

Draft

A Human Education in the Third Millennium

- A Declaration

Background

This text was developed within the framework of the international initiative "Human Education in the 3rd Millennium", initially by a group of scholars and thinkers of education from more than 30 countries and shared subsequently with a broader circle of colleagues from all continents.

In the face of common threats across an interdependent world, the Earth and society, education needs to be rethought, and we educators feel a responsibility, both collectively and individually, to develop a new conception of education for the 3rd Millennium. Education needs to develop a sense of respect, solidarity and care among all people, and for all life. We believe that a transformed set of educational institutions, curricula and methodologies could help in meeting the challenges of our era.

We hope that this Declaration will both assist educational debate and encourage people to act in the interests of reinventing and advancing education, wherever this may take place.

Concerns

We identify the following concerns:

1. Much education has contributed to a failure to respond adequately to the climate and ecological crisis and to enable students to understand that humanity is destroying other species, nature and, in the process, making the Earth uninhabitable;
2. Political illiteracy and a lack of understanding about the meaning of 'democracy', leads to a threat to democratic principles and institutions and rise of autocracy in many societies;
3. Education systems often do not exhibit clear value positions that oppose hatred of others, violence, nationalism and wars, and sometimes even promote them;
4. The 'crisis in the humanities' in education, particularly in universities, resulting from an undue focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM);
5. The current shaping of education has developed largely under the influence of economic forces which reduce human to 'homo economicus,' undervaluing and neglecting other human dimensions, especially relationships, ethics and caring. This results in a positioning of education as seemingly 'neutral' and 'apolitical,' divorced from its crucial role in developing human beings and civically-minded community builders;
6. Education policies throughout the world are imbued with managerialist and state-sponsored ideologies, which deprive educators of professional and academic autonomy, reduce teachers and students to economic units who primarily produce and consume. The impact of this is evident in a privilege of the concept of 'learning' over 'education', proceduralism, metrics-driven approaches, technocratic efficiencies, undue accountability structures, performance management, over-testing regimes, and commercialization;
7. The rise of populism which steers peoples into conspiracy theories, xenophobia and chauvinistic sentiments towards other peoples, exclusion and cleavages in society;
8. The failure to address fundamental human values, with education predominantly being grounded in instrumental purposes, along with a problem of agreeing ethical base in a world of contestability;

9. Education systems are not sufficiently preparing people to question the world but function to produce managed subjects;
10. Education reflects a globalized culture, which takes its bearing from the Enlightenment, valuing rationalism and scientific reason originally, and more recently economic reason as the main driver of progress. Education turns out to be unduly limited to an instrumental rationality and too present-centred, but it also needs the values of the Global South, which are more concerned with community, feelings, and meanings inspired by inter-connections between humanity and the Earth.
11. This third millennium presents a situation that includes global interconnectivity across major human and non-human ecosystems, life with radical uncertainty, mega-states and state terrorism, surveillance by states and others, global crises (pandemics, energy, climate, cyber warfare), a new awareness of the Earth as such; in such a world, education and its aims need fundamentally to be reconsidered.

This set of concerns prompts the following declaration:

Considerations

I. The human being, society, world and the aims of education

1. There is no education without an implicit or explicit concept of the human being.
2. A significant goal of education is to assist each person to discover what she or he is and is capable of, in order to learn how to exercise his or her freedom and how to engage with oneself, others, and the world with which a person is interconnected. In doing so, students become aware of universal features and capacities that all humans share, especially humaneness, as well as their individual evolving identity.
3. The task today is not only to confirm what we are but also to confront what we are not and reveal multiple modes of manipulation (political, economic, informational, cultural, biopolitical) that shape our identity. The task of education is to help realize the importance of such questions as: ‘What does it mean to be human?’ and ‘What kind of humanity are we developing?’ and continue keeping these questions alive since the potential of human beings is inexhaustible.
4. Education now needs to engage with the challenges of a ‘post-human’ era which is likely to bring radical shifts in the concept of a human being, largely due to the continuously developing internet, the 4IR (fourth industrial revolution), cyber technologies, and social media. Thus, today it is especially important to recognize and defend human identity as distinct from machines and artificial intelligence. They are human creations and tools, but it remains for a person to make decisions and ethical choices. Human identity needs to be placed in the context of a renewed relationship with all other living beings on this Earth so that humans learn not to exploit but to integrate with the planet.
5. To be human also implies searching *for what* it means to be human, what people need, desire and strive to achieve. This has been referred to as *eudaimonia* or human flourishing and meaningfulness. Educational ideals, based on being a subject with agency, associated with self-determination, personal autonomy, empathy, care, are essential for this pursuit.
6. One of the aims of general education, for all its largely secular nature, is to recognize and engage with the human need for an inner life, particularly the ethical and spiritual dimensions associated with self-relatedness, self-transformation and self-transcendence, which are uniquely human and go beyond functionalism and instrumentalism.

7. Education should present to students the world as a living entity, full of challenges but also possibilities, and to enable them to see connections with it, their place in it and human responsibilities towards it.
8. Education is a social institution aimed at initiating students into a common world, contributing to the implementation of social justice, and this is a special obligation of the state and educators towards the most vulnerable such as ethnic and racial groups, women and girls, migrants and the poor. Education is needed for every person and society as a whole. Therefore, since education is a shared responsibility, civic society, teacher unions, and other educational organizations should play their part in shaping the aims of education.
9. Instead of education that largely prepares students to enter the labor market as human capital and labor resources and socializes them to the existing social and political systems, relationships between education, society, and the state should evolve within a paradigm of human growth and the development of society.
10. Education is social by its nature and impact. Therefore, its essential aim is the all-round maturing of students as members of society. This should be understood as enabling them to become responsible people participating in public policy life with, and as equals to, policy makers.
11. Educational systems are conditioned by government and state policy but are, in fact, wider in scope and time frame. Education has a mission of raising future generations, which implies, on the one hand, the transfer and mastery of past collective experience, and on the other hand, a change for the better, that is, for the desired imaginary future. Thus, education is not about reproducing what exists but about learning to be consciously skeptical of how the world is and what it is taken to be, which calls for criticality to be a strong part of education, as well as the pursuit of human-oriented ideals.
12. Higher education has the special aims of helping society to address complex matters and contesting taken-for-granted frameworks.
13. The world faces the loss of an environment capable of sustaining human life. Accordingly, the task of cultivating humanity concerned for the future of planet Earth and capable of collective mobilization comes to the fore. It follows that, the development of shared local and global responsibility towards the totality of planet Earth becomes one of the main goals in education.
14. One of the main threats to the existence of humanity is violence. Unless human beings learn to live together, peacefully and cooperatively in a world of difference, violence will continue. Thus, one educational goal is to examine how antipathies between individuals and groups and peoples arise and to learn how to live and to advocate for peace and understanding amidst diversity and contradiction.
15. For a person to be educated, educational aims related to knowing must include not only a critical capacity and a disposition to scientific objective accounts of the world, but also an understanding of a complex subjective picture of human relations, desires, feelings and thinking.

Thus, a salient goal of education includes the growth not just of acquired knowledge and skills, but also, and primarily the growth of the student's personality. And this requires a holistic growth, extending to care and concern for society and the world, as well as a deepening of experience.

The aims of education are to prepare students to be able continually form themselves (self-regulation and self-organization), to live peacefully with others (non-violence), and to be disposed to take responsibility for their society and the world (an ethics of responsibility); and exercise this responsibility through professional qualities, social and civil dispositions, along with a readiness collectively to solve problems and resolve conflicts.

II. Designing education

Principles

Education for the third millennium requires transformations, based on human-oriented principles. Educators should:

1. Educate in accordance with the best of humanity, advancing our ability to be with others (including all the entities in the natural world) and with ourselves and to live a meaningful human life. This entails:
 - Teaching what it means to be a human being and about human diversity through reasoned inquiry; and going beyond rational knowledge and skills so as to constitute a ‘whole human’ education. This must include bodily awareness, desires, experiences, feelings, intuitions, creativity, relationships, values, and the human ability to accept and take on responsibility.
 - Restoring humanities to a central place, in particular critical social sciences. Education should not adopt models of machines and operating systems, instead, 'students should acquire a meaningful and questioning attitude towards technology as such. Education should be a process that is essentially *humane*;
 - Helping students to believe in the worth and potential of their unique life and in the world’s need for them; reveal the deep interdependence of the human condition with the totality of the world; providing education for an ‘inner life’ that includes students’ self-awareness, values, emotional maturity, empathy and morality, as well as the ability to discover and treasure meanings; and the cultivation of courage in the face of difficulties, suffering and death;
 - Developing the ability to love something and someone in the world along with friendliness and respect for others;
2. Encourage active agency among students so as to empower them, and help them find themselves in activities, refrain as much as possible public rankings, which demoralize children in their studies, especially in the early years of their formation;
3. Educate for a global human society and for the entire Earth, which requires a vision of interdependence with other species and the natural environment, an ethic of collective responsibility and the embracing of wisdom from diverse traditions that are harmonious with nature;
4. Help to reduce violence and hostility and teach peaceful co-existence of individuals and peoples based on commonality and interconnectedness with others;
5. Produce critical and responsible citizens who exhibit the best aspects of democratic norms and outlook, teach democracy as a way of life and thought, develop criticality in its fullest sense and not just ‘critical thinking skills’, encouraging students to question the status quo, to deliberate and contest values, and subject widely circulating pictures of the world to critical scrutiny;
6. Enable students to distinguish between information and practical wisdom, to discover personal meanings, to differentiate the important from unimportant, to value truthfulness and have the courage to stand up for it;
7. Create dialogic and cooperative spaces, cultivate searching, questioning, curiosity and thinking beyond what is taken for granted, together with reflexivity, self-questioning, openness and appreciation of difference;
8. Cultivate not only the ascent of children to the values of the adult world, but also the ascent of adults to the values of childhood, promote intergenerational dialogue.

Institutional dimension

9. The financing of schools and universities should be borne largely by the state, overseen by democratically accountable bodies that are accountable to the interests of teachers, students, families and communities.
10. We need educational institutions that pursue not instrumental but meaningful goals and approaches and give priority to the human dimension.
11. Teachers form a significant part of educational institutions, since they can embody a model of what it is to be human and inspire students in that way. Public education policies should promote teachers' calling and dedication to their mission, since a heightened professionalism is necessary in fulfilling such a demanding task. Teacher education, as the development of a mode of professional being, should encourage imagination, reflection, openness, critical pedagogical thinking, and dialogue, as well as the search for personal meanings and values.
12. Teachers require respect, trust, adequate payment, peace, and security in their work environment. Management should adopt greater transparency, mutuality, nurturing and encouragement to better ensure that their teachers can flourish. Teachers and administrators should be accountable to each other.
13. Educational policy should recognize and reduce the overwhelming workload and demands that many accountability frameworks place upon educators. Moreover, educational policy should include educators' own voices in the evolution of those frameworks.
14. The ideal of autonomy in education can be embodied only through autonomous teachers being accorded professional freedoms in autonomous, democratically managed institutions.
15. Today, ideas of de-schooling and forms of non-school education are gaining momentum. Yet schooling remains important as a public system ensuring universal access to education, as well as a channel for socialization.
16. Schools, universities and teachers are each unique and must be valued as such, and not judged just by their ratings or by some arbitrary quantitative system.

The relational dimension of teachers, students, and others

17. The right of children and young people to be understood as unique, reflective, explorational and emotional beings, to be respected for their choices and identities, the voice of students need be systematically and actively included in dialogues about education and society;
18. Respect for teachers' agency, and attention being given to the intrinsic motivation of all adults who bear responsibility for the education of children, without subjecting them to undue management disciplines;
19. A collaborative, dialogical, non-hierarchical interpersonal teaching-learning environment, free from any form of coercion and constraint;
20. Empathy and appreciation of each other as a necessary framing for pedagogical practice including a recognition of the emotions of students and teachers;
21. Caring for students in their development with due attention to the challenges that students face, especially with regard to what is happening in society.

Educational activity

22. A pedagogy of change implying transformative learning and a pedagogy of self-transcendence, as the educational process implies transformation for students through overcoming one's own limitations;

23. An awareness pedagogy, which is a process of perceiving one's own milieu and oneself, in concentration, self-awareness, self-regulation and self-actualization;
24. A pedagogy of responsibility aimed at the discovery and exploration by students of their own freedom and role in the world;
25. An activity-based education and an experiential pedagogy, founded on the students' activities and their experiences within and, often, outside formal arrangements;
26. A pedagogy, that enables students to identify tensions and contradictions in a complex world and learn from conflicting situations and ideas to live purposefully amid contradictions. The ability to struggle is significant in society in relation to unequal and exploitative practices, as well as recognizing and confronting one's own prejudices and predispositions;
27. A meaning-making pedagogy helping students discover meanings and create a system of personally and socially grounded meanings;
28. A diversity pedagogy, meeting the diversity of students, dialogical in nature, using not just 'knowledge' but 'knowledges' plural and not one, but many pedagogical and assessment models;
29. The use of extracurricular and informal learning in study programs to enrich the educational experience;
30. A pedagogy of cooperative learning and shared assessments; learning, with teachers and students exploring together as co-learners, and with teachers maintaining an openness to learning from students, to diverse ways of thinking and being;
31. Teaching young people how to interpret data, understand the function of information algorithms;
32. Using images to develop students' imaginations and teaching them how to deal with images not only as information but as a cultural reality, and how to overcome the bewitching qualities of images.

Primary level of education

Preschool and primary school education should

33. Create a care and nest for the growth of the child, especially in terms of the child's personality;
34. Rely on, and cultivate further, the natural openness of children, their inclination to responsiveness, sympathy, caring, and closeness to nature;
35. Model human norms in relation to people, themselves, nature and living beings;
36. Encourage children to create, explore and discover, while allowing them to make mistakes.

Secondary level of education

Schooling/ Educators should

37. Assist the most vulnerable groups in their learning trajectories and in their social advancement, in overcoming the inequities they face;
38. Push the balance of the formal and hidden curriculum from skills training and preparation for work more towards personal development, citizenship education;
39. The examination system should primarily serve educational purposes and aid students' full development;

40. Broaden the approach to current problems under discussion from a national perspective to an international perspective and a concern for the whole natural and social world;
41. Encourage students to value public good and human rights, and inculcate an engagement with democratic procedures such as elections;
42. In the modern information society, teach students to inquire, search for meaning and perceive things as interconnected, not least as to their interconnections with the students themselves;
43. Respect ethnic and religious diversity, including atheist beliefs.

Further Education

Should

44. Recognise the dignity of all forms of work and challenge the false dichotomy between intellectual, experiential and practical learning;
45. Ensure that students know and appreciate the intellectual, social, ethical dimensions of vocational skills, that they master;
46. Enable students to think critically in the frames of their vocational learning;
47. Help students recognize personal and public meanings in their work and practices;
48. Provide all students with the opportunity to go on to pursue higher education should they wish to do so.

Tertiary level of education

Higher education should:

49. Evolve a higher education ethic that is independent both of geo-politics and the large corporations, and which is oriented to the fate of societies, humanity, other species and the whole Earth;
50. Educate in students not an indifference, born of an interest in objectivity, but a position of responsibility for their lives and the life of society;
51. Link each study programme to the wider world and so develop students' understandings such that, as graduates, they will be well-placed to help society address complex matters;
52. Adopt curricula and research activities that are organized around transdisciplinarity, which would start from the overarching claims of the world itself;
53. Develop the academic community with its values, its concerns for freedom (both in itself and across society) and capacities for collective decision-making even in a context of differing views.

Adult and Community Education

Should

54. Be readily available and accessible to all adults throughout their lives;
55. Expand the sphere of relations with and personal involvement in society, particularly regarding civic affairs;
56. Include cultural and political learning, as well as discussions on philosophical, psychological, scientific, and cultural basis, to help adults clarify the meaning of their lives;

57. Create opportunities for intergenerational learning, and develop in adults responsibility for the younger generations, society and the world, not least in providing spaces for adult themselves to become educators;
58. Develop the capacities of civil society organisations in enhancing community wellbeing and democracy;
59. Promote collective concern with regard to global problems and community participation in their solutions.

We call on education policy makers to adopt these educational values, aims and ideals and we call on educationists to devise new imaginative teaching approaches that bring them to life so as to enable students to develop their potential as full human beings in a challenging world. We believe that everyone in education should be involved in this creative process of transforming education for the third millennium.