

**Rethinking Education
Towards a global common good?
UNESCO, 2015.**

Introduction

The publication is a call for dialogue among all stakeholders. It is inspired by a humanistic vision of education and development, based on respect for life and human dignity, equal rights, social justice, cultural diversity, international solidarity, and shared responsibility for a sustainable future. These are the fundamentals of our common humanity. This book enhances the vision provided

by the two landmark UNESCO publications: *Learning to Be: The world of education today and tomorrow* (1972), the 'Faure Report', and *Learning: The treasure within* (1996), the 'Delors Report'.

This publication contributes to rethinking education and learning in the context that education is expected to prepare individuals and communities by giving them the capability to adapt and to respond. It builds on one of UNESCO's main tasks as a global observatory of social transformation with the objective of stimulating public policy debate.

Sustainable development: A central concern

The aspiration of sustainable development requires us to resolve common problems and tensions and to recognize new horizons. Unsustainable patterns of economic production and consumption contribute to global warming, environmental degradation and an upsurge in natural disasters. Moreover, while international human rights frameworks have been strengthened over the past several decades, the implementation and protection of these norms remain a challenge. Education must find ways of responding to such challenges, taking into account multiple worldviews and alternative knowledge systems, as well as new frontiers in science and technology such as the advances in neurosciences and the developments in digital technology. Rethinking the purpose of education and the organization of learning has never been more urgent.

Reaffirming a humanistic approach to education

Education alone cannot hope to solve all development challenges, but a humanistic and holistic approach to education can and should contribute to achieving a new development model. In such a model, economic growth must be guided by environmental stewardship and by concern for peace, inclusion and social justice. The ethical and moral principles of a humanistic approach to development stand against violence, intolerance, discrimination and exclusion.

Local and global policy-making in a complex world

The escalating levels of social and economic complexity present a number of challenges for education policy-making in today's globalized world. The expansion of access to education worldwide over the past several decades is placing greater pressure on public financing. Additionally, the demand has grown in recent years for voice in public affairs and for the involvement of non-state actors in education, at both national and global levels. This diversification of partnerships is blurring the boundaries between public and private, posing problems for the democratic governance of education. In short, there is a growing need to reconcile the contributions and demands of the three regulators of social behaviour: society, state and market.

Re-contextualizing education and knowledge as global common goods

In light of this rapidly changing reality, we need to rethink the normative principles that guide educational governance: in particular, the right to education and the notion of education as a public good. Indeed, we often refer to education as a human right and as a public good in international education discourse. Yet, while these principles are relatively uncontested at the level of basic education, there is no general agreement, in much of the discussion, about their applicability to post-

Highlight

basic education and training. Therefore, a concern for knowledge – understood as the information, understanding, skills, values and attitudes acquired through learning – is central to any discussion of the purpose of education.

Considerations for the future

Diverse stakeholders with their multiple perspectives should be brought together to share research findings and to articulate normative principles in the guidance of policy. UNESCO, as an intellectual agency and think tank, can provide the platform for such debate and dialogue, enhancing our understanding of new approaches to education policy and provision, with the aim of sustaining humanity and its common well-being.

In the attempt to reconcile the purpose and organization of learning as a collective societal endeavour, the following questions may serve as first steps towards debate: While the four pillars of learning – to know, to do, to be, and to live together – are still relevant, they are threatened by globalization and by the resurgence of identity politics.

Read the full report at the official website: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002325/232555e.pdf>

© UNESCO 2015

Published in 2015 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France
