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Education and Culture as Tasks of UNESCO: Current Challenges and Perspectives

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As part of UNESCO, education is seen as a part of culture; at the same time, the educational and socializing effects of culture are brought to the fore. Unlike with other international organizations, UNESCO prioritizes the foundational effects of culture and the cultural character of education. Through this engagement, UNESCO's conceptions of economics and culture differ from other organizations. Three basic publications are illustrative of this: the Faure report "Learning to Be" (1972), the Delors Report "Learning: the Treasure Within" (1996) and "Rethinking Education, Towards a Global Common Good? "(2015). The attempt to develop a human rights oriented framework is common to these studies.

The Faure Report is devoted to the development of the concepts of "*social learning*"and "*learning for life*". It is made clear that in an increasingly complicated world, learning can not be limited to schools. One learns in social life, from social institutions, the workplace, the media, and even in one's free time. This takes a lifetime. Emphasis is placed on the right of every individual to learn for their personal, social, economic, political and cultural development. The Delors Report takes up this idea in order to develop four pillars of learning: *learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, learning to be.* The close connection between ways of learning and the nature of a society are highlighted. The report emphasizes the need to organically develop a complete human. UNESCO's values are to be upheld, while the ideas and ideals of market based education are to be avoided. The last few decades have experienced profound changes (UNESCO 2015). New forms of companies and social webs have sprouted, leading to new and difficult challenges (GIL / WULF 2015). Globalization reduced extreme poverty, but simultaneously created the conditions for rampant underemployment, high levels of youth unemployment, and an enormous wealth gap between states. Often, the dominant educational systems contribute to the emergence of these discrepancies, instead of reducing them. Television, Internet, mobile technologies and other digital media offer new ways of cultural production, but close to sixty percent of the world's population is isolated from these technologies. Education today must be seen from a truly global perspective. Economic and ecological, as well as fostering young people in urban and rural areas is vital. New skills and abilities must be fostered. With sustainability and social justice, a diversity of worldviews and knowledge systems arise. (WULF 2013B; WULF 2013A WULF 2014).

1. Education and Culture

The UN and UNESCO, in the past decade, have aimed to improve the situation for people with disabilities, young people, and to create sustainable progress in education. Inclusive education reforms are now underway. The UN Disability Convention (UN CRPD) created no special rights, but did specify universal human rights people with disabilities. The participation of disabled people in the public sphere is a human right. People with disabilities come from all walks of life. The Convention aims to improve the living conditions of people with disabilities by improving accessibility, mobility, healthcare, education, employment opportunities, and participation in political life. In recent years, efforts have intensified. “This approach implies inclusion, not primarily as a special education task, linked to the question of the” right “place of support for pupils with special educational needs, but as a fundamental analysis of the handling difference and heterogeneity in the school context. (Wiersing 1994, 602). Inclusion is not limited only to school, but the entirety of life and the socialization process.

In order to promote development in the arts, UNESCO organized international conferences on arts education, together with the Portuguese government in 2006 in Lisbon and with the Korean government in 2010 in Seoul. “Cultural Education in the Media” in Berlin followed the aforementioned conferences (UNESCO ART EDUCATION PORTAL). Sustainable education in the context of UNESCO is: “a world where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from quality education and learn the values, behavior and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and for positive societal transformation “ (UN DECADE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2005-2014).

2. “Rethinking Education”

Conceptually, these areas find their foundation in the UNESCO book “Rethinking Education”which, tries to determine how education in a globalized world should be conceived. It elaborates on the previously developed UNESCO values, concepts and practices. Secondly, it aims to gather new ideas and strategies to develop, which are the primary conditions of changing the world more effectively. This places *sustainability* at the center of education. At the same time, it is also important to value the principles of humanistic education, our societal traditions of knowledge formation, and the importance of thinking of education in the context of the common good.

Education in the context of sustainability refers to: “Sustainability is the action in which individuals and societies move towards a better future for all, both locally and globally; a future in which social justice and environmental responsibility guide socioeconomic development. The changes in today’s interconnected and interdependent world are bringing new levels of complexity, tensions and paradoxes, as well as new and unforeseen horizons of knowledge (UNESCO 2015 20). In recent years, the consumption of resources has risen sharply. Given the principle of scarcity, economic growth must not be the sole goal of development, and as such, development must be redefined. This includes a focus on urban areas, since by 2050 two-thirds of all people will live in cities. Education must enable people to cope with these changed circumstances of life and to deal robustly with the challenges including: “the cyber

world", climate change, and resource scarcity. New forms of creativity are needed.

Education for sustainability is based on a "humanistic" approach to education and to build on the foundation of the past to build a prosperous future. In normative terms, sustainable education aligns with human dignity, equal rights for all, social justice, cultural diversity, international solidarity, and shared responsibility for a sustainable future. Violence, intolerance, discrimination, and exclusion are to be eliminated if at all possible. There are different interpretations of the term "humanist". These interpretations are based on atheistic and rationalist, anthropocentric and theocentric human images that many have in common but may differ in many points or even contradict one another. The diverse array of humanistic ideas include: the development of critical thinking and independent judgment, problem solving, the capacity for dialogue, and sustainability, including the social, ethical, economic, cultural and spiritual dimensions. "A humanistic approach takes the debate on education beyond the utilitarian role in economic development … Education is not only about the acquisition of skills, but about the values of respect for life and human dignity that are required for social harmony in a diverse world" (UNESCO 2015, 37). A "holistic approach" to education, training and learning is required, which "overcomes the traditional dichotomies between the cognitive, emotional and ethical aspects" (UNESCO 2015 39) The report then reaffirms the four pillars of learning. Methods of reform, content creating, and the building of learning spaces to foster diverse networks are created to make multimedia forms of learning more accessible. Teachers and educators must also be humanized and become more accessible.

The limiting of nation states caused by globalization has vastly grown the complexities of policy-making and strategic planning. In many regions, tensions between education and the labor market more tenuous than ever before, and even good degrees do not guarantee work, which has resulted in a growing generation of disenfranchised youths. Better mode of transition from school-life to work-life must be fostered. Training courses and job requirements must adapt to changing circumstances, be more flexible, but also foster an organic symbiosis between school and work. Increasing mobility in the labor market leading to the problems of brain drain and brain gain require new forms of coordination between the states. Lifelong learning of utmost importance to the citizens of the world. The prospects for a "Global Citizenship Education" (GCE) and the challenges associated national education continue to increase.

To develop world education, requires the interaction of the public and private sectors, since "common good" in education allows both the public sphere and private sphere to foster a task whose fulfillment is instrumental the common good of all of the society. Inclusion, transparency and accountability are important tasks to develop to ensure the democratic nature of education. This applies to formal education, but also for the non-formal and informal learning processes that are becoming increasingly important. In many states, the privatization of education leads to the blurring of boundaries between "public" and "private". Education as a "common good" differs from public education, under which education is often identified from an individualistic and a socioeconomic perspective. Education as a "common good" includes the consideration of cultural diversity and social participation. Education and knowledge are also global goods that make an important contribution to the common good of all people.

"International development discourses often refer to education as both a human right and a public good. The principle of education as a fundamental human right that enables the realization of other human rights is grounded in international frameworks. It denotes the role for the state in ensuring the respect, fulfillment and the protection of the right to education. Beyond the role in the provision of education, the state must act as a guarantor of the right to education" (UNESCO 2015 75).

3. Sustainability as a challenge

In the context of the objectives established by the representatives of the international community for sustainable development, education plays an important role. The UN General Assembly *Open Working Group* set seventeen targets, with which it hoped to achieve sustainability as an objective for the development of humankind. The Rio + 20 outcome document "*The future we want*" contained the decision to establish a working group which would elaborate a list of "Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)." These objectives create a universal vision for the development of humankind in the next fifteen years. Taken together, they specify what is meant by sustainability. The objectives of sustainable development include: 1) ending poverty; 2.) ending hunger and fostering sustainable agriculture; 3) securing the health and well being of people of all ages; 4) inclusive and equal quality education; 5) social justice for people of all genders; 6) water sustainability and access for all; 7) affordable, clean, energy for all; 8) economic development for all; 9) sustainable industrialization; 10) reduction of wealth inequality between countries; 11) sustainable urban development; 12) limiting consumption; 13) the fight against climate change; 14) sustainable use of the oceans; 15) the promotion of sustainable use of the Earth's ecosystem; 16) support of peaceful and inclusive societies; 17) revitalization of the global partnership for sustainable development.

Anyone familiar with the UN, knows that none of these goals is really new. These goals are updated goals in place since the founding of the UN. What is new is that the *entire global community* has come together in the UN General Assembly to adopt these goals for sustainable development. Education, Training and socialization are considered a key way of achieving these objectives. The objectives for sustainable development aimed at overcoming the problems rampant in a globalized world. If sustainability were realized, there would be no poverty, no hunger, there would be well-developed healthcare systems and a well-developed educational system that encourages all people, in the same way, through lifelong learning.

These objectives are reminiscent of the great utopias of European history: Plato's *Republic* (Plato 2000), Tommaso Campanella *City of the Sun* (CAMPANELLA 2008), Thoma More's Utopia (MORUS 1964), and more. Utopias, utopian thinking, and utopian practice have long been a fascination in the field of education, but why have they not been implemented? Why does a detailed analysis of utopias show that their realization may not be desirable? Utopias have a tendency to limit the diversity of human life, in favor of a rigid social order. Today, the desired development of sustainability requires more diversity than any previously developed utopia. If the goals of sustainable development can be realized, a partial restriction of fundamental rights would certainly be required. Perhaps, the objective of developing a perfect society may lead, as Horkheimer and Adorno in the "Dialectic of Enlightenment"

claim, to its opposite (Horkheimer / Adorno 1971).

To achieve true and lasting sustainability, fundamentally alter the relationship of the archetypal human to itself and the world. Development of a sustainable future implies the transformation of capitalism and the development of new forms of economic cooperation, as well as the end to the destruction of nature, in the interests of new forms of cohabitation between humans and the world around them. The aim is to view the natural world as something to be respected and cherished. In ancient times, a human was part and parcel of the surrounding world, and even in later centuries, such as the Christian Middle Ages, people viewed nature as God's creation and thus worthy of respect and adoration. Only in modern times, with the emergence of capitalism and colonialism, did the relationship to nature fundamentally change. Now nature is exploited in the interest of the human and only the human. Threatened by climate change and the scarcity of resources, we need a fundamental change in our relationship to nature and the world around us.

4.Education and Culture – A Frame of Reference 2030

New utopian ideas about sustainability in education began with the World Education Forum in Incheon in Korea on May 2015, during which a declaration and an action program was discussed for targeted goals from 2015-2030. This conference was attended by nearly 1500 delegates from about 130 countries. Among the participants were Secretary General of the UN Ban Ki-moon, the Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, the Prime Minister of Korea, the chairperson of the World Bank, and the Director of UNICEF. Also, represented were the UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women, UNHCR, and many NGOs from all over the world. In addition to the adoption of the Declaration, an action plan was discussed and adopted.

The Declaration of Incheon targets the development of education in the world:*"Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"*. The program is based on a "humanistic vision of education and development", which is based on fundamental human rights and human dignity, on social justice, security, cultural diversity, and mutual responsibility. Education must be seen as public good and a fundamental human right; the realization of which is necessary to foster peace and sustainable development (UNESCO 2015).

In the declaration, a program of action to develop a 12-year public school system is recommended. Excellent quality compulsory education of the primary and secondary levels should be free and of a good quality. In addition, there should be a compulsory preschool education and the expansion of vocational training. Adult literacy programs are also recommended. Education should be inclusive and equal. "Inclusive" refers not only to the inclusion of children with disabilities, but is much broader in scope and is directed against all forms of exclusion and marginalization. If all forms of exclusion are themselves excluded, equality in the realm of education is the outcome. Much remains to be done to foster the social, educational, and economic rights of women and girls. In order to promote learning and creativity in young people, the quality of education must be improved. Finally, it is important that education is not limited to official school systems. Vocational training and lifelong learning should be developed and informal means and modes of education are encouraged. At least four to six

percent of GDP, or fifteen to twenty percent of all public expenditure should be spent on education, which requires an additional twenty-five billion dollars annually.

“Education for Sustainable Development” (ESD) should use the *Global Program of Action* by UNESCO, as a follow-up program to the UN Decade (UNESCO 2014). In the goals for sustainable development (SDGs), Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is expressly mentioned as sub-target 4.7. This states “*equip all learners with the knowledge and the skills necessary for sustainable development*”. “Education for Global Citizenship” (GCE) is another program, which must be strengthened. Additional requirements include: human rights education, peace education and intercultural learning to foster tolerance and democracy (WINTERSTEINER et al., 2014.).

This vision of an inclusive, equitable, quality, and lifelong education provides the reference framework for education, which the international community has agreed upon in Incheon. Compared to earlier efforts, this development is a step forward. This is true even if one does not realize progress can be in remote locations. It, therefore, should not be assumed that these goals can be realized in the coming years. Another objection is: Is not this vision a “grand narrative,” who François Lyotard (1979), claims hides the fact that in principle these goals cannot be implemented? Instead, such a vision provides a degree of “satisfaction”. It suggests that the international community has improved upon previous efforts so the goals for a sustainable future may now be realized. The universal character of this declaration does, however, hide some difficulties which continue to plague practical work on the implementation of reforms. The development of a plan and program of action is one thing, but realization brings significant difficulties.

5. Outlook

The work of UNESCO is taking place in the midst of tension between universality and diversity. This is true for both theory and practice in the fields of culture and education. Given the emergence of the globalized world, new interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary and intercultural or transcultural research is needed. In many fields of work of UNESCO unearths innovative solutions to complex problems. In the conceptualization of the problems hitherto investigated, profound cultural differences do exist, but common ground must be found through dialogue, even if not always without conflict. In areas where cultural values greatly diverge, there are particularly large difficulties, (UNESCO 2009; GERMAN UNESCO COMMISSION 2009) therefore, the interdisciplinary and intercultural research on the anthropological foundations of education, training and socialization in UNESCO plays an important role in fostering complementary perspectives and mutual cooperation. (WULF 2013A; WULF 2014).

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