

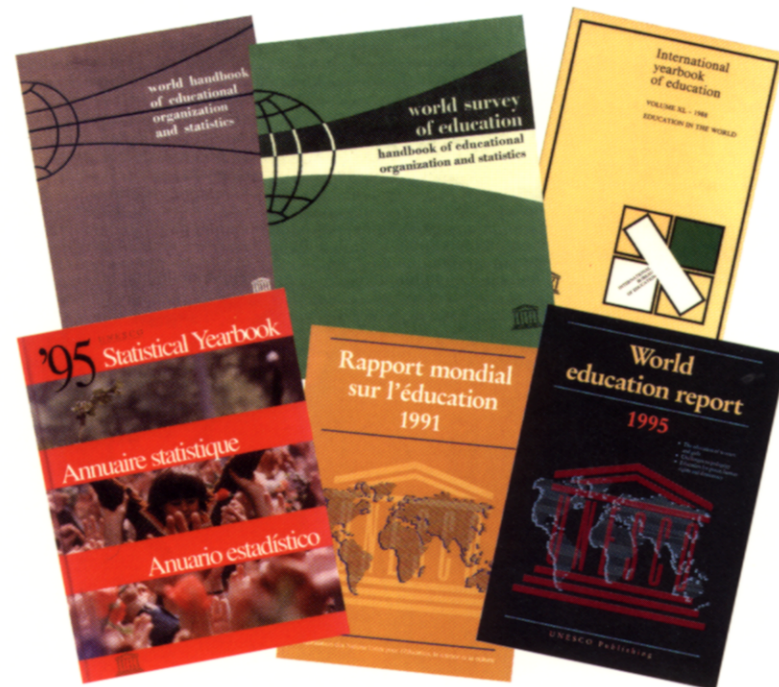
CONSTRUCTING A LEARNING SOCIETY

FROM 'LEARNING TO BE' TO 'LEARNING: THE TREASURE WITHIN'

UNESCO has never equated educational development with mere quantitative expansion. And the kind of education the Organization has endeavoured to promote is one which would contribute to peace and welfare of mankind. The Organization has therefore always considered education in relation to the global needs of the world community and of national societies. In order to guide its own activities, as well as to offer suggestions to its Member States and to educators on how best to achieve these goals, UNESCO had to meet certain prerequisites. First, to draw up a picture of the existing situation in terms of educational legislation structures and statistical data in various countries; second, to stimulate a process of exchange of ideas and consultation among deciders and educators, both on specific issues and on general trends at the regional or world levels; and third, to foster global reflection, aimed at provoking imaginative thoughts regarding its future. Such reflection could take its origin from eminent educators and thinkers. UNESCO has resorted to these three approaches.

DEPICT AND ANALYSE THE STATUS OF EDUCATION

The World Survey of Education is an early example of the first approach. It was designed to serve as an instrument of co-operation among education authorities and educationists. In 1951, UNESCO had published the World Handbook of Educational Organizations and Statistics based on the replies to a questionnaire from fifty-seven countries. This was the origin of the World Survey of Education. Published in five volumes between 1955 and 1971, it represented an unprecedented effort to place comparative education, in a workable form, at the service of co-operation in the field of education. Some twenty years after the publication of Volume V, a more condensed and selective publication was issued under the title World Education Report. Intended as a reference book for policy-makers working in education and development, three issues have so far been published (1991, 1993 and 1995). Another major publication is the UNESCO



Statistical Yearbook which, since 1964, provides statistical data on significant aspects of educational development worldwide, such as enrolment figures by level and type of education for each region, growth rates of enrolment, public expenditure, etc. The book is widely used by other international organizations, governments and educators.

PROMOTE THE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL

The second approach is exemplified by the exchange of views and discussions during regional conferences which bring together ministers of education and those responsible for economic development. The general debate which opens such conferences is usually devoted to an analysis of the status of education in the region with its innovations, successes and failures, and prevailing trends set against a background of social and economic development.

In a global perspective, the sessions of the International Conference on Education, organized by UNESCO at the International Bureau of Education, provide similar information at a world level. Reports submitted by governments provide a wealth of information and insights into the main developments in education at national level that have taken place from one conference to another. These reports are then published in the International Yearbook of Education.

During the fifty years covered by this review, education has evolved considerably due to rapid social changes, often the result of scientific progress and technological innovations. This background of social change has been taken into account in the analyses, debates and recommendations of the various conferences organized by UNESCO. Moreover, two Commissions chaired respectively by Edgar Faure and Jacques Delors were set up to examine, at twenty-five years of distance, the impact

on education of social change both at national and global levels, and suggest paths to be explored to respond to the new problems, responsibilities and challenges. Both commissions highlighted the ever greater interdependence of education and of society.

1970, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION

The late 1960s were years of striking contrasts: after the destructions and losses caused by the Second World War, the industrial countries had made a surprisingly fast recovery. Social change had accompanied economic growth with an ensuing rise in standards of living. Newly independent countries were attempting their economic take-off and the notion of the contribution of education to development was accepted. In developing and industrialized countries alike, enrolment figures were reaching levels never seen before. Yet, the organization of education systems, their methods and their contents remained substantially the same and the goals of education had not been redefined to match the challenges of the emerging new world. This led to unrest among students, generally referred to as the 1968 education crisis which started in the United States and France, but soon spread to a large number of countries. In 1970, René Maheu, then Director-General of UNESCO, thought that the time was ripe to set up an International Commission on the Development of Education which was to submit its report in 1972. The Commission, chaired by Edgar Faure, former Prime Minister and Minister of Education of France at the time of the 1968 crisis, was composed of six eminent members selected in their personal capacity as high-level educators or scientists, former ministers or international civil servants.⁽¹⁾

The Commission's work was based on four assumptions: first,

(1) Felipe Herrera (Chile), Abdul-Razzak Kaddoura (Syrian Arab Republic), Henri Lopes (the Congo), Arthur V. Petrovski (USSR), Majid Rahnema (Iran), and Frederick Champion Ward (United States).

that the world community had common aspirations, problems and trends, despite differences of all kinds between nations and peoples; second, a belief in democracy, to which education was the keystone; third, that the total fulfilment of each individual is the aim of development; and fourth, that only lifelong education could shape a complete human being. It identified a number of characteristics and new trends common to the majority of education systems and progress achieved, as well as dead ends to which the current situation of education seemed to have led. However, on a more optimistic note, it also considered some reasons for hope such as the benefits which could be expected from scientific progress and new technologies. The Commission gave much thought to the relationship between education and society, and to education as a reflection of society, as well as a factor of societal change.

Looking to the future, the Commission considered that, rather than being subject to restricted reforms, education needed to be rethought and focused on the two interrelated notions



A work session of the Faure Commission.

LEARNING TO BE, KEY IDEAS

'Lifelong education' and 'the learning society' were the report's two key ideas. The former was considered as the 'keystone' of educational policies; the latter as a strategy aimed at committing society as a whole to education. The approach was based on the idea of osmosis between education and society, and sought to steer clear of a number of misconceptions such as the ideas of education as a 'sub-system' of society, of instruction as a tool for solving all individual and social problems, and of the compartmentalization of life into 'learning time' and 'time for living'.

As its title indicates, the report focuses on learning, a process that goes beyond education, and a fortiori, teaching. Education and teaching are described in it as dimensions that are subordinate to the learning process. School and out-of-school activities (formal, non-formal and informal education) are treated without hierarchical distinction, and the importance of basic education for all and of adult education is taken as a premise: 'learning is a process that lasts a lifetime, both in its duration and in its diversity'.

However, the Commission did not regard lifelong education as a process of permanent schooling, adult education or continuous vocational training. It was seen neither as an educational system nor an educational field, but rather as 'a principle on which the overall organization of a system and hence the elaboration of each of its parts, are based'. Lifelong education is a need that is common to everyone.

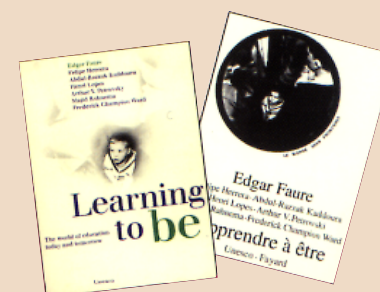
Learning must be redistributed not only in time, but also in space. Thus the Faure Commission called into question the monopoly of institutionalized education. All institutions, whatever their field of competence (economic, social, cultural or informational) can be used for educational purposes and thereby help to build 'a self-aware learning society'.

The Report focused on personal development and put learners, not teachers or educational institutions, at the core of education. The important thing is not the path followed by the learner, but the outcome of the learning process. Each one of us must be free, as our judgement grows stronger and our experience becomes richer and more varied, to choose the ways best suited to our own needs, expectations and abilities.

One criticism that could be made of Learning to be is that it expected too much of education and did not take sufficient account of economic and political conditions. It also overestimated the material resources of the developing countries and the extent to which the industrialized countries were really willing to provide them with substantial aid. The bypassing of religious phenomena and the overlooking of the ever-widening education gap between individuals, and between ethnic groups, social classes and nations also reflect a lack of realism that has given rise to disappointments.

Asher Deleon

Executive secretary of the Faure Commission
Excerpt from 'Learning to be in Retrospect',
The UNESCO Courier, April 1996.



Translated into 33 languages.

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of lifelong education and of the learning society. As a result of rapid scientific and technological progress, and accelerated social change, nobody could expect that their initial education could serve them throughout life. Education, therefore, could no longer be considered as a period preceding – and distinct from – active life. Every kind of experience should be used to acquire further knowledge; education should no longer be restricted to formal schooling, nor limited in time. School, while remaining the essential mode of delivery for transmitting organized knowledge, would be supplemented by all components of social life, institutions, working environment and leisure, as well as by the media. This led to the concept of ‘learning society’ fully integrating education and social environment. In addition to no longer being based on teaching and on the precedence of the teacher over the learner, education would in fact replace the ‘teaching’ approach by the ‘learning’ approach, the learner – particularly during his adult life – directly assimilating the knowledge provided by society. ‘A social configuration which accorded such a place to education and conferred such a status on it deserves a name of its own – the learning society.’⁽²⁾

These ideas, well received by educators, were widely discussed. Their application, however, seems to have been partial and fragmentary. Moreover, it is possible that the future role assigned to education by this Commission might have been considered too ambitious, and that it expected too much of education. Nevertheless, the ideas of lifelong education and of a learning society seem to have remained entirely valid, and can serve as a grid for analysis as well as principles for action. The report remains one of the most complete and boldest attempts to derive the educational implications of societal change and of the impact on society of the on-going scientific revolution.

(2) Learning to Be, Paris, UNESCO, 1972.

1993, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON EDUCATION FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Almost twenty-five years after the report of the commission chaired by Edgar Faure, it was felt necessary to mandate another commission ‘to study and reflect on the challenges facing education in the coming years and to formulate suggestions and recommendations in the form of a report which could serve as an agenda for renewal and action for policy-makers and officials at the highest levels’.

The International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century was therefore set up. Chaired by Jacques Delors, former French Minister of Economy and Finance, and President of the Commission of the European Community, it consisted of fourteen members.⁽³⁾ Its report, *Learning: the Treasure Within*, is the result of more than two years of work, based on extensive studies, debates and discussions with teachers’ unions, non-governmental organizations and other groups.

Taking full account of the ideas expressed in *Learning to Be* – in particular the two concepts of lifelong education and of the learning society – the Commission endeavoured to enlarge on them in the light of subsequent major world developments and of the changing, and sometimes contradictory, trends of today’s world. For instance, the threat of extreme danger, as well as the hopes and challenges created by scientific progress; the growing interdependence and globalization of problems, as well as the existence of increasing disparities; the aspiration to cultural identity and respect of differences, and the emergence of contradictory concerns such as those between tradition and modernity, those between the need for competition and the concern for equality of opportunity, and those between the extra-

(3) In’am Al Mufti (Jordan), Isao Amagi (Japan), Roberto Carneiro (Portugal), Fay Chung (Zimbabwe), Bronislaw Geremek (Poland), William Gorham (United States), Aleksandra Kornhauser (Slovenia), Michael Manley (Jamaica), Marisela Padrón Quero (Venezuela), Marie-Angélique Savané (Senegal), Karan Singh (India), Rodolfo Stavenhagen (Mexico), Myong Won Suhr (Republic of Korea), and Zhou Nanzhao (China).

ordinary expansion of knowledge and the human capacity to assimilate it. Education, increasingly conceived as a key factor of societal development, had to adapt to new trends and prepare for change. What kind of education, then, for the twenty-first century?

The Commission believed that education should rest on four 'pillars': 'learning to know' (acquiring a broad general education and in-depth knowledge in a few selected fields), 'learning to do' (acquiring competence based on a mix of abilities rather than on specialized vocational training), 'learning to be' and 'learning to live together'.

The Commission clarified the concept of continuous education – or lifelong learning – linking it with that of the learning society, in which everything affords an opportunity for learning and enriching one's potential. More than retraining, indispensable as this may be, since initial training for life is impossible, lifelong learning implies the acquisition of new knowledge throughout life: at school, out-of-school, at work and in social life. The training capacities of school – the main provider of organized knowledge – of non-formal education, of adult education and of life experience should be integrated.

Basic education as advocated by the 1990 Jomtien Conference is a 'passport for life' and the foundation for lifelong learning. Furthermore, 'any tendency to view basic education as a kind of emergency educational package for poor people and poor countries would be, in our view, an error.'⁽⁴⁾ In order to make lifelong learning a reality, the Commission supported the idea of a 'time credit' allocated to young people at the start of their education, entitling them to a certain number of years of education of which they could take advantage throughout their life.

New information and communication technologies are 'in the process of achieving nothing short of a revolution' affecting not only production and work, but also education and training. These technologies afford new possibilities to education, albeit at the risk of increasing existing inequalities, as the poorer are denied access

(4) Learning: the Treasure Within, Paris, UNESCO, 1996.

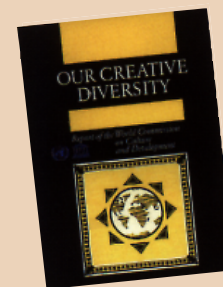
EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Education is a key link in the connecting structure between culture and development. What methods are likely to ensure better symbiosis between each person's culture, the education that transforms us, and the development to which both should contribute but which in return should be geared to the cultural and educational goals? Should we not open up a line of research in this field to ensure that



there is no repetition of the failure of socially maladjusted models of cultural and educational development ?

Culture can permeate development only if it first permeates education and if in return education effectively promotes fulfilment in one's own culture, and not merely social or professional selection, which very often and in many societies leads to the brain drain.



Javier Pérez de Cuéllar
Address at the inaugural meeting of WCCD, Paris,
17-21 March 1993.

to them. The Commission stressed the role of education, in an information society, in respect of the use of information and social values conveyed by the media.

The problem of unemployment is an increasingly important issue in all societies worldwide. Whilst education did not bear the brunt of responsibility for this problem, which stems primarily from economic factors, the Commission agreed that education had a role to play in resolving it by strengthening its links with the world of work, and by promoting increased mobility and retraining, alternating periods of education with periods of work.

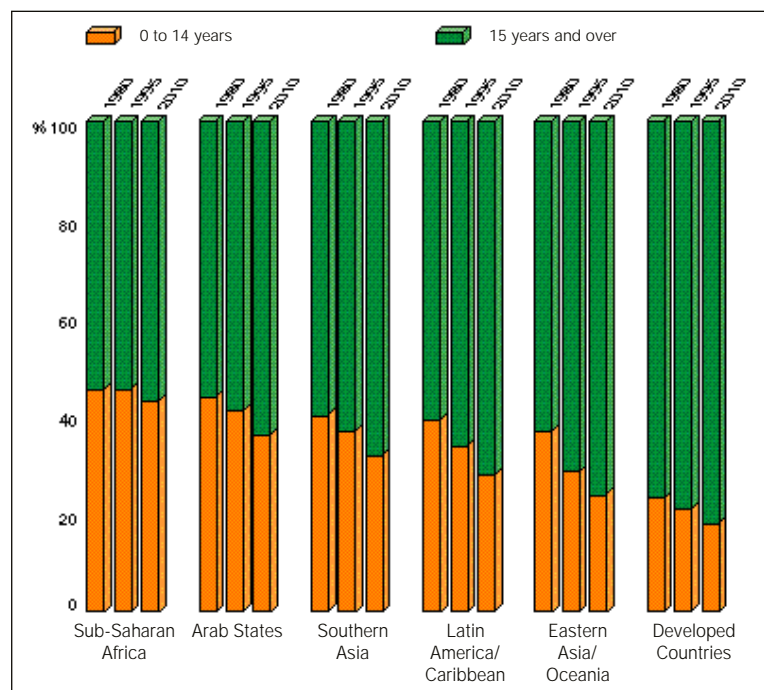
The Commission also outlined the role to be played by education at all levels from the standpoint of lifelong learning, the new responsibilities of teachers and their implication in training and retraining, and issues such as economic and financial choices, new types of certification, and the regulation of the education system. The report's 'pointers and recommendations' make suggestions as to how education systems could reflect the requirements and demands of the world of the twenty-first century. Visible

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throughout are a number of basic tenets: a belief in the power of education as a key to the future; that people, who are the main factors in economic growth, are both the aim and the means of development; a plea for inequalities and disparities to be corrected, and an appeal for international co-operation to this effect; and the hope that interdependence in the global village will soon become active solidarity. This reflection, therefore, is not only wholly consistent with the ethical mission of UNESCO, but also clearly demonstrates how education can contribute to a culture of peace.

EVOLUTION OF THE AGE-STRUCTURE OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION, 1980-2010

The proportion of over-65s will shoot up in the low-growth countries from 12 per cent in 1990 to 16 per cent in 2010 and 19 per cent in 2025. This ageing of the population will undoubtedly have repercussions not only on lifestyles and standards of living, but also on the financing of public expenditure.



Note: The regions correspond to UNESCO's nomenclature. The countries of the former Soviet Union are considered as developed countries, and those that are in Asia are also included there.

FOUR CRUCIAL ISSUES

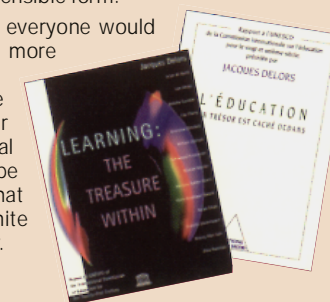
The Commission did its best to project its thinking on to a future dominated by globalization, to ask the right questions and to lay down some broad guidelines that can be applied both within national contexts and on a global scale. Here I shall examine four issues which I believe are crucial.



- The first issue is the capacity of education systems to become the key factor in development by performing a threefold function – economic, scientific and cultural. Everyone expects education to help build up a qualified and creative workforce that can adapt to new technologies and take part in the 'intelligence revolution' that is the driving force of our economies. Everyone – in North and South alike – also expects education to advance knowledge in such a way that economic development goes hand in hand with responsible management of the physical and human environment. And, finally, education would be failing in its task if it did not produce citizens rooted in their own cultures and yet open to other cultures and committed to the progress of society.
- The second crucial issue is the ability of education systems to adapt to new trends in society. This brings us to one of the fundamental responsibilities of education – having to prepare for change despite the growing insecurity that fills us with doubts and uncertainties. Education must take into account a whole range of interrelated and interacting factors that are always in a state of flux, whether it is dealing with individual or social values, family structure, the role of women, the status accorded to minorities, or the problems of urban development or the environment.
- The third crucial issue is that of the relations between the education system and the state. The roles and responsibilities of the state, the devolution of some of its powers to federal or local authorities, the balance to be struck between public and private education - these are just some aspects of a problem which, moreover, differs from one country to another.
- The fourth issue is the promulgation of the values of openness to others, and mutual understanding – in a word, the values of peace. Can education purport to be universal? Can it by itself, as a historical factor, create a universal language that would make it possible to overcome certain contradictions, respond to certain challenges and, despite their diversity, convey a message to all the inhabitants of the world? In this language which, ideally, would be accessible to everybody, all the world's wisdom and the wealth of its civilization and cultures would be expressed in an immediately comprehensible form.

The creation of a language accessible to everyone would mean that people would learn to engage more readily in dialogue, and the message that this language would convey would have to be addressed to human beings in all their aspects. A message that claims to be universal – one of education's lofty ambitions – must be conveyed with all the subtle qualifications that take full account of human being's infinite variety. This is no doubt our major difficulty.

Jacques Delors
From 'Education for Tomorrow',
The UNESCO Courier, April 1996.



Being translated into over 30 languages.