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## REVISITING *LEARNING: THE TREASURE WITHIN*

### ASSESSING THE INFLUENCE OF THE 1996 DELORS REPORT

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The vision outlined  
in *Learning: The  
Treasure Within*

Influence on the  
conceptualization  
of education

Influence on  
education policy  
and practice

How does the  
Delors vision  
relate to EFA?

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## ABSTRACT

Published by UNESCO in 1996, *Learning: The Treasure Within*, the Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, chaired by Jacques Delors, former European Commission President, proposed an integrated vision for education. Much like the Faure Report *Learning to Be*, published in 1972, the Delors Report is widely considered to be a key reference for the conceptualization of education and learning worldwide. What have been the influence of the vision and the paradigms of lifelong learning and the four pillars of learning to know, to do, to be, and to live together, on educational discourse, policy, and practice? How has the report influenced UNESCO's own strategic vision and programme? This paper discusses these questions as a first step towards the critical rereading of the Delors Report that aims to revisit this vision of education for the future of education in the light of global societal transformation observed since the mid-1990s.

## > INTRODUCTION

The International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, established by the former Director-General of UNESCO, Federico Mayor, and presided by Jacques Delors, published a report in 1996 entitled: *Learning: The Treasure Within*.<sup>1</sup> Much like the Faure report *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow*,<sup>2</sup> published in 1972, the Delors Report is widely considered to be a key international reference for the conceptualization of education and learning. While the vision proposed in the Delors Report continues to inspire thinking on education worldwide, it is important to highlight that societal transformation underway since the 1990s has given rise to fresh challenges which call for a re-conceptualization of education and its contribution to development. It is therefore timely to revisit the 1996 Delors Report in order to determine the

degree of continued relevance of this vision for education. To what extent does the analysis remain valid in the contemporary global context? What would need to be adjusted or refined in the vision given new emerging challenges for education and learning? As a first step in this undertaking it is important to gain a better understanding of the influence that the Delors Report has had on education policy and practice worldwide since its publication in 1996. This paper therefore begins by (1) recalling the vision of education and learning articulated in the Delors Report, before reviewing existing evidence on the influence the report has had on (2) conceptualizations of education, on (3) education policy and practice, as well as on (4) UNESCO's own programme of work.

## > THE VISION OUTLINED IN *LEARNING: THE TREASURE WITHIN*

*Learning: The Treasure Within* (1996) was specifically prepared for UNESCO by an independent commission chaired by Jacques Delors and composed of fifteen personalities from various backgrounds. In early 1993, the Director-General of UNESCO thought it was timely to aggregate contemporary ideas on education and gather existing views on how we should consider education for the twenty-first century. The introductory chapters of *Learning: The Treasure Within* thus provide an overview of societal challenges and deal with a wide range of development issues ranging from globalization to the knowledge society, social cohesion, inclusion, exclusion, gender equality, and democratic participation.

### TENSIONS GENERATED BY SOCIETAL CHANGE<sup>3</sup>

These issues are explored against the backdrop of a number of tensions generated by technological, social, and economic change. Indeed, the Delors Report argues that technological and social changes observed in the mid-1990s were generating a range of tensions 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 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.”

➤ **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.”

➤ **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 overabundance 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.”

1 Delors et al. (1996). *Learning: The Treasure Within*. Paris: UNESCO.

2 Faure et al. (1972). *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow*. Paris: UNESCO.

3 The citations relative to these tensions are all taken from Delors et al. (1996). *Learning: The Treasure Within*.

➤ **The need for competition and 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 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.”

➤ **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.”

Through this analysis, *Learning: The Treasure Within* proposes various recommendations relative to combating inequitable economic growth; breaking the vicious cycle linking poverty and the inequality observed between men and women; building bridges between school and the world of work; formulating a time credit for education; reviewing the material, social and economic status of teachers; learning to respect diversity; and rethinking the challenges posed by the development of new information technologies. The introductory essay entitled *Education: A necessary utopia* indicates clearly that the vision articulated in the report is placed in a long-term perspective of the 21st century. Considering the extraordinary diversity that characterizes education in our world, the report seeks to focus on how learning processes and educational institutions can strengthen social cohesion in an increasingly globalized world.

## THE VISION OF LEARNING<sup>4</sup>

Building on this earlier analysis, the Delors Report also proposes a renewed vision of learning. It reaffirms and broadens the concept of “Learning throughout life” already presented in the 1972 Faure Report *Learning to Be*. The concept was to be one of the keys of the 21st century because “it meets the challenge of a rapidly changing world, and it is necessary because of its advantages of flexibility, diversity and availability at different times and in different places. It also goes beyond the traditional distinction between initial schooling and continuing education”.<sup>2</sup> With the lifelong learning paradigm set as a backdrop, the report is based on four key pillars underlying education and life; learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together:

➤ **Learning to know:** Learning to know, includes *Learning to learn*, an instrumental learning skill inherent to basic education, which allows individuals to benefit from educational opportunities that arise throughout life. “Bearing in mind the rapid changes brought about by scientific progress and new forms of economic and social activity”, Learning to know allows for the combination of a “broad general education with the possibility of working in depth on a selected number of subjects”.

➤ **Learning to do:** Learning to do emphasizes the acquisition of vocational skills necessary to practice a profession or trade. Partnerships between the world of education and that of business and industry are encouraged in view of promoting a variety of arrangements that allow education and training to interact with the world of work. In addition to learning to practice a profession or trade, people need to develop the ability to adapt to a variety of often unforeseeable situations and to work in teams – these skills have conventionally not been given due attention in education.

➤ **Learning to be:** Learning to be was the central theme of the Faure Report published by UNESCO in 1972 which emphasized the development of the human potential to its fullest. The 1972 recommendations were still considered to be extremely relevant in the Delors Report “for in the twenty-first century everyone will need to exercise greater independence and judgment combined with a stronger sense of personal responsibility for the attainment of common goals.”

➤ **Learning to live together:** Learning to live together is seen as needing to develop an understanding of others, of their history, their traditions, and their spirituality. Such understanding “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” [...] and “to escape from the dangerous cycle sustained by cynicism and complacency.”

4 The citations relative to the four pillars of learning are all taken from Delors et al. (1996). *Learning: The Treasure Within*.

5 Delors et al. (1996).

## > INFLUENCE OF THE DELORS REPORT ON THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF EDUCATION

What do we know about the influence that the Delors Report has had since the 1990s? As a document proposing paradigms for the conceptualisation of an integrated and humanistic vision of education, it is not always easy to determine the impact it has had on policy and practice.

### BEYOND THE UTILITARIAN ECONOMIC VISION OF THE 1990s

In order to fully appreciate the novelty proposed by the Delors Report in 1996, it is useful to recall the international education development context in which it was published. The end of the Cold War in the early 1990s spelled the end of a global context of bi-polar geopolitics. Symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War saw the emergence of a mono-polar world order and the triumph of economic liberalism and capitalism. With what was perceived as the confirmation of the failure of the socialist development model, the market was increasingly seen as the main factor of regulation in a globalized world. Within this ideological context, there was a return to more traditional utilitarian economic approaches to development, in which investment in education was framed primarily in terms of its positive impact on human development.<sup>6</sup>

### A HUMANISTIC AND INTEGRATED VISION OF EDUCATION

Published in the mid-1990s, the Delors Report offered a different vision for education from the dominant utilitarian, economic tone prevalent at that time. Burnett (2008), for instance, reminds us that the Delors Report was based on a vision of “education as a public good with a fundamental role to play in personal and social development”, thus providing a guide for education systems to “make them more meaningful, flexible, and fair, based on the four pillars of education.” Draxler (2010) further elaborates on the contrasting vision proposed by the report at that time:

“The context in which the report was written was one of important changes in thinking about education and in education development policy. The humanistic and optimistic view dominant in the sixties and seventies of a holistic education aimed at both individual and societal progress had ceded predominance to a more utilitarian view based on policymakers’ desires to build human capital. The value of education was widely expressed in “rates of return” on investment (public and private) and

helped reinforce a strongly capitalistic and productivistic view of the value of education [...]. It proclaimed a deeply humanistic vision of education as a holistic process, linking the acquisition of knowledge to practice, and balancing individual with collective competence. It posited the fundamental and idealistic view of education as much broader than economics.”

### LIMITS OF THE “DELORS VISION”

While the report has been seen by some as being “more profoundly humanistic [...] and less market driven” than the visions of education proposed by such development partners as the World Bank or the OECD (Power 1997), others are more critical. Bhola (1997), for instance, argues that the vision remains influenced by conventional development discourse in which education is seen “as preparation for a future working life, not for social praxis in the present”, and that it promotes a “formalization of education, not a freeing of the process of education from bureaucratic systems of delivery”. Noting that ideological analysis of the Delors Report has remained rare, Lee (2007) analyses the ideological underpinnings of the educational vision proposed. “While the Delors Report reaffirmed social democratic liberalism based on the Faure Commission’s humanistic and utopian ethos of learning throughout life, it was the schooling discourse which was centred in its social democratic liberalism.” Furthermore, Cuellar Reyes (2006) highlights the fact that inputs for education are seen only through the context of globalization, itself framed in terms of economics and the development of new technologies.

Others, such as Sancho Gil (2001), have regretted that the Delors Report gave education the complex responsibility to overcome the seven tensions generated by societal change. Moreover, while the report outlined what education should ideally be, it did not suggest any indication on how to move from the current situation to the ideal one. Furthermore, he also argued that the teaching and learning strategies presented in the report are not truly novel:

“The pedagogical strategies designed to achieve or enable this kind of education are not so ‘new’. In reality, they are not only the result of the progressive and humanistic vision of education, promoted by educators such as Dewey, Freinet or Freire, but also of the constructivist and collaborative reflections on learning stemming from the psychological reports on development by Piaget and Vygotsky.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> This discourse rests on rationales for investment in education illustrated through its return in terms of increased rural productivity and urban self employment, higher levels of earnings in the formal sector, lowered fertility, better diet and earlier and effective diagnosis of illness, food security, better child health care (particularly through higher levels of female education), and longer life expectancy.

<sup>7</sup> Sancho Gil (2001), author’s translation from “Las estrategias pedagógicas para lograr o posibilitar este tipo de educación no parecen ciertamente ‘nuevos’. En realidad, entroncan con toda la visión progresista y humanista de la enseñanza, en la que es posible reconocer tanto las ideas de educadores como Dewey, Freinet o Freire, como las perspectivas constructivistas y colaborativas del aprendizaje basadas en los planteamientos psicológicos sobre el desarrollo de Piaget y Vygotsky.”

## THE CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATING THE VISION INTO POLICY AND PRACTICE

Some analysts have also argued that the “Delors vision” is too utopian and does not easily translate into practice. Even proponents of the report admit that the “conclusions were more philosophical than practical”, but go on to affirm that this is perhaps – as stated in the introduction to the report itself - a “necessary utopia” (Draxler 2010). It is true that the challenges of operationalizing a vision of lifelong learning and of monitoring the quality and relevance of education through the four pillars of learning are daunting as they suppose system-wide frameworks and interdisciplinary approaches. In connection with this, the “Discussion kit” prepared by the Canadian

Commission for UNESCO in 1997 was precisely designed as a tool “to facilitate discussion of the principal ideas contained in the Delors Report” among “young people, parents, teachers, adults in training, practitioners in the non formal sector, education and training officials and government employees and members involved in education reform”.<sup>8</sup> The report was thus clearly a vision document, proposing a philosophical approach to the ultimate purpose of education. As such, it required a dedicated effort to translate the framework in an operational way into education strategies and practice. In sum, recognizing its continued relevance for thinking on education, Bhola (2000) has characterized the report as a “postmodern document in need of intelligent deconstruction”.

## > INFLUENCE ON EDUCATION POLICY AND PRACTICE

Although there has been no systematic follow-up on the influence and impact of the Delors Report, it is safe to say that it has generated a great deal of interest both in terms of education policy debates and curriculum development. Its influence has been likened to that of a “White Paper”:

“It informed but did not dictate legislation and policy at the international level. It formed a backdrop for reflection for decision-makers. It was translated into more than 30 languages, was an integral part of policy debate in every country where a language version was available, and generated special initiatives in at least 50 countries. Schools and districts took the four pillars the report proposed as a way of viewing the purpose of education as a basis of reviewing their curricula.”<sup>9</sup>

While the evidence on the direct impact of the Delors Report is “scattered”, it was affirmed that by 2008 that it had impacted on:

“Fifty or so major policy conferences had the report as a central theme, reports of legislation in a dozen or so countries, local applications, continued debate in scholarly and other publications, and continued references in the policies of UNESCO, the World Bank, and bilateral donors papers ...”<sup>10</sup>

## INFLUENCING POLICY CONCEPTS AND FOCUS AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL

The Delors Report has undeniably had a visible impact on education policy at the global level. It is important to stress that the four pillars of learning were envisaged against the backdrop

of the notion of “lifelong learning”, itself an adaptation of the concept of “lifelong education” as initially conceptualised in the 1972 publication *Learning to Be*. Understood also as “life-wide”, lifelong learning is seen as the key organizing principle for education and training systems, as well as for the building of knowledge societies (Torres 2010). As such, assessing the quality of learning cannot be reduced to schooling or to formal education and training sectors. Bearing in mind that learning takes place both within and outside of school, analysis of the social and economic context of learners is essential to reaching a better understanding of quality in education (Resnick 1987). Nor can employability and socioeconomic integration be seen as the only purpose or result of (successful) learning. In the lifelong learning perspective, learning is about the development of the whole person:

“It is about allowing every individual to participate in society and making our society more cohesive. Learning enables people to develop to their full potential and to play an active role in their environments. It allows them to try new things and to harness untapped talents. Along with enhancing employment opportunities and professional standing, learning lays the groundwork for fulfilment in life.”<sup>11</sup>

This Lifelong Learning paradigm, so central to the Delors vision of a “learning society”, has had a significant influence in terms of global education policy. While the paradigm is not new, Lee (2007) argues that “it is indisputable that the Delors Report is UNESCO’s most important policy report on lifelong learning since the 1972 Faure Report” [...], and, as such, “seems to have had a policy influence not only on UNESCO’s member countries but also on some leading international agencies such as the EU.”

8 Canadian Commission for UNESCO (1997).

9 Draxler (2010).

10 Carneilo & Draxler (2008).

11 Bertelsmann Stiftung (2010). ELLI: European Lifelong Learning Indicators. Making lifelong learning tangible.

## MONITORING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

There have also been some interesting attempts to monitor such policy orientations in the Canadian and European contexts. Indeed, drawing on the pioneering work of the Canadian Council of Learning in developing the Composite Lifelong Learning Index,<sup>12</sup> the Bertelsmann Stiftung has developed an index for European countries based on indicators that cover the various domains of lifelong learning as defined by the four pillars of learning. These European Lifelong Learning Indicators (ELLI) and composite index are an attempt to capture at least part of the concept of lifelong learning in the European context.<sup>13</sup> The selection of relevant indicators is necessarily conditioned by the social, economic and cultural realities of each context and it would be useful to determine the extent to which such a composite index may be adapted to non-European realities. Indeed, some analysts have argued that while the vision of “learning throughout life” outlined in the Delors Report may become a reality for countries in the North, the “paradigm has so far had little impact on countries in the South” (Torres 2010). Indeed, it has been highlighted that the lifelong learning paradigm “will remain a fantasy for most of the countries in the developing world where learning throughout life has to be translated into basic education with development-oriented content and taught through adult literacy and adult education programs” (Bhola 2000).

## “PATHWAY” FOR NATIONAL EDUCATION REFORM

As a philosophical document providing a broad vision, the Delors Report has arguably served as a pathway for reform, guiding policy debates for education reform in a range of countries and regions. In Latin America and the Caribbean, for instance, it has been suggested - in the context of globalization of the late 1990s – that the Delors Report should serve as an important reference in the debate on the nature of reform required for education systems:

“The pathway for reform is laid out in the philosophy and agenda of the Delors Report. In its emphasis on the value of education as a tool for economic and human capital development; in its vision of learning as learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be; in its central focus on teachers and policy-makers as the keys to change and reform; the Report provides a broad vision of the direction of change efforts.”<sup>14</sup>

The Delors Report was thus seen as an essential philosophical framework that could help guide the reform agenda as countries within the Latin American and Caribbean region attempted to “reengineer their education systems” (De Lisle 1998). Another example of the role of the Delors Report in inspiring thinking on education policy is evident in the 1998 India Country Paper on Vocational Education in which “both learning to know and

learning to do would be critical” to the process of adaptation throughout life within an integrated vision of learning:

“Learning to be and learning to live together – the other two pillars of learning, the one based on self-actualization and the other on tolerance and non-violence towards others would mesh with the first two producing an integrated man and commutatively an integrated society. There would thus be in the education scenario of tomorrow no room for separation of work and education. The pursuit of a vocation, skill or technology would not be a stand-alone one but fused with the pursuit of education as a whole in a lifelong synthesis.”<sup>15</sup>

## GAUGING THE QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF EDUCATION

The four pillars of learning outlined in the Delors Report may also serve as a reference to gauge the relevance of education (Tawil, Akkari & Macedo 2012). While the assessment of the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of education systems can be approached through more readily available quantitative data, assessing the relevance of educational processes, their outcomes and impact, is much more challenging. This is due to the fact that the perceived relevance of education is subjective and can only be defined in any given context at any given time, in terms of the consensus reached between stakeholders with differing perspectives on what the purpose and desired outcomes of education are/should be, how best to produce these, and if existing education systems are doing so in a satisfactory manner. As has been suggested by the work of the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, *relevance* is a key, albeit subjective, dimension of the quality of education. The four pillars of learning, as outlined in *Learning: The Treasure Within*, are thus a useful reference when gauging the relevance and quality of educational processes. Quality education may be seen to be founded on the four pillars of learning, inspired by an integrated conceptualization of the quality and relevance of education that provides the cognitive, moral and cultural dimensions of learning. As such, De Lisle (1998) has argued that:

“The four pillars constitute [...] a broad guide to the reform of the instructional subsystem which include the elements of pedagogy, curriculum, and teacher trainer methodologies”, as well as “outlining a direction for the reform of teachers and teaching...”<sup>16</sup>

## INFORMING CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

As a broad set of integrated goals, the four pillars of learning provide a useful reference for the reorientation and reorganization of school curricula. In emphasizing the “all-rounded development and the full flowering of the human potential of individual learners”, Zhou nan-Zhao (2005)

12 The Canadian Council of Learning (2010).

13 Bertelsmann Stiftung (2010).

14 De Lisle (1998: 45).

15 Government of India (1998: 17).

16 De Lisle (1998: 35-36).

has argued that the pillar of “learning to be”, for instance, encourages more balanced school curricula, “taking into account not only the cognitive-intellectual dimension of personality but its spiritual, moral, social skills and values aspects.” In addition, the pillar of “learning to live together” calls for the strengthening of a learning area devoted to promoting skills and values based on the principles of respect for life, human dignity and cultural diversity. Taken collectively, the four pillars provide a vision of learning throughout life in which “school education is only part or a phase of the learning continuum”. Seen within this lifelong and “life wide” perspective, the Delors vision is a useful reference to ensure that curricular objectives in basic schooling aim to equip learners with the learning tools to enrich and expand their learning outside and beyond schooling. This was the case in Venezuela, for example, where it was used to design a national curriculum for basic education starting in 1997 (Guellin Celis, 2008). A more recent example of the concrete translation of the Delors vision into curriculum design is the development of the Basque curriculum for compulsory schooling in Spain. The 1996 Delors Report, as well as the 2005 Council of Europe’s *White Book on Education and Training*, served as the two basic references for the development of the 2005 Basque

curriculum for basic schooling.<sup>17</sup> This framework is based on the following general domains of competencies adapted from the Delors Report and which are articulated with more specific multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and disciplinary competencies:

- Learning to learn and to think;
- Learning to communicate;
- Learning to live together;
- Learning to be oneself;
- Learning to do and to initiate/undertake.

Another significant illustration of the influence of the four pillars of learning for curriculum development has been in the area of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Indeed, the four pillars outlined in the Delors Report have been used in the ongoing work – coordinated by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe – to define ESD competencies required by educators.<sup>18</sup> Finally, UNESCO has also generated a number of sourcebooks inspired by the “four pillars of learning” and that are designed for educators, teachers and learners.<sup>19</sup>

## > HOW DOES THE DELORS VISION RELATE TO EFA?

“Following the World Education Forum, held in Dakar in April 2000, UNESCO decided to centre its own Education Programme around implementing the strategy and recommendations agreed on at that Forum” (UNESCO 2002).<sup>20</sup> Given this shift in strategic programming, what influence has the Delors Report had on UNESCO’s own programme, in particular on the Education for All (EFA) initiative that has framed the organization’s work in education since 2000? Burnett (2008) has argued that the lifelong learning vision, on which the Delors Report is based, is “embedded in the Dakar framework” and that the recognition that learning starts in the early years, for instance, influenced the formulation of the first EFA goal set in 2000 and which calls for the expansion of early childhood care and education. Likewise, it has been argued that the Delors Report has been influential in the development of the concept of *life skills* - understood to go beyond vocational and practical skills and knowledge to encompass social skills - particularly as it was elaborated in the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000.<sup>21</sup>

Others, however, do not agree. Torres (2010), for instance, argues that “EFA goals replicate the conventional education mentality and do not facilitate a holistic understanding of education and of learning throughout life”, but rather a segmented view of learning. Indeed, she argues that the linkages between the goals are not apparent, they are organized by age, perpetuate the dichotomy between formal and non-formal education, neglect informal learning, and view literacy in isolation. Furthermore, EFA focuses on basic education and primarily on “meeting basic learning needs”, and neglects the need to expand them and generate new learning needs. While the Delors Report recognizes the notion of basic education (as articulated in Jomtien in 1990) as the “passport to life”, it also emphasizes the importance of secondary education as the “crossroads of life”, as well as of higher education as the site for learning throughout life.

The influence of the Delors vision on EFA thus appears to be limited. As has been pointed out by Spring (1999):

“It is a seminal and very ambitious document, wider in scope than anything UNESCO has attempted since the late 1960s. It attempts to identify both “the state of play” and desirable future direction for education across all sectors around the world. While its messages are particularly relevant for developing countries, the report draws

17 Curriculum Vasco Para El Periodo de la Escolaridad Obligatoria (2005: 8-9).

18 <http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/areas-of-work/education-for-sustainable-development-esd/about-us/themes-and-resources/educator-competences-for-esd.html>

19 See, for example, the series produced by the Asia Pacific Network for Education and Values Education (APNEIV) in partnership with the Asia Pacific Centre for Educational Innovation for Development (APEID), and UNEVOC (2002; 2005).

20 See UNESCO Programme and Budget for 2002-03 (33 C/3).

21 Barret, Chawla-Duggan, Lowe, Nikel & Ukpo (2006: 6).

developed countries into UNESCO's common purpose of establishing a united, equitable and sustainable world."

Spring goes on to affirm that "the report is much wider in scope than its other major initiative in the decade, the Education for All programme launched in 1990." This is indeed regrettable as it undoubtedly contributed to exacerbate the progressive disengagement with EFA since 2000 by more "developed" countries which have come to perceive the international education agenda as one that is more relevant for lower-income countries.

Indeed, the Millennium Development Framework (MDG) adopted in 2000, only months after the adoption of the Education for All (EFA) Dakar Framework for Action the

same year, not only challenged EFA as the sole reference for educational development at the global level, but also narrowed the international education agenda to Universal Primary Education (UPE) and gender equality (narrowly equated with parity). The narrower MDG focus resulted in neglect of the broader vision of EFA that encompasses – within its vision of basic learning – early childhood care and education, youth and adult literacy, vocational skills development, as well as concern for the improvement of the quality and relevance of basic learning. The limited impact of the vision articulated by the Delors Report on EFA further weakened the perceived relevance of the international education agenda among middle and upper-income countries as many had achieved or were close to achieving the more limited education-related MDG goals.<sup>22</sup>

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## > CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Delors Report has been widely considered to be a key international reference for education and learning worldwide. As a vision document proposing an integrated and humanistic vision of learning, its publication in 1996 provided a welcome alternative to the dominant utilitarian and productivistic approach that dominated education and development discourse in the 1990s. Having said this, some analysts have argued that the somewhat "utopian" vision has not always been easy to translate into practice. This is perhaps particularly true of the operationalization of the lifelong learning paradigm, particularly in lower-income countries where equitable access to relevant basic education remains a major challenge. Others, however, have argued that the influence of the Delors Report, likened to that of a "White Paper", has been significant on education policy debates in a range of countries worldwide.

Indeed, despite the lack of systematic follow-up on its impact, evidence suggests that the report has influenced education reform and curriculum development in a range of countries worldwide. While the vision outlined in the report is arguably still a relevant guiding framework for education development in today's world, it would be important to revisit the report in light of multifaceted societal change observed worldwide since the 1990s. Such a re-contextualization of the Delors Report can contribute to the current global debates on education and development frameworks beyond 2015. More importantly, however, such a re-reading' of the Delors Report would help ensure that current thinking on the role of education in development is truly "global" and relevant to national development efforts in *all* contexts in our common quest for a just, inclusive, and sustainable future.

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<sup>22</sup> Tawil, S. 2012. *Beyond 2015: Perspectives for the future of education*. Internal discussion paper. Paris, UNESCO. (unpublished).

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