



Future Education: A New Paradigm

Federico Mayor Zaragoza

Fellow, World Academy of Art & Science;
Chairman, Foundation for a Culture of Peace, Spain

“Education for all throughout life”: This was the main conclusion of the First World Conference on Education organized by UNESCO in Jomtien, March 1990. For *all* and very importantly, *throughout life*. This became the new title of the main programme of UNESCO on Education that was called “Literacy and basic education”.

With the advent of digital technology, the World Congress was held at a moment in which, for the first time in history, the voice of “We, the peoples” was raised and listened to by the governments.

“Every human being is unique and must be able to fully exercise their distinctive faculties: to think, to imagine, to anticipate, to innovate, to create!”

It must not be forgotten that, until the end of three decades, a vast majority of human beings were born, lived and died in different square kilometres... They were silent, obedient, fearful...

Now, they can express themselves freely, they are aware of what happens worldwide and, very importantly indeed, women are progressively taking part in the decision-making processes. As Nelson Mandela told me in Pretoria, in 1996, when I was claiming that the culture of peace did not have the full support that I expected, I proclaimed that “Until now, we have had only male absolute power. Now, before long, women will become the cornerstone of the new era, because women only exceptionally utilize the force whereas men exceptionally do not.”

“Education must be progressively person-centred and values-based.”

Every human being is unique and must be able to fully exercise their distinctive faculties: to think, to imagine, to anticipate, to innovate, to create! This is the real hope: we can redress the present trends and design a new world for the times to come.

We are all diverse biologically and intellectually at every moment of life, in the course of a permanent evolutionary process, but united by the universal values of justice, freedom, equality and solidarity, which are so well enshrined in the UNESCO’s Constitution.

Therefore, education must be progressively person-centred and values-based. All human beings are equal in dignity: this is the supreme distinctiveness of humanity, as emphasized in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000), and education must make people “free and responsible”, who are the “drivers of their lives”, as defined by Professor Francisco Giner de los Ríos in 1876.

Freedom represents the most exclusive human capacity and therefore any kind of determinism, fanaticism, dogmatism, supremacism... must be completely disregarded because in all these attitudes ignorance prevails over reason.

Philosophy, the art of “thinking what nobody has thought” and the artistic disciplines, which promote artistic creativity, are the essential learning disciplines.

In 1992, I requested the President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, to chair a World Commission in order to define the main avenues of education in the XXI Century. In its report the Commission established:

- Learn to be
- Learn to know
- Learn to do
- Learn to live together

I added “learn to undertake”, because to the famous dictum of “*sapere aude*”, “dare to know”, it is necessary to add “know how to dare”, because otherwise knowledge is useless. “Dare to share”! (knowledge, experience, views, etc.) in order to take advantage, particularly now that life longevity has increased, of the immense treasure, normally unknown and unexplored, of every human life.

It is therefore very clear that the following confusions must be avoided:

- Education and professional training
- Knowledge and information
- Information and news

Reports on economic growth promoting institutions like OECD insist on the learning of abilities, technologies and professional capabilities when what really counts is *to be* fully human!

Furthermore, the immense media power results very frequently in the mix-up of information and news, as so precisely commented by Bernard Lawn, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate of 1985, it is indispensable to think in the context of the whole when the media focuses only on the part. “We must see the invisibles to realize the real extent and depth of the news... Only if we are able to see the invisible we will be able to do the impossible,” he added.

Only truly educated peoples will know when humanity faces processes of no return if *timely measures* are not adopted and how to make possible the historical transition from a culture of imposition, domination, violence and war to a culture of encounter, dialogue, conciliation, alliance and peace. *From force to word*, from “*Si vis pacem, para bellum*” to “*Si vis pacem, para verbum*”!

There are some reference documents that I consider worthy of mentioning here:

- The UN Charter (1945)
- The Constitution of UNESCO (1945)
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- The World Plan of Action on Education for Human Rights and Democracy (Montreal, 1993)
- The Declaration on a Culture of Peace and Religions (Barcelona, 1994; Lille, 2009).
- The Declaration on Tolerance (UNESCO General Conference, 1995)
- The Declaration of the General Assembly of United Nations on “The Culture of Peace and Non-violence of the Children of the World” (1998). (Decade 2001-2010).
- The Declaration and Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace (General Assembly of United Nations, 1999).
- The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000).
- The Earth Charter (2000).

With this guidance, the five priorities of the UN could be implemented:

- *food*
- *water*
- *health*
- *environment*
- *education*

Regretfully, neoliberalistic policies prompted by the Republican Party of the United States have always been against democratic multilateralism, and at the end of the “Cold War” in the 80s of the last century, the party substituted the United Nations by the plutocratic groups (G6, G7, G8...G20) for worldwide governance and, even worse, ethical values by the market ones.

“[We need] to rebuild the United Nations System from scratch, which is absolutely indispensable to ensure the rapid and full realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)”.

The global situation today, with global threats potentially irreversible, requires the timely adoption of measures to address the present challenges.

The transition from an economy of speculation, production delocalisation and war (more than 4 billion dollars per day invested in armament and military expenditures while thousands of persons, most of them children from 1 to 5 years old, die of hunger and extreme poverty) to a knowledge-based economy for a global human and sustainable development is particularly important. But this radical and indispensable change will not come from today’s modalities of governance, which are market-dependent.

Now is the time of “We, the peoples”. Peoples who know and are ready to raise their voices. Educated peoples able *to participate...* free and responsible, the driving force for the transformation so urgently required.

We need to become citizens of the world, because the threats we face are global in nature. Citizens need to be fully conscious of their crucial role to act in such a way that the main responsibilities towards humankind are fully accomplished; to promote evolution and to avoid revolution; to behave in order to implement a new concept of security, not only in territories and frontiers but to create an atmosphere of a dignified life for those peoples living in less secure territories, through an important “disarmament for development”; to take advantage of a “new concept of work” and to redefine labour conditions; to rebuild the United Nations System from scratch, which is absolutely indispensable to ensure the rapid and full realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and Climate Change measures.... which will eventually lead to a culture of peace and non-violence worldwide.

*“Education
has to reinvent
the future.”*

The scientific, academic, artistic, intellectual communities at large, must be at the forefront of world mobilization in this respect. Education has to pave the way for a new era. Education has to reinvent the future: this is a truly relevant intergenerational duty.

Author Contact Information

Email: repcion@fund-culturadepaz.org