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LEARNING: THE TREASURE WITHIN

Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century

HIGHLIGHTS

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UNESCO

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Highlights

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Education: the necessary Utopia

In confronting the many challenges that the future holds in store, humankind sees in education an indispensable asset in its attempt to attain the ideals of peace, freedom and social justice. As it concludes its work, the Commission affirms its belief that education has a fundamental role to play in personal and social development. The Commission does not see education as a miracle cure or a magic formula opening the door to a world in which all ideals will be attained, but as one of the principal means available to foster a deeper and more harmonious form of human development and thereby to reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war.

At a time when educational policies are being sharply criticized or pushed – for economic and financial reasons – down to the bottom of the agenda, the Commission wishes to share this conviction with the widest possible audience, through its analyses, discussions and recommendations.

Does the point need to be emphasized? The Commission was thinking principally about the children and young people who will take over from today's generation of adults, the latter being all too inclined to concentrate on their own problems. Education is also

an expression of affection for children and young people, whom we need to welcome into society, unreservedly offering them the place that is theirs by right therein – a place in the education system, to be sure, but also in the family, the local community and the nation. This elementary duty needs to be constantly brought to mind, so that greater attention is paid to it, even when choosing between political, economic and financial options. In the words of a poet: 'The Child is father of the Man'.

Our century has been as much one of sound and fury as of economic and social progress – progress that in any case has not been equally shared. At the dawn of a new century the prospect of which evokes both anguish and hope, it is essential that all people with a sense of responsibility turn their attention to both the aims and the means of education. It is the view of the Commission that, while education is an ongoing process of improving knowledge and skills, it is also – perhaps primarily – an exceptional means of bringing about personal development and building relationships among individuals, groups and nations.

This view was explicitly adopted by the members of the Commission when they accepted their mandate. They wished moreover, by the arguments they adduced, to stress the pivotal role of UNESCO, a role that stems directly from the ideas on which UNESCO was founded, based upon the hope for a world that is a better place to live in, where people will have learned to respect the rights of women and men, to show mutual understanding, and to use advances in knowledge to foster human development rather than to create further distinctions between people.

Our Commission had the perhaps impossible task of overcoming the obstacles presented by the extraordinary diversity of situations in the world and trying to arrive at analyses that are universally valid and conclusions acceptable to everyone.

Nevertheless, the Commission did its best to project its thinking on to a future dominated by globalization, to choose those questions that everyone is asking and to lay down some

guidelines that can be applied both within national contexts and on a worldwide scale.

Looking ahead

Some remarkable scientific discoveries and breakthroughs have been made during the last twenty-five years. Many countries have emerged from underdevelopment, and standards of living have continued to rise, albeit at rates differing considerably from country to country. Despite this, the prevailing mood of disenchantment forms a sharp contrast with the hopes born in the years just after the Second World War.

It may therefore be said that, in economic and social terms, progress has brought with it disillusionment. This is evident in rising unemployment and in the exclusion of growing numbers of people in the rich countries. It is underscored by the continuing inequalities in development throughout the world.[1] While humankind is increasingly aware of the threats facing its natural environment, the resources needed to put matters right have not yet been allocated, despite a series of international meetings, such as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and despite the serious warnings of natural disasters or major industrial accidents. The truth is that all-out economic growth can no longer be viewed as the ideal way of reconciling material progress with equity, respect for the human condition and respect for the natural assets that we have a duty to hand on in good condition to future generations.

We have by no means grasped all the implications of this as regards both the ends and means of sustainable development and new forms of international co-operation. This issue will constitute one of the major intellectual and political challenges of the next century.

That should not, however, cause the developing countries to disregard the classic forces driving growth, in particular as regards their need to enter the world of science and technology, with all this implies in terms of cultural adaptation and the modernization of mentalities.

Those who believed that the end of the Cold War held out the

1. According to UNCTAD studies, average income in the least-developed countries (560 million inhabitants) is falling. The estimated figure is $300 a year per inhabitant as against $906 for developing countries and $21,598 for the industrialized countries.

prospect of a better and more peaceful world have another reason for disenchantment and disillusionment. It is simply not an adequate consolation or excuse to repeat that history is tragic; that is something everyone knows or should know. Although the death toll in the last world war was 50 million, we must also remember that since 1945 some 20 million people have died in around 150 wars, both before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It hardly matters whether these are new risks or old risks. Tensions smoulder and then flare up between nations and ethnic groups, or as a result of a build-up of social and economic injustices. Against a background of growing interdependence among peoples and the globalization of problems, decision-makers have a duty to assess these risks and take action to ward them off.

But how can we learn to live together in the 'global village' if we cannot manage to live together in the communities to which we naturally belong – the nation, the region, the city, the village, the neighbourhood? Do we want to make a contribution to public life and can we do so? That question is central to democracy. The will to participate, it should be remembered, must come from each person's sense of responsibility; but whereas democracy has conquered new territory in lands formerly in the grip of totalitarianism and despotic rule, it is showing signs of languishing in countries which have had democratic institutions for many decades, as if there were a constant need for new beginnings and as if everything has to be renewed or reinvented.

How could these great challenges not be a cause for concern in educational policy-making? How could the Commission fail to highlight the ways in which educational policies can help to create a better world, by contributing to sustainable human development, mutual understanding among peoples and a renewal of practical democracy?

Tensions to be overcome

To this end, we have to confront, the better to overcome them, the main tensions that, although they are not new, will be

central to the problems of the twenty-first century, namely:

- The tension between the global and the local: people need gradually to become world citizens without losing their roots and while continuing to play an active part in the life of their nation and their local community.
- The tension between the universal and the individual: culture is steadily being globalized, but as yet only partially. We cannot ignore the promises of globalization nor its risks, not the least of which is the risk of forgetting the unique character of individual human beings; it is for them to choose their own future and achieve their full potential within the carefully tended wealth of their traditions and their own cultures which, unless we are careful, can be endangered by contemporary developments.
- The tension between tradition and modernity, which is part of the same problem: how is it possible to adapt to change without turning one's back on the past, how can autonomy be acquired in complementarity with the free development of others and how can scientific progress be assimilated? This is the spirit in which the challenges of the new information technologies must be met.
- The tension between long-term and short-term considerations: this has always existed but today it is sustained by the predominance of the ephemeral and the instantaneous, in a world where an over-abundance of transient information and emotions continually keeps the spotlight on immediate problems. Public opinion cries out for quick answers and ready solutions, whereas many problems call for a patient, concerted, negotiated strategy of reform. This is precisely the case where education policies are concerned.
- The tension between, on the one hand, the need for competition, and on the other, the concern for equality of opportunity: this is a classic issue, which has been facing both economic and social policy-makers and educational policy-makers since the beginning of the century. Solutions have sometimes been proposed but they have never stood the test of time. Today, the Commission ventures to claim that the pressures of competition have caused many of

those in positions of authority to lose sight of their mission, which is to give each human being the means to take full advantage of every opportunity. This has led us, within the terms of reference of the report, to rethink and update the concept of lifelong education so as to reconcile three forces: competition, which provides incentives; co-operation, which gives strength; and solidarity, which unites.

- The tension between the extraordinary expansion of knowledge and human beings' capacity to assimilate it: the Commission was unable to resist the temptation to add some new subjects for study, such as self-knowledge, ways to ensure physical and psychological well-being or ways to an improved understanding of the natural environment and to preserving it better. Since there is already increasing pressure on curricula, any clear-sighted reform strategy must involve making choices, providing always that the essential features of a basic education that teaches pupils how to improve their lives through knowledge, through experiment and through the development of their own personal cultures are preserved.
- Lastly – another perennial factor – the tension between the spiritual and the material: often without realizing it, the world has a longing, often unexpressed, for an ideal and for values that we shall term 'moral'. It is thus education's noble task to encourage each and every one, acting in accordance with their traditions and convictions and paying full respect to pluralism, to lift their minds and spirits to the plane of the universal and, in some measure, to transcend themselves. It is no exaggeration on the Commission's part to say that the survival of humanity depends thereon.

Designing and building our common future

People today have a dizzying feeling of being torn between a globalization whose manifestations they can see and sometimes have to endure, and their search for roots, reference points and a sense of belonging.

Education has to face up to this problem now more than ever as a world society struggles painfully to be born: education is at the heart of both personal and community development; its mission is to enable each of us, without exception, to develop all our talents to the full and to realize our creative potential, including responsibility for our own lives and achievement of our personal aims.

This aim transcends all others. Its achievement, though long and difficult, will be an essential contribution to the search for a more just world, a better world to live in. The Commission wishes to stress this point strongly, at a time when some are being assailed by serious doubts as to the opportunities opened up by education.

It is true that many other problems have to be solved, and we shall come back to them, but this report has been prepared at a time when, faced with so many misfortunes caused by war, crime and under-development, humankind is apparently hesitating between continuing headlong along the same path and resignation. Let us offer people another way.

There is, therefore, every reason to place renewed emphasis on the moral and cultural dimensions of education, enabling each person to grasp the individuality of other people and to understand the world's erratic progression towards a certain unity; but this process must begin with self-understanding through an inner voyage whose milestones are knowledge, meditation and the practice of self-criticism.

This message should guide educational thinking, in conjunction with the establishment of wider and more far-reaching forms of international co-operation which will be discussed below.

Seen in this context, everything falls into place, whether it be the requirements of science and technology, knowledge of self and of the environment, or the development of skills enabling each person to function effectively in a family, as a citizen or as a productive member of society.

This all goes to show that the Commission in no way undervalues the central role of brainpower and innovation, the

transition to a knowledge-driven society, the endogenous processes that make it possible to accumulate knowledge, to incorporate new discoveries and to apply them in different areas of human activity, from those related to health and the environment to the production of goods and services. It is also aware of the limits, and even the failures, of attempts to transfer technologies to the most impoverished countries, precisely because of the endogenous nature of methods for the accumulation and application of knowledge. This is why it is necessary, among other things, to become familiar at an early age with science and the uses of science, and with the difficult task of assimilating progress in such a way that human identity and integrity are fully respected. Here, too, the ethical issues must not be overlooked.

It also shows that the Commission is aware of the contribution that education must make to economic and social development. The education system is all too often blamed for unemployment. This observation is only partly true; above all it should not obscure the other political, economic and social prerequisites for achieving full employment or enabling the economies of underdeveloped countries to take off. As for education, the Commission believes that valid responses to the problems of mismatch between supply and demand on the labour market can come from a more flexible system that allows greater curricular diversity and builds bridges between different types of education, or between working life and further training. Such flexibility would also help to reduce school failure and the tremendous wastage of human potential resulting from it.

Such improvements, desirable and feasible as they are, do not, however, obviate the need for intellectual innovation and the implementation of a model of sustainable development based on the specific characteristics of each country. Given the present and foreseeable advances in science and technology, and the growing importance of knowledge and other intangibles in the production of goods and services, we need to rethink the place of work and its changing status in tomorrow's society. To create tomorrow's

society, imagination will have to keep ahead of technological progress in order to avoid further increases in unemployment and social exclusion or inequalities in development.

For all these reasons, it seems to us that the concept of an education pursued throughout life, with all its advantages in terms of flexibility, diversity and availability at different times and in different places, should command wide support. There is a need to rethink and broaden the notion of lifelong education. Not only must it adapt to changes in the nature of work, but it must also constitute a continuous process of forming whole human beings – their knowledge and aptitudes, as well as the critical faculty and the ability to act. It should enable people to develop awareness of themselves and their environment and encourage them to play their social role at work and in the community.

In this context, the Commission discussed the need to advance towards a 'learning society'. The truth is that every aspect of life, at both the individual and the social level, offers opportunities for both learning and doing. It is thus very tempting to focus too much on this side of the question, stressing the educational potential of the modern media, the world of work or cultural and leisure pursuits, even to the extent of overlooking a number of fundamental truths: although people need to take every opportunity for learning and self-improvement, they will not be able to make good use of all these potential resources unless they have received a sound basic education. Better still, school should impart both the desire for, and pleasure in, learning, the ability to learn how to learn, and intellectual curiosity. One might even imagine a society in which each individual would be in turn both teacher and learner.

For this to come about, nothing can replace the formal education system, where each individual is introduced to the many forms of knowledge. There is no substitute for the teacher–pupil relationship, which is underpinned by authority and developed through dialogue. This has been argued time and time again by the great classical thinkers who have studied the question of education. It

is the responsibility of the teacher to impart to the pupil the knowledge that humankind has acquired about itself and about nature and everything of importance that it has created and invented.

Learning throughout life: the heartbeat of society

The concept of learning throughout life thus emerges as one of the keys to the twenty-first century. It goes beyond the traditional distinction between initial and continuing education. It meets the challenges posed by a rapidly changing world. This is not a new insight, since previous reports on education have emphasized the need for people to return to education in order to deal with new situations arising in their personal and working lives. That need is still felt and is even becoming stronger. The only way of satisfying it is for each individual to learn how to learn.

But there is a further requirement: the far-reaching changes in the traditional patterns of life require of us a better understanding of other people and the world at large; they demand mutual understanding, peaceful interchange and, indeed, harmony – the very things that are most lacking in our world today.

Having adopted this position, the Commission has put greater emphasis on one of the four pillars that it proposes and describes as the foundations of education: *learning to live together*, by developing an understanding of others and their history, traditions and spiritual values and, on this basis, creating a new spirit which, guided by recognition of our growing interdependence and a common analysis of the risks and challenges of the future, would induce people to implement common projects or to manage the inevitable conflicts in an intelligent and peaceful way. Utopia, some might think, but it is a necessary Utopia, indeed a vital one if we are to escape from a dangerous cycle sustained by cynicism or by resignation.

While the Commission has indeed a vision of the kind of education that would create and underlay this new spirit, it has

not disregarded the other three pillars of education which provide, as it were, the bases for learning to live together.

The first of these is *learning to know*. Given the rapid changes brought about by scientific progress and the new forms of economic and social activity, the emphasis has to be on combining a sufficiently broad general education with the possibility of in-depth work on a selected number of subjects. Such a general background provides, so to speak, the passport to lifelong education, in so far as it gives people a taste – but also lays the foundations – for learning throughout life.

Learning to do is another pillar. In addition to learning to do a job of work, it should, more generally, entail the acquisition of a competence that enables people to deal with a variety of situations, often unforeseeable, and to work in teams, a feature to which educational methods do not at present pay enough attention. In many cases, such competence and skills are more readily acquired if pupils and students have the opportunity to try out and develop their abilities by becoming involved in work experience schemes or social work while they are still in education, whence the increased importance that should be attached to all methods of alternating study with work.

Last, but far from least, is the fourth pillar: *learning to be*. This was the dominant theme of the Edgar Faure report *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow*, published by UNESCO in 1972. Its recommendations are still very relevant, for in the twenty-first century everyone will need to exercise greater independence and judgement combined with a stronger sense of personal responsibility for the attainment of common goals. Our report stresses a further imperative: none of the talents which are hidden like buried treasure in every person must be left untapped. These are, to name but a few: memory, reasoning power, imagination, physical ability, aesthetic sense, the aptitude to communicate with others and the natural charisma of the group leader, which again goes to prove the need for greater self-knowledge.

The Commission has alluded to another Utopian idea: a

learning society founded on the acquisition, renewal and use of knowledge. These are three aspects that ought to be emphasized in the educational process. As the development of the 'information society' is increasing the opportunities for access to data and facts, education should enable everyone to gather information and to select, arrange, manage and use it.

While education should, therefore, constantly adapt to changes in society, it must not fail to pass on the attainments, foundations and benefits of human experience.

Faced with a growing and at the same time increasingly quality-minded demand for education, how can educational policies achieve the twin aims of high educational standards and equity? These were the questions that the Commission addressed concerning courses of study, educational methods and content, and prerequisites for the effectiveness of education.

The stages and bridges of learning: a fresh approach

By focusing its recommendations on the concept of learning throughout life, the Commission did not intend to convey the idea that by such a qualitative leap one could avoid reflecting on the different levels of education. On the contrary, it has set out to reassert some of the major principles advanced by UNESCO, such as the vital need for basic education, to urge a review of the role of secondary education and to examine the issues raised by developments in higher education, particularly the phenomenon of mass higher education.

Quite simply, learning throughout life makes it possible to organize the various stages of education to provide for passage from one stage to another and to diversify the paths through the system, while enhancing the value of each. This could be a way of avoiding the invidious choice between selection by ability, which increases the number of academic failures and the risks of exclusion, and the same education for all, which can inhibit talent.

The foregoing in no way detracts from the excellent definition

of *basic learning needs* produced in 1990 at the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand):

> These needs comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy, and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning. (World Declaration on Education for All, Art. 1, para. 1.)

This is certainly an impressive catalogue, but it does not necessarily imply an overloading of curricula. The teacher–pupil relationship, the learning available in children's local environment, and an effective use of modern media (where they exist) can in conjunction contribute to the personal and intellectual development of each pupil. The 'three Rs' – reading, writing and arithmetic – are given their full due. The combination of conventional teaching and out-of-school approaches should enable children to experience the three dimensions of education – the ethical and cultural, the scientific and technological, and the economic and social.

To put it another way, education is also a social experience through which children learn about themselves, develop interpersonal skills and acquire basic knowledge and skills. This experience should begin in early childhood, in different forms depending on the situation, but always with the involvement of families and local communities.

Two observations which the Commission sees as important should be added at this stage.

Basic education should be extended, worldwide, to the 900 million illiterate adults, the 130 million children not enrolled in school, and the more than 100 million children who drop out prematurely from school. This vast undertaking is a priority for the technical assistance and partnership projects carried out as part of international co-operation.

Basic education is of course an issue in all countries, including

the industrialized ones. From this initial stage onwards, educational contents should be designed to stimulate a love of learning and knowledge and thus develop the desire and provide the opportunities for learning throughout life.

This brings us to one of the major problem areas in any reform, that of the policies to be applied to the period of adolescence and youth, between primary education and work or higher education. To coin a phrase, *secondary schools* cut rather a sorry figure in educational thinking. They are the target of considerable criticism and they provoke a considerable amount of frustration.

Among the sources of frustration are the increased and increasingly diversified requirements, leading to rapid growth in enrolments and overcrowded curricula – whence the familiar problems associated with mass education, which the less-developed countries cannot easily solve at either the financial or the organizational level. There is also the distress felt by school-leavers who face a shortage of opportunities, a distress increased by an all-or-nothing obsession with getting into higher education. Mass unemployment in many countries only adds to the malaise. The Commission stresses its alarm at a trend that is leading, in both rural and urban areas, in both developing and industrialized countries, not only to unemployment but also to the under-utilization of human resources.

The Commission is convinced that the only way out of this difficult situation is a very broad diversification of the types of study available. This reflects one of the Commission's major concerns, which is to make the most of all forms of talent so as to reduce academic failure and prevent the far-too-widespread feeling among young people that they are excluded, left with no prospects.

These various types should include both conventional education, which focuses more on abstraction and conceptualization, and approaches that alternate school with work experience in a way that brings out additional abilities and inclinations. In any event, there should be bridges between these approaches so that errors – all too frequent – in the choice of direction can be corrected.

The Commission also believes that the prospect of being able to go back to education or training would alter the general climate by assuring young people that their fate is not sealed forever between the ages of 14 and 20.

Higher education should be seen from this same angle.

A first point to remember is that, side by side with universities, there are other types of higher education institutions in many countries. Some cream off the most able students while others were set up to provide specifically targeted, high-quality vocational training, lasting between two and four years. Such diversification undeniably meets the needs of society and the economy as manifested both at the national and at the regional levels.

Increasingly stringent selection in order to ease the pressures brought about by mass higher education in the wealthiest countries is neither politically nor socially acceptable. One of the main drawbacks of such an approach is that many young people are shut out from the educational process before they have been able to obtain a recognized diploma; they are therefore in the desperate predicament of having obtained neither a formal qualification nor a training appropriate for the job market.

The evolution of enrolments therefore needs to be managed, but it can be kept within limits as a result of secondary education reform, along the broad lines proposed by the Commission.

Universities would contribute to this process by diversifying what they offer:

- as scientific establishments and centres of learning, from where students go on to theoretical or applied research or teaching;
- as establishments offering occupational qualifications, combining high-level knowledge and skills, with courses and content continually tailored to the needs of the economy;
- as some of the main meeting-places for learning throughout life, opening their doors to adults who wish either to resume their studies or to adapt and develop their knowledge or to satisfy their taste for learning in all areas of cultural life; and

- as leading partners in international co-operation, facilitating exchanges of teachers and students and ensuring that the best teaching is made widely available through international professorships.

In this way, universities would transcend what is wrongly held to be the conflict between the logic of public service and the logic of the job market. They would also reclaim their intellectual and social vocation as, in a sense, guarantors of universal values and the cultural heritage. The Commission sees these as cogent reasons for urging greater university autonomy.

Having formulated these proposals, the Commission emphasizes that these issues take on a special significance in poor countries, where universities have a decisive role to play. In developing countries, universities must learn from their own past and analyse their countries' difficulties, engaging in research aimed at finding solutions to the most acute among them. It is also incumbent on them to propose a renewed vision of development that will enable their countries to build a genuinely better future. They must provide the vocational and technological training of the future leaders and the higher- and middle-level education required if their countries are to escape from their present treadmills of poverty and underdevelopment. It is particularly necessary to devise new development models for regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, as has already been done for some Eastern Asian countries, on a case-by-case basis.

Getting the reform strategies right

While neither underestimating the need to manage short-term constraints nor disregarding the need to adapt existing systems, the Commission wishes to emphasize the necessity of a more long-term approach if the reforms required are to succeed. By the same token, it stresses the fact that too many reforms one after another can be the death of reform, since they do not allow the system the time needed either to absorb change or to get all the parties concerned involved in the process. Furthermore, past failures show that

many reformers adopt an approach that is either too radical or too theoretical, ignoring what can be usefully learned from experience or rejecting past achievements. As a result, teachers, parents and pupils are disoriented and less than willing to accept and implement reform.

The main parties contributing to the success of educational reforms are, first of all, the local community, including parents, school heads and teachers; secondly, the public authorities; and thirdly, the international community. Many past failures have been due to insufficient involvement of one or more of these partners. Attempts to impose educational reforms from the top down, or from outside, have obviously failed. The countries where the process has been relatively successful are those that obtained a determined commitment from local communities, parents and teachers, backed up by continuing dialogue and various forms of outside financial, technical or professional assistance. It is obvious that the local community plays a paramount role in any successful reform strategy.

Local community participation in assessing needs by means of a dialogue with the public authorities and groups concerned in society is a first, essential stage in broadening access to education and improving its quality. Continuing the dialogue by way of the media, community discussions, parent education and on-the-job teacher training usually helps to create awareness, sharpen judgement and develop local capacities. When communities assume greater responsibility for their own development, they learn to appreciate the role of education both as a way of achieving societal objectives and as a desirable improvement of the quality of life.

In this respect, the Commission stresses the value of a cautious measure of decentralization in helping to increase educational establishments' responsibilities and their scope for innovation.

In any event, no reform can succeed without the co-operation and active participation of teachers. This is one reason why the Commission recommends that the social, cultural and material status of educators should be considered as a matter of priority.

We are asking a great deal, too much even, of teachers, when we expect them to make good the failings of other institutions which also have a responsibility for the education and training of young people. The demands made on teachers are considerable, at the very time when the outside world is increasingly encroaching upon the school, particularly through the new communication and information media. Thus, the young people with whom the teacher has to deal, though receiving less parental or religious guidance, are also better informed. Teachers have to take this new situation into account if they are to be heeded and understood by young people, give them a taste for learning, and show them that information and knowledge are two different things and that knowledge requires effort, concentration, discipline and determination.

Rightly or wrongly, teachers feel isolated, not just because teaching is an individual activity, but also because of the expectations aroused by education and the criticisms which are, often unjustly, directed at them. Above all, teachers want their dignity to be respected. Most teachers are members of unions – in some cases, powerful unions – which are, undeniably, committed to the protection of their corporate interests. Even so, there is a need for the dialogue between society and teachers, and between the public authorities and teachers' unions, to be both strengthened and seen in a new light.

Admittedly, the renewal of this kind of dialogue is no easy task, but it is one that must needs be carried out in order to put an end to the teachers' feelings of isolation and frustration, to make change acceptable and to ensure that everyone contributes to the success of the necessary reforms.

It is appropriate in this context to add some recommendations concerning the content of teacher training, access by teachers to continuing education, the improvement of the status of teachers responsible for basic education, and greater involvement of teachers in disadvantaged and marginalized groups, where they can help to improve the integration of children and adolescents in society.

This is also a plea for the education system to be provided not

only with well-trained teachers but also with the wherewithal for delivering education of a high standard, including books, modern communication media, a suitable cultural and economic environment and so forth.

Conscious of the situation in schools today, the Commission lays great emphasis on the quantity and quality of traditional teaching materials such as books, and on new media such as information technologies, which should be used with discernment and with active pupil participation. For their part, teachers should work in teams, particularly in secondary schools, thereby helping to achieve the necessary flexibility in the courses of study on offer, thus obviating many failures, bringing out some of the pupils' natural talents, and providing better academic and career guidance with a view to learning continued throughout life.

The improvement of education, seen in this light, requires policy-makers to face up squarely to their responsibilities. They cannot leave it to market forces or to some kind of self-regulation to put things right when they go wrong.

It is on the strength of its belief in the importance of policy-makers that the Commission has stressed the permanence of values, the challenges of future demands, and the duties of teachers and society; they alone, taking all the factors into consideration, can generate the public-interests debates that education – since it concerns everyone, since it is our future that is at stake and since education can help to improve the lot of one and all – so badly needs.

This naturally leads us to focus on the role of the public authorities. They must propose clear options and, after broad consultation with all those involved, choose policies that, regardless of whether the education system is public, private or mixed, show the way, establish the system's foundations and its main thrusts, and regulate the system through the necessary adjustments.

Naturally, all public policy decisions have financial repercussions. The Commission does not underestimate this difficulty. Without entering into the complexities of various

systems, it holds the view that education is a public good that should be available to all. Once this principle is accepted, public and private funding may be combined, according to different formulae that take into account each country's traditions, stage of development, ways of life and income distribution.

All the choices to be made should, in any event, be predicated upon the fundamental principle of equality of opportunity.

During the discussions, I made a more radical proposal. As learning throughout life gradually becomes a reality, all young persons could be allocated a study-time entitlement at the start of their education, entitling them to a certain number of years of education. Their entitlement would be credited to an account at an institution that would manage a 'capital' of time available for each individual, together with the appropriate funds. Everyone could use their capital, on the basis of their previous educational experience, as they saw fit. Some of the capital could be set aside to enable people to receive continuing education during their adult lives. Each person could increase his or her capital through deposits at the 'bank' under a kind of educational savings scheme. After thorough discussion, the Commission supported this idea, though it was aware of the potential risks, even to equality of opportunity. As things stand today, a study-time entitlement could be granted at the end of compulsory schooling, so as to enable adolescents to choose a path without signing away their future.

In general, however, if after the essential step forward taken by the Jomtien Conference on basic education one had to point to an emergency situation, it would be to secondary education that we would turn our attention, given that the fate of millions of boys and girls is decided between the time they leave primary school and the time they either start work or go on to higher education. This is where the crunch comes in our education systems, either because those systems are too élitist or because they fail to come to terms with massive enrolments because of inertia and total inability to adapt. At a time when these young people are struggling with the problems of adolescence, when they feel, in a sense, mature but

are in fact still immature, when instead of being carefree they are worried about their future, the important thing is to provide them with places where they can learn and discover, to give them the wherewithal to think about their future and prepare for it, and to offer them a choice of pathways suited to their abilities. It is also important to ensure that the avenues ahead of them are not blocked and that remedial action and in-course correction of their educational careers are at all times possible.

Broadening international co-operation in the global village

The Commission noted the growing tendency, in the political and economic spheres, to resort to international action as a way of finding satisfactory solutions to problems that have a global dimension, if only because of the growing interdependence that has so often been emphasized. It also regretted the inadequacy of results and stressed the need for reform of international institutions to make their action more effective.

The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the social and educational fields. Emphasis has been deliberately placed on the importance of the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in March 1995. Education occupies a prominent place in the guidelines adopted there and this prompted the Commission to formulate, in this respect, recommendations concerning:

- a policy of strong encouragement for the education of girls and women, following directly on from the recommendations of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995);
- the allocation of a minimum percentage of development aid (a quarter of the total) to fund education: this slanting in the direction of education should also apply to international funding institutions, first and foremost the World Bank, which already plays an important role;
- the development of 'debt-for-education swaps' to offset the adverse effects of adjustment policies and policies for reducing

internal and external deficits upon public spending on education;

- the widespread introduction of the new 'information society' technologies in all countries, to prevent yet another gap opening up between rich countries and poor countries; and
- tapping into the outstanding potential offered by non-governmental organizations, and hence by grass-roots initiatives, which could provide a valuable backup to international co-operation.

These few suggestions should be seen in the context of partnership rather than aid. After so many failures and so much waste, experience militates in favour of partnership, globalization makes it inescapable, and there are some encouraging examples, such as the successful co-operation and exchanges within regional groupings, the European Union being a case in point.

Another justification for partnership is that it can lead to a 'win-win situation': whilst industrialized countries can assist developing countries by the input of their successful experiences, their technologies and financial and material resources, they can learn from the developing countries ways of passing on their cultural heritage, approaches to the socialization of children and, more fundamentally, different cultures and ways of life.

The Commission expresses the hope that the Member States will give UNESCO the necessary resources to enable it to foster both the spirit of partnership and partnership in action, along the lines suggested by the Commission to the Twenty-eighth Session of the General Conference. UNESCO can do this by publicizing successful innovations and helping to establish networks on the basis of grass-roots initiatives by non-governmental organizations, whether aiming to develop education of a high standard (UNESCO professorships) or to stimulate research partnerships.

We also believe it has a central role to play in developing the new information technologies in such a way that they serve the interests of quality education.

More fundamentally, however, UNESCO will serve peace and mutual understanding by emphasizing the value of education as

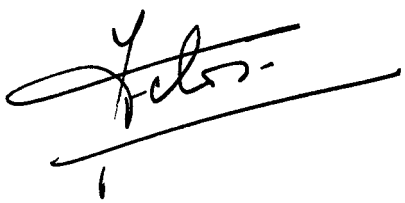
a manifestation of the spirit of concord, stemming from the will to live together, as active members of our global village, thinking and organizing for the good of future generations. It is in this way that UNESCO will contribute to a culture of peace.

For the title of its report, the Commission turned to one of La Fontaine's fables, *The Ploughman and his Children*:

Be sure (the ploughman said), not to sell the inheritance
Our forebears left to us:
A treasure lies concealed therein.

Readapting slightly the words of the poet, who was lauding the virtues of hard work, and referring instead to education – that is, everything that humanity has learned about itself – we could have him say:

But the old man was wise
To show them before he died
That learning is the treasure.



Jacques Delors
Chairman of the Commission

PART ONE

chapter 1

Pointers and recommendations

• Worldwide interdependence and globalization are major forces in contemporary life. They are already at work and will leave a deep imprint on the twenty-first century. They require that overall consideration, extending well beyond the fields of education and culture, be given, as of now, to the roles and structures of international organizations.

• The major danger is that of a gulf opening up between a minority of people who are capable of finding their way successfully about this new world that is coming into being and the majority who feel that they are at the mercy of events and have no say in the future of society, with the dangers that entails of a setback to democracy and widespread revolt.

• We must be guided by the Utopian aim of steering the world towards greater mutual understanding, a greater sense of responsibility and greater solidarity, through acceptance of our spiritual and cultural differences. Education, by providing access to knowledge for all, has precisely this universal task of helping people to understand the world and to understand others.

chapter 2

Pointers and recommendations

- Education policy must be sufficiently diversified and must be so designed as not to become another contributory cause of social exclusion.

- The socialization of individuals must not conflict with personal development. It is therefore necessary to work towards a system that strives to combine the virtues of integration with respect for individual rights.

- Education cannot, on its own, solve the problems raised by the severance (when this happens) of social ties. It can, however, be expected to help to foster the desire to live together, which is a basic component of social cohesion and national identity.

- Schools cannot succeed in this task unless they make their own contribution to the advancement and integration of minority groups by mobilizing those concerned while showing due regard for their personality.

- Democracy appears to be progressing, taking forms and passing through stages that fit the situation in each country. Its vitality is nevertheless constantly threatened. Education for conscious and active citizenship must begin at school.

- Democratic participation is, so to say, a matter of good citizenship, but it can be encouraged or stimulated by instruction and practices adapted to a media and information society. What is needed is to provide reference points and aids to interpretation, so as to strengthen the faculties of understanding and judgement.

- It is the role of education to provide children and adults with the cultural background that will enable them, as far as possible, to make sense of the changes taking place. This presupposes that they are capable of sorting the mass of information so as to interpret it more effectively and place events in a historical perspective.

chapter 3

Pointers and recommendations

- Further reflection on the theme of a new model of development, showing more respect for nature and the structuring of people's time.

- A future-oriented study of the place of work in society, taking into account the effects of technical progress and change on both private and community life.

- A fuller assessment of development, taking all its aspects into account, along the lines of the work done by UNDP.

- The establishment of new links between educational policy and development policy, with a view to strengthening the bases of knowledge and skills in the countries concerned: encouragement of initiative, teamwork, realistic synergies taking local resources into account, self-employment and the spirit of enterprise.

- The necessary improvement and general availability of basic education (importance of the Jomtien Declaration).

PART TWO

chapter 4

Pointers and recommendations

• Education throughout life is based on four pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be.

• **Learning to know**, by combining a sufficiently broad general knowledge with the opportunity to work in depth on a small number of subjects. This also means learning to learn, so as to benefit from the opportunities education provides throughout life.

• **Learning to do**, in order to acquire not only an occupational skill but also, more broadly, the competence to deal with many situations and work in teams. It also means learning to do in the context of young peoples' various social and work experiences which may be informal, as a result of the local or national context, or formal, involving courses, alternating study and work.

• **Learning to live together**, by developing an understanding of other people and an appreciation of interdependence – carrying out joint projects and learning to manage conflicts – in a spirit of respect for the values of pluralism, mutual understanding and peace.

• **Learning to be**, so as better to develop one's personality and be able to act with ever greater autonomy, judgement and personal responsibility. In that connection, education must not disregard any aspect of a person's potential: memory, reasoning, aesthetic sense, physical capacities and communication skills.

• Formal education systems tend to emphasize the acquisition of knowledge to the detriment of other types of learning; but it is vital now to conceive education in a more encompassing fashion. Such a vision should inform and guide future educational reforms and policy, in relation both to contents and to methods.

chapter 5

Pointers and recommendations

• The concept of learning throughout life is the key that gives access to the twenty-first century. It goes beyond the traditional distinction between initial and continuing education. It links up with another concept often put forward, that of the learning society, in which everything affords an opportunity of learning and fulfilling one's potential.

• In its new guise, continuing education is seen as going far beyond what is already practised, particularly in the developed countries, i.e. upgrading, with refresher training, retraining and conversion or promotion courses for adults. It should open up opportunities for learning for all, for many different purposes – offering them a second or third chance, satisfying their desire for knowledge and beauty or their desire to surpass themselves, or making it possible to broaden and deepen strictly vocational forms of training, including practical training.

• In short, 'learning throughout life' must take advantage of all the opportunities offered by society.

PART THREE

chapter 6

Pointers and recommendations

• A requirement valid for all countries, albeit in various forms and with different types of content – the **strengthening of basic education**: hence the emphasis on **primary education** and its traditional basic programmes – reading, writing, arithmetic – but also on the ability to express oneself in a language that lends itself to dialogue and understanding.

• The need, which will be still greater tomorrow, for receptivity to science and the world of science, which opens the door to the twenty-first century and its scientific and technological upheavals.

• The adaptation of **basic education** to specific contexts, the most deprived countries as well as the most deprived section of the population, starting out with the facts of everyday life, which affords opportunities for understanding natural phenomena and for different forms of socialization.

• The pressing needs of literacy work and basic education for adults are to be kept in mind.

• In all cases, emphasis is to be placed on pupil–teacher relations, since the most advanced technologies can be no more than a back-up to the relationship (transmission, dialogue and confrontation) between teacher and pupil.

• Secondary education must be rethought in this general context of learning throughout life. The key principle is to arrange for a variety of individual paths through schooling, without ever closing the door on the possibility of a subsequent return to the education system.

• Debates on selection and guidance would be greatly clarified if this principle were fully applied. Everyone would then feel that whatever the choices made or the courses followed in adolescence, no doors would ever be closed in the future, including the doors of the school itself. Equality of opportunity would then mean what it says.

• **Universities** should be central to the higher level of the system, even if, as is the case in many countries, there are other, non-university establishments of higher education.

• Universities would have vested in them four key functions:

1. To prepare students for research and teaching.
2. To provide highly specialized training courses adapted to the needs of economic and social life.
3. To be open to all, so as to cater for the many aspects of lifelong education in the widest sense.
4. International co-operation.

• The universities should also be able to speak out on ethical and social problems as entirely independent and fully responsible institutions exercising a kind of intellectual authority that society needs to help it to reflect, understand and act.

• The diversity of secondary schooling and the possibilities afforded by universities should provide a valid answer to the challenges of mass education by dispelling the obsession with a one-and-only educational 'king's highway'. Combined with more widespread application of the practice of alternating periods of education with periods of work, these approaches can provide effective tools for fighting against school failure. The extension of learning throughout life will require consideration of new procedures for certification that take account of acquired competences.

chapter 7

Pointers and recommendations

• While the psychological and material situation of teachers differs greatly from country to country,ban upgrading of their status is essential if 'learning throughout life' is to fulfil the central function assigned to it by the Commission in the advancement of our societies and the strengthening of mutual understanding among peoples. Their position as master or mistress in the classroom should be recognized by society and they should be given the necessary authority and suitable resources.

• The concept of learning throughout life leads straight on to that of a learning society, a society that offers many and varied opportunities of learning, both at school and in economic, social and cultural life, whence the need for more collaboration and partnerships with families, industry and business, voluntary associations, people active in cultural life, etc.

• Teachers are also concerned by the imperative requirement to update knowledge and skills. Their professional lives should be so arranged as to accommodate the opportunity, or even the obligation, for them to become more proficient in their art and to benefit from periods of experience in various spheres of economic, social and cultural life. Such possibilities are usually provided for in the many forms of study leave or sabbatical leave. Those formulae, suitably adapted, should be extended to all teachers.

• Even though teaching is essentially a solitary activity, in the sense that each teacher is faced with his or her own responsibilities and professional duties, teamwork is essential, particularly at the secondary level, in order to improve the quality of education and adapt it more closely to the special characteristics of classes or groups of pupils.

• The Commission stresses the importance of exchanges of teachers and partnerships between institutions in different countries. As is confirmed by current activities, such exchanges and partnerships provide an essential added value not only for the quality of education but also for a greater receptivity to other cultures, civilizations and experiences.

• All these lines of emphasis should be the subject of a dialogue, or even of contracts, with teachers' organizations which go beyond the purely corporatist nature of such forms of collaboration: over and above their aims of defending the moral and material interests of their members, teachers' organizations have built up a fund of experience which they are willing to make available to policy-makers.

chapter 8

Pointers and recommendations

• Choosing a type of education means choosing a type of society. In all countries, such choices call for extensive public debate, based on an accurate evaluation of education systems. The Commission invites the political authorities to encourage such debate, in order to reach a democratic consensus, this being the best route to success for educational reform strategies.

• The Commission advocates the implementation of measures for involving the different persons and institutions active in society in educational decision-making: administrative decentralization and the autonomy of educational establishments are conducive in most cases, it believes, to the development and generalization of innovation.

• In view of the foregoing, the Commission wishes to reaffirm the role of the political authority, which has the duty clearly to define options and ensure overall regulation, making the required adjustments: education is a community asset which cannot be regulated by market forces alone.

• The Commission none the less does not underrate the force of financial constraints and it advocates the bringing into operation of public/private partnerships. In developing countries, the public funding of basic education remains a priority, but the choices made must not imperil the coherence of the system as a whole, nor lead to other levels of education being sacrificed.

• It is essential that funding structures be reviewed in the light of the principle that learning should continue throughout individuals' lives. The Commission hence feels that the proposed study-time entitlement, as briefly outlined in the report, deserves to be discussed and explored.

• The progress of the new information and communication technologies should give rise to a general deliberation on access to knowledge in the world of tomorrow. The Commission recommends:
– the diversification and improvement of distance education through the use of the new technologies;
– greater use of those technologies in adult education and especially in the in-service training of teachers;
– the strengthening of developing countries' infrastructures and capabilities in this field and the dissemination of such technologies throughout society; these are in any case prerequisites to their use in formal education systems; and
– the launching of programmes for the dissemination of the new technologies under the auspices of UNESCO.

chapter 9

Pointers and recommendations

- The need for international co-operation – which itself has to be radically rethought – is felt also in the field of education. This is an issue not only for education policy-makers and the teaching profession but for all who play an active part in community life.

- At the level of international co-operation, a policy of strong encouragement for the education of girls and women should be promoted, in the spirit of the Beijing Conference.

- So-called aid policy should be made to evolve towards partnership by fostering, among other things, co-operation and exchanges within regional groupings.

- A quarter of development aid should be devoted to the funding of education.

- Debt swaps should be encouraged in order to offset the adverse effect of adjustment policies and policies for the reduction of domestic and foreign deficits on educational spending.

- National education systems should be helped to gain strength by encouraging alliances and co-operation between ministries at regional level and between countries facing similar problems.

- Countries should be helped to stress the international dimension of the education provided (curricula, use of information technologies and international co-operation).

- New partnerships between international institutions dealing with education should be encouraged through, for example, the launching of an international project for disseminating and implementing the concept of learning throughout life, on the lines of the inter-agency initiative that resulted in the Jomtien Conference.

- The gathering, at international level, of data on national investment in education should be encouraged, in particular by the establishment of suitable indicators: total amount of private funds, investment by industry, spending on non-formal education, etc.

- A set of indicators should be developed for revealing the most serious dysfunctions of education systems, by cross-relating various quantitative and qualitative data, such as: level of spending on education, drop-out rates, disparities in access, inefficiency of different parts of the system, poor-quality teaching, teachers' status, etc.

- With an eye to the future, a UNESCO observatory should be set up to look into the new information technologies, their evolution and their foreseeable impact on not only education systems but also on modern societies.

- Intellectual co-operation in the field of education should be encouraged through the intermediary of UNESCO: UNESCO professorships, Associated Schools, equitable sharing of knowledge between countries, dissemination of information technologies, and student, teacher and researcher exchanges.

- UNESCO's normative action on behalf of Member States, for instance in relation to the harmonization of national legislation with international instruments, should be intensified.

Appendices

The work of the Commission

In November 1991 the General Conference invited the Director-General 'to convene an international commission to reflect on education and learning for the twenty-first century'. Federico Mayor requested Jacques Delors to chair the Commission, with a group of fourteen other eminent figures from all over the world and from a variety of cultural and professional backgrounds.

The International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century was formally established at the beginning of 1993. Financed by UNESCO and working with the assistance of a secretariat provided by the Organization, the Commission was able to draw on the Organization's valuable resources and international experience, and on an impressive mass of information, but was completely independent in carrying out its work and in preparing its recommendations.

UNESCO has on several previous occasions produced international studies reviewing issues and priorities in education worldwide. In 1968, *The World Educational Crisis: A Systems Analysis*, by Philip H. Coombs, then Director of UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), drew on the work of the Institute to examine the problems facing education, and to recommend far-reaching innovations.

In 1971, in the wake of student upheavals in much of the world during the previous three years, René Maheu (then Director-General of UNESCO), asked a former French Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Edgar Faure, to chair a seven-person panel entrusted with defining 'the new aims to be assigned to education as a result of the rapid changes in knowledge and in societies, the demands of development, the aspirations of the individual, and the overriding need for international understanding and peace' and putting forward 'suggestions regarding the intellectual, human and financial means needed to attain the objectives set'. Published in 1972 under the title *Learning to Be*, the report of the Faure Commission had the great merit of firmly establishing the concept of lifelong education at a time when traditional education systems were being challenged.

The first and perhaps the chief difficulty confronting the Commission chaired by Jacques Delors concerned the extreme diversity of educational situations, conceptions and structures. Related to this difficulty was the sheer quantity of information available and the obvious impossibility, for the Commission, of digesting more than a small proportion of it in the course of its work. It was thus

obliged to be selective and to single out what was essential for the future, bearing in mind both geopolitical, economic, social and cultural trends on the one hand and, on the other, the part educational policies could play.

Six lines of inquiry were chosen, enabling the Commission to approach its task from the angle of the aims (both individual and societal) of the learning process: education and culture; education and citizenship; education and social cohesion; education, work and employment; education and development; and education, research and science. These six lines were complemented by three transverse themes relating more directly to the functioning of education systems: communications technologies; teachers and teaching; and financing and management.

The method adopted by the Commission was to engage in as wide-ranging a process of consultation as was possible in the time available. It held eight plenary sessions, and the same number of working-group sessions, to examine both the major topics chosen, and concerns and issues particular to one region or group of countries. Participants in the working-group sessions were representative of a wide range of professions and organizations directly and indirectly related to education, formal and non-formal: teachers, researchers, students, government officials, and people active in governmental and non-governmental organizations at national and international levels. A series of presentations by distinguished individuals enabled the Commission to hold in-depth exchanges on a wide range of topics related in various degrees to education. Individual consultations were carried out, face-to-face or in writing. A questionnaire was sent to all the National Commissions for UNESCO, inviting them to submit documentation or unpublished material: the response was very positive and the replies were studied carefully. Non-governmental organizations were similarly consulted and in some cases invited to participate in meetings. In the past two-and-a-half years, members of the Commission, including its Chairman, also attended a series of governmental and non-governmental meetings in which its work was discussed and ideas exchanged. Many written submissions, commissioned or unsolicited, were sent to the Commission. The Commission's secretariat analysed a considerable volume of documentation and provided the Commission's members with summaries on a variety of topics. The Commission proposes that, in addition to its report, UNESCO should also publish the working documents produced for it.

Members of the Commission

Jacques Delors (France)
Chairman of the Commission; former President of the European Commission (1985–95); former French Minister of Economy and Finance

In'am Al Mufti (Jordan)
Specialist on the status of women; Adviser to Queen Noor of Jordan on Planning and Development – Noor Al Hussein Foundation; former Minister of Social Development

Isao Amagi (Japan)
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Alexandra Draxler, Secretary of the Commission
A secretariat will ensure the follow-up to the Commission's work, by publishing the background material and studies looking more closely into aspects of the Commission's deliberations or recommendations, by helping to organize, at the request of governmental or non-governmental authorities, meetings to discuss the findings of the Commission and by taking part in activities that will attempt to put into practice some of the Commission's recommendations. The address will continue to be:

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