

October 1995

Commission
internationale
sur l'éducation
pour le vingt et
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*International
Commission on
Education for
the Twenty-first
Century*

Report of the Commission
Preliminary Synthesis

UNESCO, Paris

• **Président/Chairman:** Jacques DELORS • **Membres/Members:** Isao AMAGI, Roberto CARNEIRO, Fay CHUNG, Bronislaw GEREMEK, William GORHAM, Aleksandra KORNHAUSER, Michael MANLEY, In'am MUFTI, Marisela PADRON Quero, Marie-Angélique SAVANÉ, Karan SINGH, Rodolfo STAVENTHAGEN, Myong Won SUHR, ZHOU Nanzhao

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Preamble

On the eve of the twenty-first century, intense thought and discussion is being devoted to the future of human society. Education, on which human progress depends to such a large extent, has not escaped scrutiny. What is it doing today to prepare the active citizens of tomorrow?

It is in this context, and in keeping with the mission of UNESCO, that 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 14 other persons from all over the world and from varied cultural and professional backgrounds.

The International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century was formally established at the beginning of 1993, with a wide-ranging mandate '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 that (could) serve as an agenda for renewal and action for policy-makers and officials at the highest levels.' 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, Director of UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IEP), 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 Prime Minister and Minister of Education of France, Edgar Faure, to chair a panel of seven persons 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 Edgar Faure Commission had the great merit of firmly establishing the concept of lifelong learning, at a time when traditional education systems were being challenged.

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The first and certainly the chief difficulty confronting the Commission in carrying out its mandate concerned the vast diversity of educational situations, philosophies of education, and indeed practicalities of educational provision and organization. Related to the difficulties raised by diversity was the sheer quantity of information available, and the impossibility for the Commission of digesting more than a small proportion of it in the course of its work. Thus, selection was necessary to determine what was vital in looking at the future, bearing in mind both geopolitical, economic, social and cultural trends, and potential roles of education policies.

Realizing of course that no choice could please everyone, and on the basis of documentation assembled at both national and international levels, we decided to concentrate on a central theme that could be of relevance all over the world, namely, the way in which education can cultivate the creative potential of each individual, and at the same time contribute to promoting cohesion in an increasingly globalized society. Admittedly everyday reality varies radically from one continent and one country to another. But over and above such diversity, which should never be overlooked, there remains a general view of the importance of education.

Much has been written about how learning takes place, and what circumstances favour different kinds of learning; a great deal is also known about the consequences, for individuals and society, of decisions concerning the organization of school and higher education systems. There is abundant research and evidence concerning the content of formal and non-formal education; and indicators are available, even if inadequate, to evaluate the policies followed. However, the Commission observed early on that effective choices, both individual and societal, are often based on principles that should be examined and taken into account in any study of this kind. It is therefore not surprising that the Commission decided to explain its approach by referring to certain principles, in particular, those underlying the basic objectives of education policy.

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The method adopted by the Commission was to engage in as wideranging a process of consultation as was possible during the time available. The Commission met in plenary session eight times; it held eight working group sessions to examine both the major topics chosen, and also 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. Individual hearings of well-known intellectuals enabled the Commission to hold in-depth exchanges on a wide range of topics related to education. Other consultations were held on an individual basis, face-to-face or in writing. A questionnaire was sent to all the National Commissions of UNESCO to invite submissions in the form of existing documentation or fresh material: the response was very positive, and the replies were studied carefully. Non-governmental organisations 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 were requested by, or sent spontaneously to, the Commission. The Commission secretariat analysed a considerable volume of literature and provided summaries on a variety of topics for the Commissioners. The Commission will propose that in addition to its report, UNESCO should also publish the working documents produced for it.

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On these bases the Commission prepared for the General Conference a concise text summarising the main analyses and recommendations in the final report.

This text, which follows below, seeks to relate changing trends in the world and societies to the missions traditionally devolving on education.

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In the first part of its report the Commission seeks to identify the main trends influencing education: bearing in mind economic growth and the aim of sustainable development; the transition from individual membership of a society to democratic participation; the relationship between the grass-roots community and world society.

The second part of the report lays emphasis on the imperative of quality in education and the concurrent need to satisfy the immense demand for education throughout the world. Resting on four main pillars - *learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together*- the learning process should be designed so as to enable every individual to develop by making the very most of his or her abilities. The concept of education can then be enlarged in time and in the social space to embrace that of learning throughout life.

Broadening the spectrum of educational opportunity, involving new actors in the educational process and creating closer links between the different types of education are prerequisites for success. We need to avoid a widening of the gap between a privileged minority of those who generally benefit from progress and a substantial proportion of humankind left to suffer its drawbacks.

In the third part of its report the Commission draws conclusions for educational processes from both the overall analysis and the central theme of learning throughout life, which is the key for equality of opportunity. The first teachers of a child, normally, are its parents; throughout youth and adulthood, learning takes place in a variety of forms: at school, in community life, the family, leisure pursuits, associations and civic life. This increasingly complex reality must be taken into account by all the actors in society in building on the four pillars of the learning process. There is, needless to say, a growing influence of information technologies that must be considered.

But it is within the education system - defined on traditional lines - that the central message is forged concerning the type of citizens a society wishes to educate, and that the continuity and progress of knowledge should be ensured. And, by extension, it is teachers who play the crucial, central role in maintaining the vigour of the system.

Marshalling the components of the education process is not easy. It is difficult to define strategies, and still more difficult to implement them with all concerned. But it is precisely the responsibility of public policy, of government, to propose the direction to be followed, and to enlist the greatest possible number of actors in order to succeed in a strategy that masters change, both deliberate and inevitable.

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The view taken in the Commission's report, which is not so much a review as the starting-point of a forward-looking debate, is one of committed optimism, and of voluntarism. It assumes that a certain number of human values - the dignity and responsibility of the individual, the freely chosen participation of individuals in communities, equality of opportunity, the search for a common good - are universal, that they can be shared and applied collectively, and that education can play its part in this great enterprise.

By way of conclusion

Considering the many challenges that the future holds in store, education appears to be an indispensable tool in humankind's attempt to attain the ideals of peace, freedom and social justice. As it concludes its work, the Commission states its belief that education plays a fundamental role in personal and social development. The Commission does not see education as a miracle cure or as the magic key to a world in which all ideals will be attained. In its view, education is nevertheless one of the principal means available to foster a deeper and more harmonious form of human development and thereby reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war.

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

Our century has been noted as much for sound and fury as for economic and social progress - progress that in any case has not been equally shared. The dawn of a new century brings a prospect of anguish struggling with hope. It is essential in this context 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 one's knowledge and know-how, it is also - and perhaps primarily - the best 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, through their reflection, to demonstrate the pivotal role of UNESCO. This role stems directly from the ideas on which UNESCO was founded, 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 doubtless impossible task of overcoming the obstacles presented by the extraordinary diversity of situations in the world and trying to arrive at analyses and conclusions that are generally valid and acceptable to everyone.

Nevertheless, 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.

Looking ahead

Some remarkable scientific discoveries and breakthroughs have been made during the last twenty-five years. Many countries have ceased to be underdeveloped and are emerging; standards of living have continued to rise, albeit at paces that differ 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.

One can, then, speak of disillusionment with economic and social progress. This is evident in rising unemployment and in the exclusion of growing numbers of people in the affluent 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 Rio Conference, and despite the serious warnings of natural disasters or major industrial accidents. The truth is that 'economic growth regardless' 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.

Have we understood all the implications of this, both as regards the ends and means of sustainable development and for new forms of international co-operation? Certainly not! This issue will constitute one of the major intellectual and political challenges of the next century.

That being said, developing countries cannot disregard the classic forces driving growth, in particular participation in the domains of science and technology, with all this implies in terms of cultural adaptation and modernisation of attitudes.

Those who felt that the end of the Cold War held out the prospects 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 fifty million, we must also remember that since 1945 some twenty million people have died in around 150 wars, started either before or since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Are these new risks or old risks? That hardly matters. Tensions smoulder and then flare up between nations and ethnic groups, or as a result of a build-up of social and economic injustices.

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.

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 diminish them.

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. But we should not forget that the will to contribute must come from each person's sense of responsibility. Although democracy has won 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. It is as if there is a constant need for new beginnings and as if everything has to be renewed or reinvented.

How could these major challenges not be a 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?

Overcoming the tensions

To this end, we have to confront, and thus be better able to overcome, the main tensions that, although they are not new, will be central to the problems of the twenty-first century.

There is the tension between the global and the local: people need to become world citizens, without losing their roots, while continuing to play an active part in the life of their nation and their local community.

Another tension exists 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, including the tendency to forget the unique character of each human being. Yet, we are summoned to choose our future and achieve our full potential within the carefully tended wealth of our traditions and our own cultures which, unless we are careful, can be endangered by contemporary developments.

The tension between tradition and modernity is part of the same problem: how is it possible to adapt without turning one's back on the past, how can one acquire independence in complementarity with the free development of others, and how can one master scientific progress? It is in this spirit that the challenges of the new information technologies must be met.

Long-term and short-term considerations have always been in conflict. Today, however, this tension is sustained by the prevalence of the ephemeral and the instantaneous in a world where an over-abundance of information and fleeting emotion continually keeps the spotlight on immediate problems. Public opinion cries out for quick answers and ready solutions, whereas often what is called for is a patient, concerted, negotiated reform strategy. This is precisely the case where education policies are concerned.

A further source of tension exists between, on the one hand, the need for competition, and on the other, the concern for equality of opportunity. This is a perennial issue, which has been facing both economic and social policy-makers and educational policy-makers since the beginning of the century. Although it has sometimes been resolved, enduring answers have never been found. Today, the Commission ventures to claim that the pressures of competitiveness have driven many authorities 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.

Lastly, there is the age-old tension between the spiritual and the material. Although not always overtly felt or expressed, there is a thirst for ideals and values which we shall term 'moral ideals and values' to avoid offending anyone. Education has the noble task of stimulating in everyone, in accordance with their traditions and convictions, and with full regard for pluralism, an elevation of thought and mind reaching out to the universal and a measure of self-transcendence. The survival of humanity - and the Commission does not say this lightly - hinges on this.

Designing and building our common future

Our contemporaries feel torn between a globalization whose manifestations they can see and sometimes have to bear, and their search for roots, reference points and a sense of belonging.

It is through education that we can comprehend the painful birth of a world society. Thus education will play a central role in both personal and community development. Its mission is to enable each of us, without exception, to develop all our talents and creative potential, including the responsibility for our own lives and achievement of our goals.

This aim is more important than all other educational aims. Although it will take a long period of hard work to achieve, it 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, at a time when serious doubts are being expressed about the opportunities opened up by education.

Many other problems clearly have to be solved, and we shall come back to them. But, this report has been prepared at a moment when, faced with so many misfortunes caused by war, crime and underdevelopment, humankind is apparently hesitating between continuing headlong along the same path or resignation. Let us offer people another way.

This way leads to a renewed emphasis on the moral and cultural dimensions of education. It means enabling each person to grasp the individuality of other people and to understand the chaotic move of the world towards a certain unity. But it begins with self-understanding through an inner voyage, whose milestones are knowledge, meditation and the spirit 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 in the final part of these conclusions.

Things fall into place in such a perspective, whether we are considering 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.

The Commission in no way undervalues the central role of intellectual endeavour and innovation, at a moment when 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, are effecting a transition to a knowledge-driven society. 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 the accumulation and application of knowledge. It is for this reason, among others, that it is important to become familiar at an early age with science and the uses of science and with the difficult task of controlling progress in such a way that human identity and integrity are fully respected. Here, too, the ethical issues must not be overlooked.

The Commission is also 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 offers sandwich course or job release schemes. Such flexibility would also help to reduce school failure and the tremendous wastage of human potential resulting from it.

Improvements, however, desirable and feasible, do not obviate the need for intellectual innovation and the implementation of a model of sustainable development based on the specific needs of each country. Given the present and foreseeable advances in science and technology and the growing importance of knowledge and other intangible inputs 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 breakthroughs 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 to persons at different times and in different places, should command wide support. There is a need to rethink and broaden the notion of lifelong education. More than adapting to changes in work, education throughout life should also constitute a continuous forging of one's own personality - one's knowledge and aptitudes, but also the critical faculty and the ability to act. It should enable people to develop awareness of themselves and their environment and encourage full participation in work and society.

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 social level, offers opportunities for both learning and doing. One could be tempted to focus too much on the general availability of such learning opportunities, stressing the educational potential of the modern media, the world of work or cultural and leisure pursuits, even to the extent of forgetting a number of fundamental truths. Although people need to use all opportunities 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. 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.

The basis for a learning society is a formal education system, where each individual is introduced to the many different 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 the essence of human creativity and inventiveness.

Learning throughout life: the heartbeat of society

The concept of learning throughout life is one of the keys to the twenty-first century. It goes beyond the traditional distinction between initial schooling 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 that occur in their personal and working lives. The need, though, 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 human existence require of us a better understanding of other people and the world at large. There is a need for mutual understanding, peaceful interchange and, indeed, harmony - the very things that are most lacking in our world today.

This position leads the Commission to put greater emphasis on one of the four pillars that it has proposed and described as the foundations of education. This involves **learning to live together**, by developing an understanding of others and their history, traditions and spirituality. It would provide a basis for the creation of 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, one might argue; yet it is a necessary Utopia, indeed a vital one if we are to escape from a dangerous cycle sustained by cynicism and complacency.

Yes, the Commission has a vision of the kind of education that will breed this new spirit. But it has not disregarded the three other pillars of education which provide, as it were, the bases for learning to live together.

The first of these is **learning to know**. Bearing in mind 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 education is basically the passport to learning throughout life, in so far as it should teach people to enjoy learning and also lay the foundations that will enable them to carry on learning throughout their lives.

Learning to do is another pillar. In addition to learning to practise a profession or trade, people need to develop the ability to face a variety of

situations, often unforeseeable, and to work in teams, a feature of educational methods that does not at present receive enough attention. In many cases, such competence and skills are more readily acquired if pupils and students have the opportunity to develop their abilities by becoming involved in work experience schemes or social work while they are still in education. Therefore, increased importance should be attached to all schemes in which education alternates with work.

Last, but far from least, is the fourth pillar, **learning to be**. This was the theme of the Edgar Faure report published under the auspices of UNESCO in 1972. Its recommendations are still extremely 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. They lead to the obligation to better understand one's own personality.

The Commission has alluded to another Utopian idea: a learning society founded on the acquisition, the renewal and the use of knowledge. These are three aspects that ought to be emphasised in the educational process. Now, when the development of the 'information society' is increasing opportunities for access to data and facts, education should enable everyone to gather information and to select, arrange, manage and use it.

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

Faced, then, with a growing demand for education in both quantity and quality, 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 on the concept of learning throughout life, the Commission did not intend to convey the idea that by a qualitative leap one could avoid reflecting on the different levels of education. On the contrary, it intended, on the one hand, to reassert some principles advanced by UNESCO, such as the vital need for basic education. On the other, it wished to urge a review of the role of

secondary education, and to examine issues emerging from changes in higher education, particularly the development of mass higher education.

Quite simply, learning throughout life permits a re-ordering of the sequences and itineraries of education, easier passage from one stage to another and recognition of the value of each. Thus can be avoided the invidious dilemma of deciding between selective education, which increases the number of educational failures and the risks of exclusion, and comprehensive education, which can inhibit talent.

This focus in no way reduces the significance of the excellent definition of *basic learning needs* produced in 1990 at the Jomtien Conference on Education for All.

'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.'

This is certainly an impressive catalogue. We should not conclude, though, that it leads to a proliferation of courses. The teacher-pupil relationship, the learning available in children's local communities, and an effective use of modern communications media (where they exist) can in concert make a contribution to the personal and intellectual development of each pupil. The 'three Rs' - reading, writing and arithmetic - get their full due. The combination of conventional teaching and out-of-school approaches should enable children to experience the three dimensions of education - the moral and cultural, the scientific and technological, and the economic and social.

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 involving families and local communities.

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

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

Basic education is of course an issue in all countries, including the industrialised ones. It should be designed to stimulate a love of learning and knowledge and thus the desire and opportunities for education later in life.

We must also consider one of the major problem areas in any reform: the policies aimed at the period of adolescence and youth between primary education and work or higher education. Secondary schools are, as it were, neglected in educational thinking. They are the target of considerable criticism, and they provoke a considerable amount of frustration.

Among the sources of frustration is a demand for expansion and diversification of secondary education, leading to rapid growth in enrolments and overcrowded curricula. There emerge well-known problems associated with mass education, which largely underdeveloped countries cannot easily solve at either the financial or the organisational level. Furthermore, there is the discouraging problem of school leavers who face a shortage of opportunities, their distress increased by a widespread all-or-nothing obsession with access to higher education. Mass unemployment in many countries can only add to the malaise. The Commission stresses its alarm at a trend that is leading, in both rural and urban areas, in both developing and industrialised 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 types of study available. This reflects one of the Commission's major concerns, which is showing the value of all forms of talent so as to reduce school failure and prevent the far-too-widespread feeling among young people that they are excluded, with no future in store.

Types of secondary education should include both conventional education which focuses more on abstraction and conceptualisation - and approaches that combine school and job experience in a way that brings out additional abilities and inclinations. In any event, there should be bridges between these approaches so that errors in choice of direction - all too frequent - can be corrected.

Furthermore, the prospect of being able to go back to education or training would, in the view of the Commission, alter the general climate by assuring each young person that his or her fate is not sealed between the ages of 14 and 20.

Higher education should be seen from this same angle.

Let us remember that side by side with universities, there are other types of higher education institutions in many countries. Some are highly selective, while others were set up to provide specifically targeted, quality professional and vocational training, lasting between two and four years. Such diversification

obviously meets the needs of society and the economy, both at the national and 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. Adopting such an approach creates a new problem: many young people are expelled from the educational process before they have been able to obtain a recognized diploma; they are therefore in the desperate predicament of having neither a degree nor training appropriate for the job market.

There is a need to manage increasing enrolment, but increases can be limited 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, leading to theoretical or applied research or teaching;
- as establishments offering professional qualification, combining high level academic knowledge and skill development, with courses and content continually tailored to the needs of the economy;
- as one of the main crossroads for learning throughout life, opening the way to adults who wish to return to education, either to adapt and develop their knowledge or to satisfy their taste for learning in all areas of cultural life;
- as leading partners in international co-operation, favouring exchanges of teachers and students, and promoting dissemination of first-class teaching through international professorships.

In this way, universities would transcend the needless opposition between public service and the rest of the job market. They would also reclaim their intellectual and social vocation as, in a sense, one of the guarantors of universal values and cultural heritage. The Commission sees this as a cogent reason for greater university autonomy.

Having formulated these proposals, the Commission emphasizes that these views take on a special significance in poor countries, where universities have a decisive role to play. In these countries, universities must learn from their own pasts, and analyze the difficulties around them, 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 aim to provide the vocational and technological training of the future leaders, and the graduate and post-graduate

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 on an individual basis by the Eastern Asian countries.

Getting the reform strategies right

One should not underestimate the obligation to manage short-term constraints or disregard the need to adapt existing systems. The Commission wishes, though, to emphasize the need for a more long-term approach if the reforms required are to succeed. By the same token, it stresses the fact that reforms one after another cancel out each other, since they do not allow the system the time needed either to absorb change or to get all actors 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, and rejecting past achievements. As a result, teachers, parents and pupils are disoriented and less than willing to accept and implement reform.

Three main actors contribute to the success of educational reforms: first of all, the local community, including parents, school heads and teachers; but also the public authorities; and the international community. Much past failure has 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. 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 financial, technical and/or vocational 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 training, and on-the-job teacher training, usually arouses greater awareness, develops judgement and helps build local capacities. When communities assume greater responsibility for their own development, they learn to appreciate the role of education both in achieving societal objectives and in improving the quality of life.

Here, the Commission stresses the great advantages of prudent decentralisation in helping to increase responsibility and the ability to innovate at the school level.

In any event, no reform can succeed without the co-operative and active participation of the teachers. For the Commission, this is one way of recommending 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 reaching increasingly into the school, particularly through the new communication and information media. The young people with whom the teacher has to deal are under less supervision than in the past by their families or religious movements, but they are also better informed. Teachers have to take this new situation into account if they are to be heard and understood by young people. They must impart to them an inclination 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 act, but also because of the expectations aroused by education and the criticisms which are often unjustly directed at them. Above all teachers want to see their dignity 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.

Let us recognize that the renewal of this kind of dialogue is no easy task. Renewal is essential, however, in order to put an end to the teachers' feelings of isolation and frustration, and to make change acceptable and ensure that everyone contributes to the success of the necessary reforms.

In this context, it is appropriate to add some recommendations concerning the content of teacher training, the access of all 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 providing the education system not only with well-trained teachers but also with the tools required to deliver education of a high standard. These tools should include books, modern communication media, and suitable cultural and economic support for the school.

Fully aware of classroom practicalities today, the Commission lays great emphasis on the quantity and quality of traditional teaching materials, in

particular 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. This can avoid failures, bringing out some of the pupils' natural talents and providing better study and career guidance with a view to learning continued throughout life.

Given the above, improving education systems requires responsible public policy. Policy-makers cannot assume that the market can compensate for the failures in the system or that *laissez-faire* is sufficient.

It is on the strength of its belief in the importance of public policy that the Commission has stressed the permanence of values, the challenges of future demands, preparing the future, and review of the duties of teachers and society. It is through policy formulation that vital public discussions can be generated and all issues considered. Education is everyone's business: our future is at stake, and it is through education that one can seek to improve the lives of all people.

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 State, private or mixed, give the direction, prepare the system's foundations and main features 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 and should be available to all people. 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 forms of income distribution. But whatever the case may be, all the choices to be made should be predicated upon the fundamental principle of equal opportunity.

During the discussions, the Chairman of the Commission put forward a more radical proposal. As education throughout life gradually becomes a reality all young persons could be allocated an education voucher at the start of their education. This would entitle them to a certain number of years of education. Their entitlement would be credited to an account at a bank which would manage a capital of time available for each individual, together with the appropriate funds. Everyone could use their capital for schooling, on the basis of their own choices. 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 potential deviations, to the detriment even of equality of opportunity. Thus, given present-day realities, the education voucher might be

allocated at the end of compulsory schooling so as to enable adolescents to choose a path without jeopardising future choices.

Broadening international co-operation in the global village

The Commission noted the growing need, 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 for no other reason than the growing interdependence so often emphasised. It also regretted the inadequacy of results and stressed the need for reform of international institutions to make their action more effective. There is need for effective action in both the social and the educational fields. The importance of the World Summit on Social Development, held in Copenhagen in March 1995, has been deliberately stressed. Education occupies a prominent place in the guidelines adopted.

The Commission framed a number of recommendations concerning:

- a policy of strong encouragement for the education of girls and women, following on the recommendations of the Beijing Conference held in September 1995;

- the allocation of a minimum percentage of development aid (a quarter of the total) to fund education: this adjustment in favour of education should also apply to international funding institutions, first and foremost the World Bank, which already has an important role;

- the further development of debt-for-education swaps to offset the adverse effects on State education expenditure of adjustment policies and policies for reducing internal and external deficits;

- the widespread introduction of the new technologies of the 'information society' in all countries, to prevent the growth of yet another gap between rich countries and poor countries;

- enlisting the outstanding potential of non-governmental organisations, naturally including grass-roots initiatives, which can provide valuable support to international co-operation in education.

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. 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 the partnership approach is that it can lead to a 'win-win situation'. Whilst industrialised countries can assist developing countries by contributing their successful experiences, their technologies and financial and material resources, developing countries can teach the industrialised countries ways of passing on their cultural heritage, approaches to the socialisation 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 partnership, both in spirit and in reality, along the lines suggested by the Commission to the General Conference. UNESCO can do this by making known successful innovations and helping to establish networks on the basis of grass-roots initiatives by NGOs, designed both to develop education of a high standard (UNESCO Chairs) and to stimulate research partnerships.

More fundamentally, however, UNESCO will serve peace and mutual understanding among people by continuing to stress the value of education as a means of reconciliation and a way to develop the will to live together, as active members of our global village, thinking and organising for the good of future generations. It is in this way that UNESCO will contribute to a culture of peace.