

Project description

Draft project

“Human Education in the 3-rd millennium”

Background

This Project began with several philosophers of education from different countries coming together, who shared common concerns regarding some dehumanizing trends in educational policies and practices. In particular we have observed that accompanying the increasing emphasis on global economic competitiveness there is a significant growth of commercial and technicist approaches to education and a dilution of humanizing values. The significance of which have been discussed previously in the Faure et al. (1972) report to UNESCO titled Learning to Be, and to a lesser degree the Delors (1998) report titled Learning: The Treasure Within. Today these trends are observed to be increasing globally and, as far as we understand, they occur under the influence of the post-industrial technocratic-information scenario.

The main purpose of this particular project that we propose is to consolidate, at the international level, the efforts of thinkers on education and educationists concerned with the current state of education in order to counter the negative impacts on human flourishing. We believe that a renewal of educational values can be developed through a critical rethinking of human education and its long-term consequences, and by developing constructive ideas and proposals that are most relevant for a globalized world. Currently, our group has embarked on taking the first steps: enlisting several colleagues and organizations from a variety of countries. Typically, many educational reforms and policies have been initiated in the West. However, since we are pursuing a different emphasis in policies, one that promotes human values in education, we have the vision that the crucial events of this international project should take place in a non-western part of the world (not in the USA or Europe in particular), and we see India as the right place for this. We believe that the views of the Dalai Lama who is the Nobel Peace Prize laureate and the author of books proclaiming humanistic positions beyond religion epitomizes a great deal of what our project values. He has spoken and written about education as a priority issue in his lectures and books and collaborated with educators over the past 20 years, especially advocating the idea of secular ethics in modern education. He declares: “My hope and wish is that one day, formal education will pay attention to what I call ‘education of the heart.’ Just as we take for granted the need to acquire proficiency in the basic academic subjects, I am hopeful that a time will come when we can take it for granted that children will learn, as part of the curriculum, the indispensability of inner values: love, compassion, justice, and forgiveness.” Due to his world-renowned reputation we consider that his support for our project could be very welcomed, and therefore we contacted him and presented the idea of our project to him. After discussion, HH the Dalai Lama approved of the Project and in addition, has graciously accepted our invitation to participate in it.

Current Vision of the Project Goals and Strategy The current vision of the project is the following: Examination and elucidation of human nature, of the values most pertinent for human flourishing as well as of the modern trends which prevent and contradict it, are necessarily philosophical in nature. This holds true for the variety of inquiries that occur across cultures which seek deeper understandings in contemporary education in all its forms and aims. We therefore recognise that philosophy of education must play a significant role in educational renewal, and that it must occur in close cooperation with educationists. In particular, we see the need to emphasize the problem defined by philosophers and social science scholars as a neoliberal influence on educational policies. While theoretically couched in terms such as ‘freedom’ of the market, neoliberalism has morphed into monopoly capitalism (Harvey 2007) producing consequences which are perceived by some as causing ‘war’ on both education (Giroux 2014) and on democracy (Chomsky 1999; Deetz 1992; Wolin 2018), where populations are being controlled through illusions (Chomsky 1989; Dinan & Miller 2007) rather than being emancipated through education. We believe, that philosophers of education and educationists should

jointly take action to reach educational policy makers in order to change the current educational paradigm, also taking into account different traditions from different parts of the World. Therefore, we aim at the globally relevant Declaration on Education, which criticizes those contemporary trends that pose a danger to humanity by dismissing the necessary approach to education based on such values as love, solidarity, care, justice, cooperation, equality and diversity.

Implementation The 1st stage. The starting point for achieving this goal will be an Initial Roundtable conference. This will involve a meeting with a small group of thinkers, including the Dalai Lama, for two days in Dharamsala, India. This meeting will help to identify and clearly articulate the main aspects of the significantly challenging problems of our time, and establish directions that need to be developed further during the 2nd stage. The 2nd stage. The second step, as indicated above, will involve a large conference that combines a forum of philosophers, scholars and politicians of education and a workshop with practitioners on all levels and forms of education in different contexts. The conference will be scheduled for 5-7 days. Its program will include: 1) discussion of working papers on various relevant problems, which should provide the key materials for position papers; 2) demonstration of the implementation of different pedagogical ideas during practitioners' workshops, as well as their discussion and formulation of the main problems and messages for the Declaration; 3) deliberations on the main provisions of the Declaration; 4) decisions on the forms of intervention this Declaration seeks to make for improving the educational experiences globally in terms of policy and practice in different institutions, etc. This will include identifying the challenges with the 'translation' of such interventions on a global scale given the current assembly work shaping national education systems and other non-formal and informal settings: education systems operate within geo-political contexts that are contingent on specific regulatory regimes, laws, political settlements and institutional orders.

The 3rd stage. The conference should lay the ground for the collective decision to convene an international meeting of thinkers and politicians of education to elaborate and adopt the Declaration on Human Education in the 3-rd millennium and provide a handbook for educators who are willing to engage in this new educational paradigm.

Venue We are planning all events of the project to take place in India, because India is the birthplace of great knowledge of human nature and knowledge of the possibilities and methods of moral, mental and spiritual development. Also it is particularly important that India is the country with the second highest population in the world, where the problems of developing countries can be found in all their diversity, and at the same time it is a rapidly progressing country following the democratic path of development.

Dates Tentative dates – 2019-2021. The 1st stage – beginning of 2019. The 2nd stage – beginning of 2020. The 3rd stage – 2020-2021.

Current tasks and prospects At the moment, we consider, as the main tasks, steps • to grow the initiative group, which means increase in the moral support of colleagues - from individuals and organizations from different countries (NGOs and Civic Bodies can help in knowing what kind of efforts are taking place at the ground level related to educational reforms, what problems educators face and what potential, creative strengths they possess); • to make a list of key participants of the Initial Roundtable Conference; • to start the preparation of the Initial Roundtable Conference. Regarding the 1st stage of the project we have already found financial support. As for the 2nd stage, which will occur on a larger scale, we understand that when we receive the moral support of many participants from colleagues and relevant organizations (NGOs, charities and public or private organizations in the field of education) and when we develop in a collegial discussion the draft program of the Forum, then we will seek financial support from major international funds and / or organizations.

Preliminary draft World Forum “Human Education in the 3-rd Millennium”

• All around the world, education is widely proclaimed to be the central issue for society. But even in those countries, where education gets real increased attention and financial support along with control, it matters what is meant by “education” and what forces and directions it serves. Today, as scientific and technological

progress are increasing exponentially, and interdependence of the globalized world is become further entrenched, one of the main contributing factors to current global problems (e.g. poverty, terrorism, pollution, climate change, human trafficking, and the displacement of populations) is not the lack of knowledge or capabilities. Rather it is the nature of people whose 'hearts' have not been educated. Thus the hidden curriculum of neoliberal education systems, for example, promotes short-term competitive and dry 'economic' mentality, that is rationally selfish and narrow minded, should be understood as now posing a great danger for humanity. • There is a need to discuss education in the modern world, in the face of many problems. To inquire into the nature of these problems in more detail, and to create appropriate reforms for education to address these, requires engaging with a broad range of perspectives from across the globe, including West and East and the often overlooked South, escaping an approach of standardization, but bearing in mind the different historical and theoretical perspectives and contexts of different traditions in which education practices have been thought about and developed. • Current national education systems are typically shaped by capitalistic market values, which in turn, lead to exasperating alienation, poverty, social injustice and exclusion across the globe. Philosophers, sociologists, and other specialists in education try to comprehend these processes and work out ideas and suggest responses. Hence, the main foundation of the proposed Forum will be the philosophy of education in order to clarify the problems of education and educational policies, and to clearly articulate and philosophically justify possible solutions to these problems. • Rapid global changes affect the identity of being humans (i.e. who human beings are and how we ought to live) and therefore, we must constantly raise questions concerning the kind of world we are building together. Through such philosophical inquiry we will be seeking to establish common understandings of what are the proper human dimensions, especially in terms of posthuman perspectives. • It is essential to achieve a state in which the values which are important for human flourishing, however they are identified and expressed in local contexts, with the differences in terms of gender, race, and social strata, are emphasized in policies and practices of education. • The specific content of the Forum (topics of sections, workshops) will be determined, starting from the Initial roundtable conference. • The range of participants should include philosophers, scholars, politicians of education, teachers, faculties, educational NGO's members, representing all continents, diverse cultural regions, many countries, different philosophical and scientific directions, various pedagogical movements.

Topics for the Initial Roundtable Conference "Human Education in the 3-rd Millennium" Policy • Educational reforms: what modern educational policy really means? • Market, network and state models of education (What are the main differences between market, business and education domains, between market values and education values?) • Dangerous trends (How contemporary dangerous trends for humanity are met by education? or - How education may lead to threats and risks to existing dominant life forms?) • To what degree is education a shared and global responsibility? • Social world (Which world do we build by today's education?) Democracy • Why is public participation in matters of education important? • The role of technocratic cultures and elites (education governance increasingly monopolized by knowledge brokers and consultants drawn from the technical-managerial middle classes) • Identification and acknowledgement of the inherent tension between democracy and neoliberalism. • How to bring education matters to a wider, non-technical audience or group of stakeholders so that citizens can participate directly in matters of public interest? • Interface between education and social responsibility. How to develop civil society initiatives through education? How to empower young people and adults to be as critically engaged citizens? • Autonomy of the educational system (especially, educational schooling system and universities) How realistic is it? To what degree is it essential? Pedagogy • What might a humanizing education look like? • Traditional understandings of education. Different perspectives then and now around how we understand human education in the different traditions: North and South, East and West. • Education as experimental: self-transformation, self-development, self-formation. • Agonistic pedagogy and other approaches. • New educational forms of life other than formal schooling and other educational institutions, not dominated by chronological order, performativity or efficiency. The aims and means of various forms of education as practiced throughout history and in various contexts, will be discussed and critically evaluated. Human identity • Is there a need to remember or to discover human identity, human nature as the basis of human education? • Inner values (Why and how inner values: love, compassion, justice, cooperation and solidarity could or should be part of the curriculum in education?) •

Modern moral education (What are the limits of moral education?) • Human identities, diversity (How the right for diversity is possible today in globalized standardized education? How education should problematize, discuss and meet gender diversity, religious diversity?) • Valuing peace (Does education teach through hidden curriculum, etc. peace or warlike attitudes, violence and its base, which are injustice, exclusion, etc.?) • Posthuman perspectives (Technology as a problem for education: how the youth are educated to live a technological life, to be parts of data networks? What does posthuman future introduce into today's education?)

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