenship goals (the discussion of global citizenship as a concept and as an educational goal is beyond the scope of this contribution; see, for example: Bénéker, van

Stalborch, & Van der Vaart, 2008; Davies, 2006). This is clear not only for insiders, but surprisingly also for many outsiders. Edgar Morin's famous UNESCO report on education for the future, for example, extols the virtues of geography (Morin, 2001). However, it is important to know the extent to which geographical education actually enriches young people's worldviews. The substance of and approach to geography justify the hypothesis that geographical education will deepen students' awareness and appreciation of diversity, sustainability, and (in-)equality. Geography may also enrich worldviews in the sense that it helps people to take the scale, complexity, context and interconnectedness of the world into consideration. One might expect that these layers of a worldview are the outcome of a style of geography education that is pedagogically sound and relevant in subject matter.

The first step of this cross-national project was to conduct research on geography students' world-mindedness and ideas about the global perspective in their geography education. The opportunity to participate in the research was offered to attendants of the IGU CGE conference, which took place in Tsukuba, Japan, in 2009. The three countries that started the process were the Netherlands (the first ideas of the research were presented by Béneker & Van der Vaart, 2009), Finland and Germany. The following section of this paper will describe the status of geography in the schools of these three countries to make the context of this research understandable.

Geography has a relatively strong position in Finnish schools. The national framework curriculum is renewed approximately every ten years, and it establishes the guidelines for individual municipalities and schools to add more specific detail to their curricula. The present version of the national framework curriculum was published in 2004, and it includes the goals and required content for geography education for nine years of basic education (Finnish National Board of Education, 2004; about the changes in the Finnish curricula, see Kaivola & Rikkinen, 2007; Tani, 2004). During the first four school years (ages 7–10), geography is part of an integrated subject known as 'environment and natural studies', with biology, chemistry, physics and health education all mixed together. In the fourth and fifth grades, geography is taught together with biology, while in the seventh, eighth and ninth grades, it is taught as a separate subject. During this nine-year timeframe of compulsory education, geography is a mandatory subject for all students. A majority of young Finnish people continue on to the upper secondary school after they have finished the lower secondary level (Eurydice, 2010). At this stage, two obligatory geography courses are offered: one in physical geography and another in human geography (Finnish National Board of Education, 2003). In addition to these two courses, every school must also offer their students two specialization courses: one in geographical hazards and another in regional studies (including the basics of GIS). Applied courses are also allowed to be organized, but they are not laid out in the national framework curriculum.

In the Netherlands, geography is a school subject during both primary and secondary education. In primary and lower secondary school, geography is a part of more integrated subjects titled 'orientation at the world' (primary education) and 'people and society' (secondary education). Schools can choose to integrate different subjects together or decide to keep the original subjects of 'geography' and 'history' on the timetable. Schools and teachers are provided with a relatively large amount of freedom to choose what and how to teach geography; often, schools and teachers use textbooks to help them make these decisions. In upper secondary education (pre-university, ages 15–17/18), this is different because of the influence of the examination programs. The requirements of these programs are described in detail and students are evaluated based on school exams and a national exam. A renewed geography exam program was set in 2007 (Commissie Aardrijkskunde Tweede Fase, 2003). Understanding global structures and processes has become more

important under the new version of the program because of the importance of ‘system earth’ and ‘globalization’ themes. The third theme is what is known as a macro region, and it requires students to study the specific context and history of a region, along with the influence of system earth and globalization (Van der Vaart & Krause, 2011). The fourth and final theme focuses on the Netherlands and a few important spatial issues, such as urban issues in large cities (e.g. neighborhood improvements), climate change and water management. The relative position of geography has changed over the past few years (about its earlier status, see Van der Schee & Van der Vaart, 2005). In primary education, geography is mandatory; however, ‘orientation at the world’ has suffered from the increasingly large amount of attention paid to language and mathematics (Kuiper, Van der Hoeven, Folmer, Van Graft, & Van den Akker, 2010; Notté, Van der Schoot, & Hemker, 2011). In upper secondary education, geography is an elective course.

As a result of Germany’s federal structure, states are responsible for their own education systems, which means that geography education in Germany is very diverse. Each of the sixteen federal states has its own curriculum and thus, for example, a different number of geography lessons. However, recently, there have been trends toward a standardization of the curriculum. Since 2006, national education standards for Geography at the secondary school level have been available and have served as a reference document for the creation of new curricula in the different federal states. These education standards have six areas of competence: subject-specific knowledge, spatial orientation, acquisition of knowledge/methodology, communication, judgment/evaluation and action. This document explicitly emphasizes the role of geography as a school subject for Global Education (‘Because of its contents and function, the subject of geography is particularly committed to Global Education’, DGfG, 2007, 7). This gives reason to hope that global issues are taken into account even more in the future. However, the relative position of geography as a school subject is unfortunately not very high overall. As a result of poor past test results, there has been a strong focus on the PISA subjects (foreign languages, mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics) in Germany. Nevertheless, there have also been encouraging developments such as the newly established project-based classes for senior A-level students in various federal states. In these classes, students work on a project of their choice for two years. The first set of these classes has shown that many students will choose projects/topics from within the field of geography, especially topics relating to global issues, when given the opportunity.

4. Research design

In all three countries, students in upper secondary school responded to a questionnaire with 20 statements about world-mindedness, 15 about their geography education and 8 questions about their personal characteristics. The original questionnaire was written in English and was translated into Finnish, Dutch and German. In the Netherlands, we collected 211 questionnaires from four schools (in Amstelveen, Utrecht, Ede and Haarlem); in Finland, 221 questionnaires from four schools (in Oulu, Lahti, Lappeenranta and Helsinki); and in Germany, 367 questionnaires from six schools (in Hamburg, Munich, Erlangen, Münster and Moers). The data were collected in 2010. The schools were selected from our networks with geography teachers. We chose schools located in cities and suburban places and avoided ‘special’ schools (for example with distinctive pedagogies or international schools). All students were studying on a pre-university level. The average age of the students was 15.7 years in Germany, 16.3 years in the Netherlands and 16.9 years in Finland. There was an equal spread of male and female students. Because of the small samples and the lack of background data from the students (e.g. socio-economic status) conclusions about

differences in world-mindedness between the countries can only be tentative. Of the 20 statements about world-mindedness that were selected for the questionnaire (see table in Appendix), 10 were taken from the Sampson and Smith (1957) scale and 10 were taken from the Hett (1993) scale. All these statements were validated in those and other studies, but not again for this study. All the selected statements refer to themes and values that can easily be linked to geography education:

- (1) Patriotism (global–national) and human rights (justice, global centrism);
- (2) Economy and migration (equal access, efficiency);
- (3) Education and learning (responsibility, sustainability);
- (4) Culture and attitude to others (respect, diversity).

The 20 statements used a 6-point Likert response scale (from strongly disagree (1 point), disagree (2), slightly disagree (3), slightly agree (4), agree (5) to strongly agree (6 points)). The seven ‘reverse’ statements (see Appendix) were recalculated before being used in the world-mindedness score. When scored, the world-mindedness scale ranges from 20 (least world-minded: 20×1 point) to 120 (most world-minded: 20×6 points).

The 15 statements about geography education (see results part for the statements itself) were inspired by the dimensions of Merryfield et al. (2008). We created five statements about knowledge of global interconnectedness; five statements about pedagogy (inquiry, active learning); and five statements about perspective consciousness, open-mindedness and intercultural experience/competence. These statements used the same 6-point Likert response scale; from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6).

The eight personal questions inquire about the respondent’s age, gender, experience abroad, contacts abroad and interest in foreign news. In this paper, we present the results of this study for the students from these three countries. We focus primarily on the students’ world-mindedness and their ideas about their geography education.

5. Results: world-mindedness

The students’ scores on the world-mindedness scale for all three groups are very similar. The mean score for the Finnish is 83.5, for the Germans 82.4 and for the Dutch 78.9 (on the scale 20–120). In Figure 1, the box plots depict these similar scores. The average mean per statement is around 4 (slightly agree, 4.18 Finnish, 4.12 Germans, 3.95 Dutch).

If we look at the five statements with the highest scores on the world-mindedness scale, four of those statements show similar results for each of the three countries. These statements are as follows:

- It is important that we educate people to understand the impact that current policies might have on future generations;
- People in our country can learn something of value from all different cultures;
- Any healthy individual, regardless of race or religion, should be allowed to live wherever he wants to in the world;
- I enjoy trying to understand people’s behavior in the context of their culture.

Especially Finnish students are very positive about these statements. Half of these students ‘strongly agree’ with the four mentioned statements (52%, 56%, 57% and 45%). The German students have comparable answers for the second and third statement (48% and 59%). The Dutch students do agree as well, but not on such a high level.

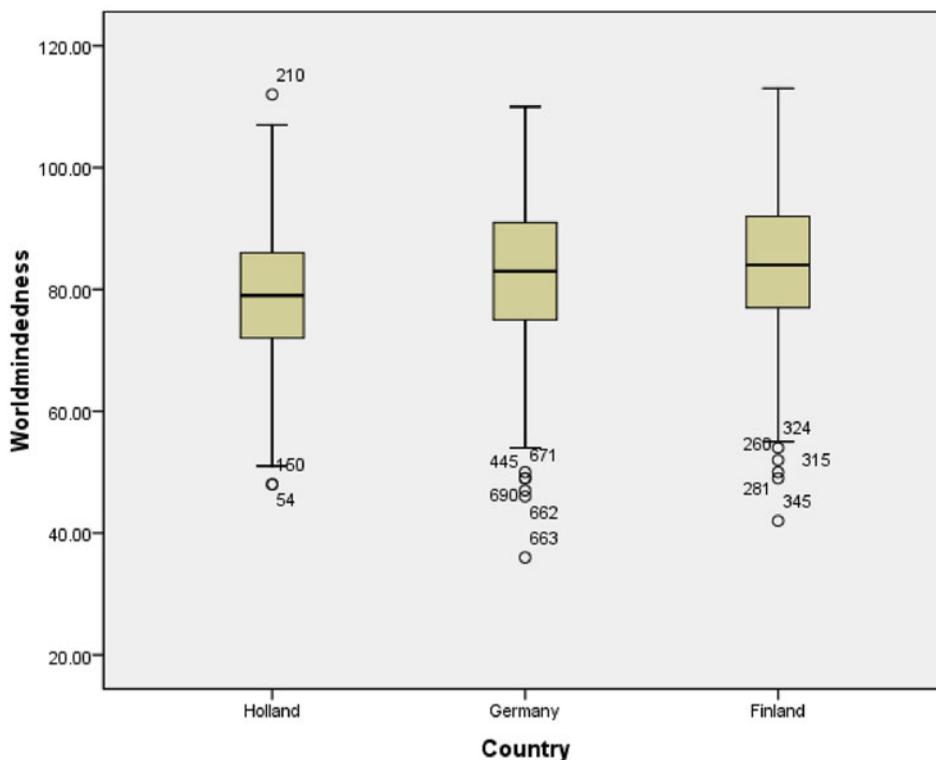


Figure 1. World-mindedness scores from 20 to 120. The box shows the 50% of the students around the mean score.

There are seven statements that the students from all three countries are relatively positive about (scores at or above slightly agree/4 or higher). Five of these statements are in the categories ‘education’ and ‘culture’. The other two statements refer to the right to live wherever you want and the idea that their country will profit from globalization in the long term. Looking at the statements students ‘agree’ on, it seems that the students are open to and interested in other people, cultures and places and that they have positive feelings about diversity, respect and sustainability.

If we look at the five statements with the lowest scores on the world-mindedness scale, three statements show similar results for all three countries. These statements are as follows:

- It would be better to be a citizen of the world than of any particular country;
- Our country should permit the immigration of foreign peoples, even if it lowers our standard of living;
- I have very little in common with people in underdeveloped nations (reverse statement).

About one-third of the students ‘strongly disagrees’ with the statement about citizenship. A clear majority of the Dutch and Finnish students disagrees with the statement about immigration (67% of the Dutch, 71% of the Finnish slightly to strongly disagree) and 46% of the German students.

Another statement with low score results is ‘If necessary, we ought to be willing to lower our standard of living to cooperate with other countries in getting an equal standard for every person in the world’. The students tend to disagree with all the statements that go against national interest, their own rights and their own standard of living. In addition, they are more negative toward the values of equal access and international commonality.

Because of the small samples (and possible cultural differences in answering questions) we have to be careful in reaching at conclusions from the differences between the countries. Important is that in all three countries there is a common pattern in scores. The differences between the countries are limited. However, the results from Finland show more extremes; specifically, the Finnish students show more openness to other cultures and more patriotism. The Germans and Dutch score in between. However, the Dutch have the lowest score on 12 of the 20 statements, while the Germans only have the lowest score on two statements. See the appendix for all the scores.

6. Results: geography education

The opinions of the students from the three countries about their geography education show similarities as well. The mean average of the 15 statements about their geography education together is 3.97 for the Germans, 4.07 for the Dutch and 4.13 for the Finnish, all three around 4 (‘slightly agree’) and above the arithmetic mean of 3.50.

The first five statements and their mean scores for each country in Table 1 deal with the global content of their geography education. The results show that the students believe (and, with a mean of 4 or higher, agree and strongly agree) that in their geography classes, they learn about other parts of the world, how those parts of the world are interconnected, globalization, global warming and other issues of (under)development. All three countries show relatively high scores on these statements. However, in this part of the questionnaire, the Dutch students show higher scores than the German and Finnish students. This may be a reflection of the Dutch curriculum content, which includes a profound global outlook. Even 94% of the Dutch students agree or strongly agree that they learn about globalization.

The second five statements in Table 2 deal with the active pedagogy used in their geography education. The answers differ among the countries and are generally less convincing,

Table 1. Mean scores (1 (strongly disagree) – 6 (strongly agree)) for five statements on content (3.5 is the arithmetic mean).

	The Netherlands	Finland	Germany
We learn a lot about other parts of the world	4.97	4.84	4.63
We study how all parts of the world are interconnected	4.71	4.43	4.00
We learn about globalization	5.47	4.69	4.68
We explore the issue of global warming	4.95	4.83	4.57
We explore issues of underdevelopment and development	4.57	4.20	4.28

Table 2. Mean scores (1–6) for five statements on pedagogy.

	The Netherlands	Finland	Germany
We discuss solutions for real-world issues	3.51	4.04	3.89
We give presentations about our work	3.18	4.00	3.72
We work individually a lot, on questions and assignments	4.16	3.94	3.44
We work in groups a lot	3.99	3.67	4.50
We have many classroom discussions	3.33	3.74	4.13

Table 3. Mean scores (1–6) for five statements on consciousness and perspectives.

	The Netherlands	Finland	Germany
We learn to better understand the ideas and point of view of people in other nations and cultures	3.73	3.91	3.65
We discuss that our national perspective on the world is just one perspective out of many	3.40	3.65	3.27
We are often invited to give our personal opinion about international issues	3.27	3.66	3.66
We explore other cultures	4.24	4.19	3.75
We learn about the dangers of stereotype images of countries and cultures	3.47	4.09	3.52

with many students answering slightly agree or slightly disagree (scores between 3 and 4). In Germany, the students answer that, on average, they work in groups a lot (59% (strongly) agreed) and have many classroom discussions in their geography classes (43% (strongly) agreed). Similarly, the Dutch students also say that they work on questions and assignments, both individually and in groups. The Dutch students are less positive (disagree slightly), however, about participating in discussions of solutions to real-world issues, engaging in classroom debates. Even 43% (strongly) disagree about giving presentations. In contrast, the Finnish are less convinced about group work and score slightly positive, on average, for the other characteristics. Compared to the Dutch and the Germans, the Finnish are more positive about discussing solutions to real-world issues and presenting their work.

The last five statements, which are about consciousness and perspectives, also show some variation in answers across the different countries. In general, the answers provided about these aspects of geography education are not convincing. The Finnish score the highest on these particular aspects. Table 3 shows that the students are reluctant about the idea that they learn different perspectives and (in Germany and the Netherlands) that they learn about the dangers of stereotypes. Only 8% of the Finnish students (strongly) disagree with the statement that they learn about stereotypes, while 24% of the Dutch and 26% of the Germans (strongly) disagree. Even a bigger part of the German students, 33%, (strongly) disagrees that they discuss that the national perspective is just one out of many. The statement ‘we explore other cultures’ receives the highest scores; this statement could have been interpreted in a more ‘cognitive’ way: that they learn about other cultures.

7. Conclusion

Overall, the students possess a very positive attitude toward world-mindedness. Sixteen of the 20 items are above the arithmetic mean of 3.50, and the mean of all the statements is 4.07 (or 81.4 on a scale of 20–120). In detail, however, there are ambiguities. On the one hand, the students agree to the statements that reflect openness to and interest in other cultures, places, types of education and futures. The data also show a high approval for values such as respect, diversity and sustainability (culture, education). These items are often characterized by the fact that they are more general and abstract. On the other hand, the rejected statements go against the national interest, an individual standard of living and individual rights. Students have more problems with values such as equal access, solidarity and global-centrism (patriotism, migration, welfare). These results are consistent with other international studies (Uphues, 2010; The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2003; World Economic Forum, 2002). They all show a certain cognitive dissonance

(Festinger, 1957). The students find a globalized, yet fair and just world desirable, but they do not accept any serious limitations on their life or their country. This is particularly evident when comparing the rating of two items: 'Any healthy individual, regardless of race or religion, should be allowed to live wherever he wants to in the world' (Rank 5, 3, 1) and 'Our country should permit the immigration of foreign people, even if it lowers our standard of living' (Rank 14, 10, 10).

Based on the data, the opinions of students from Finland, the Netherlands and Germany differ only on some points. Overall, similar cultural backgrounds and similar levels of development have bred a wide consensus. This seems to be a reflection of the northwestern European welfare state of education. It will be interesting to see whether differences appear when the present study is extended to other countries outside of Western Europe.

Furthermore, the data suggest that the students perceive school as an institution that is an important guide in the discussion of solutions to global problems. Hence, the reason that the item 'It is important that we educate people to understand the impact that current policies might have on future generations' ranks second. However, it is also evident that the influence of geography lessons is limited. Based on this study alone, it is difficult to know if a strong correlation exists between world-mindedness and geographic education. For example, more world-minded students are not automatically more positive about the global dimension of their geographic education. A strong point of geography education in these countries seems to be providing knowledge about global issues and global interconnectedness. Less recognized, however, are the skills and attitudes that stimulate global awareness.

Based on these findings, we have a few suggestions that could help geography contribute more strongly to global awareness.

The first idea is that we should address global issues more intensely with case studies that affect the students' daily lives. An example of this would be the production of sneakers in Southeast Asia. With such a topic, one can illustrate very specific global networks (international trade) and identify regional inequities (production conditions, wage levels). In addition, the students can discuss values and norms (human rights) and question their own responsibility as consumers. This can contribute to a better 'perspective consciousness'. Furthermore, such issues are well placed for students to identify their own scope of action for global issues. This seems necessary if we consider that the item 'I think my behavior can impact people in other countries' is only ranked fourteenth. This shows that there is a danger of students giving up despite actually having a positive attitude regarding their own actions.

A second idea is for geography classes in Western Europe to establish contact with schools in other parts of the world that possess a different cultural background. Thus far, student exchanges and international projects focus mainly on neighboring countries. Current technologies provide new opportunities to get in touch with peers from other countries. This can happen through web forums, social networks or with Skype at school. Such exchanges promote the broadening of perspectives, can lead to a more intense reflection of the students' own positions and can increase the students' intercultural competence. The exchanges are less about sharing knowledge and more about the discussion of a topic in the context of norms and values. One of the most interesting examples that arose from the list of statements that could be discussed with students (in a local or an international context) is migration. The dual position in students' attitudes toward their own behavior (they like to go, live, work and travel everywhere) and that of other people (not allowing migrants to come to their country) is a very good starting point.

Of course, world-mindedness is strongly influenced by various factors, such as parents, the media and peer groups. For geography, this does not mean that the subject is unnecessary

or useless. In fact, geography in the classroom prepares students to deal with the media and their peers, among many other aspects. As a result of geographic education, along with the background knowledge and skills that arise from it, students become responsible and reflective persons in their respective situations.

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Appendix

Position of the statement (1–20) and its mean score. Bold scores are above the average mean for all statements per country. The total is the average score of the three countries. R = reverse statement.

		The Netherlands		Finland		Germany		Total (average)
It is important that we educate people to understand the impact that current policies might have on future generations	1	4.95	1	5.32	3	4.88	5.05 (2)	
People in our country can learn something of value from all different cultures	2	4.91	2	5.28	2	5.10	5.10 (1)	
I enjoy trying to understand people's behavior in the context of their culture.	3	4.51	4	5.11	4	4.71	4.78 (4)	
In the long run, my country will probably benefit from the fact that the world is becoming more interconnected	4	4.33	8	4.55	9	4.37	4.42 (5)	
Any healthy individual, regardless of race or religion, should be allowed to live wherever he wants to in the world	5	4.32	3	5.20	1	5.11	4.88 (3)	
Foreigners are particularly obnoxious because of their religious beliefs. R	6	4.25	5	5.01	19	3.33	4.20 (9)	
We should teach our children to defend the good of all the world although this could go against our national interest	7	4.09	12	3.92	5	4.57	4.19 (10)	
Really, there is nothing I can do about the problems of the world. R	8	4.08	7	4.58	7	4.46	4.37 (6)	
Our schools should teach the history of the whole world rather than of our own country	9	4.04	6	4.87	11	4.09	4.33 (7)	
I generally find it stimulating to spend an evening talking with people from another culture	10	3.99	9	4.44	6	4.50	4.31 (8)	
Our country should not participate in any international organization that requires that we give up any of our national rights or freedom of action. R	11	3.90	20	2.68	15	3.73	3.44 (17)	
Our (country name) values are probably the best. R	12	3.87	11	4.03	8	4.45	4.12 (11)	

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	The Netherlands		Finland		Germany		Total (average)
Our country should not cooperate in any international trade agreements that attempt to better world economic conditions at our expense. R	13	3.80	15	3.08	13	3.80	3.56 (15)
Immigrants should not be permitted to come into our country if they compete with our own workers. R	14	3.72	10	4.05	10	4.31	4.03 (12)
If necessary, we ought to be willing to lower our standard of living to cooperate with other countries in getting an equal standard for every person in the world	15	3.64	17	3.05	18	3.41	3.37 (18)
People from my country have a moral obligation to share their wealth with the less fortunate peoples of the world	16	3.61	14	3.86	12	3.95	3.81 (13)
I have very little in common with people in underdeveloped nations. R	17	3.47	16	3.63	17	3.52	3.54 (16)
I think my behavior can impact people in other countries	18	3.30	12	3.92	14	3.78	3.67 (14)
It would be better to be a citizen of the world than of any particular country	19	3.24	18	2.98	20	3.26	3.16 (20)
Our country should permit the immigration of foreign peoples, even if it lowers our standard of living	20	2.99	19	2.97	16	3.60	3.19 (19)