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Introduction

Aim & Objectives

As an international laboratory of ideas and a platform for dialogue, UNESCO has initiated a process of rethinking education in light of global societal transformations.

The objectives of this initiative are:

- To rethink the fundamental principles on which our approaches to education and learning are based in the context of globalization. This re-visioning will build upon the vision of education outlined in the two landmark UNESCO publications, Learning to Be (1972), or the ‘Faure Report’, and Learning: The Treasure Within (1996), or the ‘Delors Report’.

- To examine the implications of multifaceted societal transformation on education, and on how knowledge, skills, and values are created, reproduced, transmitted, validated, appropriated, and used.

- To broaden the global debate on education and development post-2015 through a vision that provides a more coherent framework for understanding education in the current context of complexity, change, and uncertainty.

Expected Outcome

During this first phase of the initiative, a report will be prepared for April 2014. Imagined in the spirit of ‘realistic optimism’, the report is intended to be a call for dialogue around the fundamental principles that can guide thinking on the future of education. It is also intended as a call to action inspired by a humanistic vision of education based on principles of solidarity, respect for life, for equal human rights, for cultural diversity and our common humanity. The report is not intended as a summary of research on education, nor as an alternative monitoring report on global educational development. Rather, it is intended to stimulate a global debate on the fundamental principles and issues required to guide the strategic development of education worldwide. The report may lay the foundation for a possible new world report on education and learning.

Process & timeline

Establishment of Senior Experts’ Group

In order to undertake this process of rethinking education in a changing world, the Director-General of UNESCO has established a Senior Experts’ Group. The group is composed of thirteen members that represent a wide range of expertise from academia, policy-making, civil society, and industry (see Appendix 1 for the full list of members). The Senior Experts’ Group is chaired by Ms. Amina Mohammed, the United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Post-2015 Development Planning and is co-chaired by Professor John Morgan, holder of the UNESCO Chair of Political Economy and Education at the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom. Secretarial support shall be provided throughout the process by UNESCO Education Research and Foresight.

February 2013 meeting of Senior Experts’ Group

A meeting of the Senior Experts’ Group was organized at UNESCO headquarters in Paris from 12 to 14 February 2013 (see Appendix 2 for the meeting agenda). This document presents the ideas and issues identified by the members of the Senior Experts’ Group during that meeting.

April 2014 Meeting of the Executive Board of UNESCO

The ideas presented in this meeting report will be further explored by the Senior Experts’ Group in preparation of a document to be presented at the April 2014 session of the Executive Board of UNESCO.

1 To the extent possible, a second meeting of the Senior Experts’ Group will be organized in early 2014 before the April meeting of the Executive Board.
Initiating wider global consultation
This will be followed by a wider process of consultation in order to hear the voices of teachers, youth, families, policy-makers, and other stakeholders. This process of consultation will use existing networks of National Commissions for UNESCO, UNESCO Chairs, the federation of teacher unions, and others.
Opening Session

Welcome address: Director-General of UNESCO

The meeting was opened by Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, who, in her opening address, recalled the aim of this initiative: that is, to rethink the fundamentals of education at a time when the world is changing profoundly. The Director-General highlighted that tackling the challenges associated with globalization requires long-term strategic vision to guide education policy. It calls for a ‘new humanism’ based on a vision of human dignity and capacity and a reinterpretation of the meaning of progress in our quest for sustainable and peaceful development (See Appendix 3 for the full opening address of the Director General of UNESCO).

Introduction by the Assistant Director-General for Education

After welcoming the participants and thanking them for having accepted the Director-General’s invitation to become members of the Senior Experts’ Group, the Assistant-Director General for Education, Dr Qian Tang, provided some background for this first meeting. He started by referring to the request by Member States that UNESCO lead the global debate on education as part of current efforts to define the post-2015 international development agenda. In doing so, Dr Tang saw this initiative as a means of providing essential input into this debate by sketching out a ‘bigger picture’ of education in development based on a review of fundamental principles outlined in the 1972 Faure and 1996 Delors reports. Going beyond the current discussion on scope and shape of a post-2015 international agenda, this initiative should provide guidance on how to approach educational and societal development in a rapidly-changing world.

Self-presentation by the senior experts

By way of introduction, members of the Senior Experts’ Group were invited to introduce themselves to the others and to share some preliminary thoughts relative to the task at hand. In addition to biographical information, members of the group shared ideas that had as much to do with the ambition of the initiative and its timeliness, as with some key issues and perspectives that would need to be addressed.

Overview and organization of work

The UNESCO Education Research and Foresight team then provided an overview of the project based on the presentation note outlining the context and rationale for the initiative, the aim and expected outcomes, a proposed process and timeline, as well as a framework of guiding questions for the discussion. The Senior Experts’ Group then nominated two rapporteurs, reviewed the provisional agenda (see Agenda in Appendix 2), and defined the modalities of work for the meeting.
This section summarizes some of the initial considerations and questions that were raised by the Senior Experts’ Group during the opening session. These issues were revisited throughout the deliberations of the meeting and relate as much to the ambition, the intended audience, the approach and methodology, as well as to the timeliness of the initiative. The considerations presented in this section reflect, if not issues on which there was consensus, then at least, a common set of questions that need further thought.

**Ambition & Philosophy**

**What sort of vision?**

Does this initiative hope to confirm the relevance of the vision outlined in the 1972 Faure and 1996 Delors reports? Or does it aim to examine contemporary challenges and determine if the two reports propose a valid vision for today’s issues? Might we not be narrowing our vision if we simply try to determine whether the vision outlined in these two reports is still relevant in the current context of change? Are we really looking for a new vision of education, or the reformulation of an existing vision? Should we really revisit the four pillars of education proposed in the 1996 Delors report, and if so, how? Do the four pillars still embody ‘the treasure within’ and if so, do they simply need to be reread in light of the changing context of development? Or do we need to go beyond the vision outlined in the 1972 Faure and 1996 Delors reports?

**Education for adaptation and education for transformation**

In recognizing that the world is changing rapidly, it is important to identify the most relevant changes in terms of their implications for education. It is also important to examine whether these changes have positive or negative consequences, and to determine if and how they need to be accommodated in education. While education must help people adapt to change, education is also about emancipation and the development of capabilities to effect social transformation.

**An inspirational and aspirational tone**

While some experts felt that the report to be produced by the group could resemble a ‘manifesto’, others found the term to be too prescriptive. Some felt that the initiative should be more modest, whereas others felt that it should be quite ambitious and would need to go beyond a technocratic, bureaucratic, political, and consensual approach to education or learning. It was agreed that the initiative needs to create a genuine debate on education. The report to be prepared by the Senior Experts’ Group needs to be both inspirational and aspirational.

**Highlighting the diversity of ‘lived realities’**

There is a need to highlight the diversity of societies both within the so-called Global North, as well as within the Global South. The experiences of poverty, vulnerability, and inequality, for instance, are diverse across societies and are shaped by the specificities of local political, social and cultural contexts. The analysis needs to avoid generalizations and reflect the subtle nuances of the diversity of lived realities. This includes bringing into the analysis the ‘epistemologies of the South’ with regard to conceptualizations of development and the role of knowledge. It is essential to recognize the plurality of sources and of outcomes. There is a need to move away from the illusion of one world and one model and recognize the reality of the diversity of cultures, development models, and worldviews. We must reaffirm a common core of universal values while recognizing the diversity of lived worlds. Based on the principles of respect for diversity and equal dignity, education can combat cultural domination and the idea of a homogenizing world society.
Integrating worldviews of the North with those of the emerging Global South
Despite its international perspective, it can be argued that the epistemic location of the vision outlined in the Delors report was that of the North – understood as a location of power, and not of geography. It may therefore be argued that Learning: The Treasure Within neglected the epistemology of the South and spoke in one voice from a single perspective. It did not consider diverse political economies and multiple ethnographies. However, it is important to recall that dominant knowledge is a locus of power. When privileging one form of knowledge, we are in fact privileging a system of power. The relationship of power between knowledge systems in the North and South needs to be recognized. There is a need to question the dominant Northern cosmology of education that has led to social, economic, financial, environmental, and ‘moral pathologies’.

Recognizing the value of alternative knowledge systems
It would therefore be important to ensure that voices from the Global South be heard in current international education debates. Alternative traditional knowledge systems need to be recognized and properly accounted for, rather than be relegated to an inferior status. Arguably, the recognition of alternative knowledge systems constitutes a starting point for a paradigm shift regarding knowledge for development. Indeed, the future of education and development in today’s world requires the integration of knowledge, paradigms, and visions originating in the Global South. This is all the more relevant that the centre of the global economy is progressively gravitating towards emerging nations.

Approach & Methodology
The need for interdisciplinary approaches & historical perspective
The complexity that characterizes the current context of change requires an interdisciplinary approach without which we can say very little of importance for the future. There is also a need for a historical perspective to counter the current ‘culture of immediacy’. In this perspective, it might be useful to revisit the ‘de-schooling’ debate of the 1960s and 1970s.

Analytical framework – Society, State, and market
The three dimensions of society, state and market, were suggested as an analytical framework for the report to be produced. These

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2 See, for instance, such thinkers as Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, or Rabindranath Tagore.
3 See, for example, De-schooling Society (Ivan Illich, 1970) and Compulsory Mis-education (Paul Goodman, 1964).
4 See, for instance, John Martinussen’s Society, State and Market: A guide to competing theories of development, 1997.
Rethinking Education in a Changing World

overlapping and interdependent dimensions are important in addressing a number of different readerships.

Need for a new language of education
It was argued by some that the epistemic location of the Delors report may be said to be ‘from nowhere and everywhere’. It is therefore situated, by default, in the North. There is a consequent need to better integrate the ‘epistemology of the South’ which speaks differently in terms of its concerns, concepts, practices, and policy frames. This UNESCO initiative is welcome in that it responds to the aspiration for a new language and a new vocabulary of education.

Need for conceptual clarification
Despite their visionary proposals, both the Faure and Delors reports may be considered to be inconsistent in their use of key concepts such as ‘education’ and ‘learning’. Conceptual clarity is all the more essential when considering linguistic and cultural diversity across the world. It would therefore be helpful to be very clear about the terms used, at least in the main language(s) in which the report will be published.

Some of the key concepts and terms that would require a shared understanding and careful translation include the following:

- Development [and/versus] other worldviews/conceptualizations [e.g. ‘buen vivir’];
- Equity [and/versus] equality;
- Respect for diversity [and/versus] cultural relativism;
- Procedural democracy [and/versus]; democracy based on human rights;
- Education [and/versus] learning;
- Formal, Non-formal and Informal education;
- Lifelong learning;
- Information society; Knowledge society; knowledge-based society;
- Skills [and/versus] competencies;
- Short-term; mid-term; and longer-term perspectives.

UNESCO and the International Education Agenda Post-2015

Among the changes in the world since the mid-1990s, we must also acknowledge that the role of UNESCO itself has also changed. UNESCO no longer leads the global education debate as it did in the 1990s. Other international education and development partners have emerged, arguably with greater influence on education policy worldwide. Revisiting the 1972 Faure and 1996 Delors reports provides an opportunity for UNESCO to recapture leadership in the international education debate, reaffirming that education is much more than simply an agent to promote economic growth.

It is important that this undertaking relate to the timeframe and the current debates on the scope of the international education agenda beyond 2015. How is UNESCO involved in the formulation of the international education agenda beyond 2015? How to deal with the several competing international education initiatives, most of which have been launched within the same UN system? In addition to the framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we also have Education for All (EFA); the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), the United Nation’s Literacy Decade (UNLD), and the more recently launched Global Education First Initiative (GEFI).

This UNESCO initiative on ‘Rethinking Education in a Changing World’ could provide a broader and more coherent framework to define strategic approaches to international educational development in the 21st century.
The Forerunners


An integrated and humanistic view of learning

The two landmark UNESCO publications, *Learning to Be* (1972), and *Learning: The Treasure Within* (1996) have been key sources for education policy makers and practitioners internationally. They have been influential in promoting an integrated and humanistic vision of education framed by the paradigm of lifelong learning and by the four pillars of *learning to be*, to know, to do, and to live together.

Lifelong learning

The paradigm of lifelong learning, initially introduced in *Learning To Be* (1972), is linked to the principle of equal opportunity in the perspective of the democratisation of education and training opportunities. In *Learning: The Treasure Within* (1996) lifelong learning is understood as ‘a continuum of learning, expanded to the whole of society, open in time and space, and which becomes a dimension of life itself.’

The four pillars of education

The 1996 Delors report, however, is arguably most well-known for the four pillars of learning that it proposed. These were: ‘learning to live together’ by developing knowledge about others; ‘learning to know’, in particular through general culture which provides the foundation for learning throughout life; ‘learning to do’ through the acquisition of ‘competencies that enable individuals to deal with a variety of situations (…) and which facilitates teamwork’; and ‘learning to be’ in order to ‘have greater independence of judgement which goes hand in hand with the strengthening of personal responsibility in the realisation of a collective destiny.’

Influence on policy & practice

The question remains as to the degree of effective integration of this vision in education policy and practice. This is arguably most true of the paradigm of lifelong learning. If learning can be understood as part of a natural lifelong and life-wide process, its translation into policy has remained more problematic in societies both in the North and South, if not least because of the resource mobilisation it implies. This is particularly true in lower-income countries where equitable access to basic education remains a challenge. It has nevertheless been convincingly argued that the influence of the Delors Report, has been significant on educational policy debates in a range of countries worldwide.5

An Evolving Context

While these reports have inspired thinking about education worldwide, it is important to recognize that the global context has undergone significant transformation since the 1970s and the 1990s.

1960s & early 1970s: unwavering belief in science, progress & growth

The optimistic context of the 1960s and early 1970s was characterized by a North which offered the recently decolonized nations of the South two powerful societal models, inspired by either Marxist-Leninist or liberal capitalist ideologies. These two opposing development models were both rooted in an unwavering belief in scientific progress, economic growth, and greater social well-being. The 1972 Faure report was a product of the capitalist worldview of the North. This is evident in the individualistic approach to education in which each person was to ‘learn to be’. During this period of the 1960s and early 1970s marked by robust patterns of scientific progress and

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economic growth, the more collective and social dimensions of learning were somewhat neglected in favour of a more liberal and individualistic approach to education.

1990s: The end of the bipolar world order & the dominance of neo-liberal capitalism
The mid-1990s, however, was an entirely different period. *Learning: The Treasure Within* (1996) was published after the fall of the Berlin Wall when the collapse of the Soviet system marked the end the bipolar world order and the dominance of liberal capitalist ideologies. The liberal capitalist model imposed itself as the single viable model of societal development. It was a period marked by the intensification of globalisation through greater economic integration and the rapid development of new information and communication technologies driven by the North. The tensions associated with the acceleration of globalisation explain the fact that the Delors Report proposed a more integrated vision of education. Beyond simply *learning to be*, this vision of education included the important dimensions of learning to know, to do, and to live together.

A world in flux since the 2000s
Today, in this second decade of the twentieth century, we find ourselves in an entirely different socio-political context at the global level. Rather than the ‘end of history’ initially announced by liberal thinkers of the early 1990s, we are now clearly moving into a new historical phase of development with a changing global geopolitical landscape, a shifting global geography of economic growth, the return of identity-based politics, emerging signs of the limits of globalization, and the fragility of seemingly well-established forms of financial, economic, scientific and technological power in the North. Today, Europe, once revered as a model of political, economic, scientific, and educational development, now finds itself in crisis.

The quest for new reference models
From the choice between two opposing models of societal development proposed in the 1960s and 1970s, both rooted in a firm belief in the promises of scientific progress and economic growth, to the imposition of a single liberal economic and productivist view of development since the 1990s, the world is now in search of new models. It is a quest for reference frameworks that can provide new meaning and direction in a world characterized by increasing uncertainty and doubt, as we acknowledge the unsustainable patterns of consumption and production on which the current dominant model of development is based.

Globalization & Development
The global context of development is now characterised by the increased interconnectedness and interdependency of all societies. While this represents new opportunities for international cooperation and solidarity, the current phase of globalization is also characterized by a number of crises.

Strains on social cohesion
The intensification of globalization is producing multifaceted crises evident in patterns of growing youth unemployment and vulnerable employment, widening inequalities between and within countries, and the exacerbation of social exclusion. Driven by economic globalization, inequalities are growing across and within many countries, including in emerging economies. This is creating both a class of beneficiaries of this dynamic, as well as a class that is losing out from globalization. Moreover, the resurgence of violent conflict, cultural chauvinism, identity-based conflict, and the undermining of social cohesion are become a central concern for human security. Furthermore, the financial and economic crisis is rendering access to decent work more problematic and its prolongation is a major factor of instability which is calling into question the very principles upon which liberal economics is based.

Environmental sustainability
Sustainability has now emerged as a central development concern in the face of accelerated climate change, the degradation of vital natural resources such as water, as well
as the loss of biodiversity. The environmental viability of the dominant model of economic development, as well as the unsustainable patterns of consumption, production, and lifestyles on which it is based, are now seriously being challenged as we acknowledge the limits in extending this model from the North to the rest of the world.

Crisis of global governance in an uncertain world
These crises are highlighting the limits of our ability – international organizations and governments alike – to anticipate change, and to respond in an effective manner. The accumulation of these social, economic and environmental crises is therefore also symptomatic of a crisis of global governance. Irreversible economic, social, and technological transformations associated with globalization have reduced space, practically supressing distance and time in human interaction. Globalization marks the fact that the impact of Humankind on the planet necessitates mechanisms for global management of space, of the oceans, of international trade, of production and consumption, and of the biosphere. Moreover, multifaceted crises and shocks linked to globalization have made the global context of development ever more uncertain and unpredictable. We lack the vision and mechanisms of governance capable of helping us with this complex task in its articulation at the local and global levels.

What should be the guiding principles of education in the 21st century?
This crisis of governance recalls the public function of the State, and of international and multilateral governance. In order to ensure coherence in global governance and in the world order, there is a need to ensure alignment in the positions of international organizations, and in particular of United Nations agencies. This is valid for all dimensions of development, including education. As an intergovernmental organization UNESCO is arguably best placed to assist countries to collectively (re)define the foundational principles of education in the 21st century. The modest contribution of the Senior Experts’ Group is to identify elements of a new vision of global educational governance. How can we, as educators, contribute to greater humanity in a fast-changing world.

A relevant vision in need of renewal
There appears to be general agreement that the integrated and humanistic vision of learning outlined in the Faure and Delors reports is of continued relevance in today’s world; and that it constitutes a viable foundation for the rethinking of education. The vision is seen as a meaningful alternative to the utilitarian and productionist approach that has dominated international education development discourse and practice since the 1970s. In rethinking education today a fresh reappraisal of this vision is needed that takes into account contemporary conditions.
Globalization, Development and Knowledge

The current phase of globalisation is characterised by development trends that present both challenges and opportunities for the creation, validation, reproduction, dissemination, and appropriation of knowledge. The following trends were identified during the meeting of the Senior Experts’ Group:

Growing inequalities

The dominant economic model is producing inequitable development. There are growing inequalities between countries (North/South) as well as within countries which are being driven by globalization. These inequalities are now creating a class of people who are the beneficiaries of globalization, and a class who are the losers of globalization. How does this affect access to education and how may the problem be addressed? Equity in education may be understood as the social distribution of the opportunities for effective and relevant learning. The concept of the right to education has to do with the right of quality education for all and is inherently related to the question of equity in education. While educational systems often tend to reproduce social and economic inequalities, they can also be made to reduce such inequalities. How can we ensure that education systems will not reproduce inequalities and will distribute opportunities for human and social development in an equitable manner?

Low-employment growth

While many countries across the world may be observing robust rates of economic growth, that growth is not necessarily producing employment. In countries where growth is being driven by capital intensive economies and high technology, growth is not necessarily producing adequate employment.

Strengthening the link between education & employment

Low-employment growth is challenging the causal link between education and employment upon which international and national development discourse and practice has rationalized investment in ‘human capital’ over the past few decades. This trend now affects a range of countries both in the North, as well as in the global South. This has recently affected parts of Europe where a new generation of young people are now facing the prospect of entering employment either late or not at all. The employment crisis appears to be engrained in the dominant model of economic development. How can this model of development be transformed so that the link between education and employment is strengthened?

Overcoming frustrated aspirations among new generations of graduates

The fact that qualified jobs are becoming scarcer is causing increasing frustration among families and young graduates around the world. In many countries of the Global South, in particular, the arrival, onto a constricted labour market, of numerous youth - often the first within their communities to have benefitted from expanded access to education - is exacerbating the gap between the aspirations created by formal education and the realities of scarce employment. Large communities which are entering formal education for the first time will no longer reap the benefits of education in terms of employment and the promise of a better future.

7 See Tania Murray Li, “What if growth is jobless?”, Anthropology Today, 29 (3) 2013.

8 Even in a country like India where economic growth rates have been at 6-9 %, growth in employment is less than 1 %.
Countering the growing disillusion with the value of formal education

This frustration gap is leading to a growing disillusion with the value of education as a vehicle for social integration and greater well-being. The hope for upward social mobility spurred by the massive expansion of access to educational opportunities since the 1990s is diminishing, not only in many countries in the South, but also in the North. How can the economic and social value of education and training be strengthened in the current context? How can the relevance, particularly of secondary education, be enhanced as to make learning more relevant to the lives of young students and reduce patterns of drop out?

Migration, mobility and cultural diversity

The question of diversity may be understood with reference to the dynamics of cultural domination and the idea of an homogenizing society. Migration has contributed to greater diversity whether at school, at the workplace, or elsewhere. Yet, human mobility is not necessarily a reality that should be celebrated. Migration is often the result of the dominant economic model and of the disparities it perpetuates and amplifies between regions both across and within countries - some countries are destined to be poor while others are destined to be rich; some regions within countries are destined to be rich, and others to be poor. Having said this, countries all over the world now have to deal with significant minorities, whether because of the greater recognition of historical internal diversity, or as a result of immigration. While cultural diversity is a source of enrichment, it can also develop counter ideologies when social cohesion is under strain.

Cultural diversity and education

Education should celebrate cultural diversity, and learning can be improved because there is diversity. The cultural dimension of education needs to be stressed, and this, in the spirit of the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.  

Diversifying curricula for better learning

Education is able to prepare societies for respect of human dignity regardless of cultural, social, and ethnic origins through values and citizenship education. How can curricula be changed to better deal with diversity in the classroom? Arguably, enhanced diversity in education can improve the quality of classroom learning by introducing both educators and learners to the diversity of perspectives and the diversity of lived worlds.

More inclusive policy-making

Increased diversity also poses challenges for reaching consensus on educational policy choices that most directly influence and shape identity. This is perhaps most explicit in the choice of language(s) of instruction, the nature of citizenship education, including in such disciplines as history, geography, social studies, and religion in multicultural societies.

Growing demand for voice

There is a growing demand for voice that is observed worldwide that may, or may not be framed in terms of democratic participation. While some of such popular demand for greater voice in public affairs may be situated at the local or national levels, others are transnational and relate to issues of global concern.

Strengthening education for local/global citizenship

Such trends have important implications for public education and their collective purpose of citizenship formation. This has to do with the important non-economic function of education which is the civic and political socialisation of young people and their preparation for active and responsible participation in an increasingly interdependent world.

The digital revolution

Education is also undergoing radical transformation as a result of the digital revolution and the rapid development of information and communication technologies and digital media. The transformation has been likened to that of the historical transition from the traditional pre-industrial educational model to that of mass schooling initiated in the 19th century. While in the traditional pre-industrial model, most of what people learned they did through their daily life and work activities, the industrial educational model equated learning – to a very large extent – with schooling. Learning spaces are now undergoing an important transformation.

Emergence of new learning spaces

The multiplication and diversification of sources of information, the continued acceleration in the production and circulation of knowledge, combined with the development of new information and communication technologies and digital media, are spurring the emergence of new forms of learning in the context of the knowledge society.

Promoting networks of learning spaces

These changes in the spaces, times, and relations in which learning is taking place favour the idea of a network of learning spaces where non-formal and informal spaces of learning will increasingly need to interact with and complement formal educational institutions.

Changing patterns of educational governance

What implications does the greater involvement of more diversified national and international public and private stakeholders in education have for the changing roles, obligations and responsibilities of the State, civil society, and the private sector in educational provision? What is the nature of stakeholder consultation and participation in education policy-making and implementation? How does this play out in terms of the management of public education institutions (participation, financing, accountability, corruption...). How is the role of international development partners changing? What are the issues related to power asymmetries, including that relative to the degree of coherence between international and national development and education goals?

The privatization of knowledge

One of the most serious trends relates to the privatization of knowledge production, reproduction and dissemination. The knowledge commons is gradually being privatized through the instrument of law and, more specifically, the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) regime which is now driving knowledge production. The progressive privatization of the production and the reproduction of knowledge is increasingly evident in the work of universities, think tanks, consultancy firms, and even in book fairs and book production. As a result, much of the knowledge that we think is a public good, and which we believe belongs to the knowledge commons, is actually being privatized. Furthermore, even when it is accessible to all, much of the knowledge available on the World Wide Web is driven by particular knowledge institutions. Much of what is today part of the knowledge commons has actually been produced in the global North, and is therefore not speaking to the concerns, the paradoxes, and the challenges of global South.

Blurring of boundaries between public and private education

The principle of education as a public good under the main responsibility of the state is increasingly being contested with a call for greater involvement of the private sector. With the diversification both of stakeholders involved in education, as well as of sources of financing, a blurring of boundaries between public and private education may be observed to varying degrees in different national contexts. The geometry of State, society, and market is changing rapidly and differs between contexts. In some cases, public education, whose main purpose is to ensure social cohesion and socioeconomic development, may be said to be in crisis.
Strengthening the involvement of civil society
While the Delors report affirmed the principle of education as a public good, in many countries today education this is no longer the case. Should we adapt the principle to this new reality, or should we be attempting to protect this core principle? In the current context of globalization, there is great pressure on the State to reduce public expenditure. This creates a dilemma as regards the principle of education as a public good because we associate the principle with a responsibility of the State. Can we not promote a more important and more explicit role for civil society in education? Rather than current trends toward the commodification of public education, could we not envisage stronger partnerships with associations and non-profit organizations?

Growing importance of corporate social responsibility
Not only is private industry investing more in-company to enhance the skill profiles of their workers, but businesses are also investing more beyond their immediate needs as part of their corporate social responsibility. In India, for instance, the national government is trying to get companies to invest 2% of their turnover as part of their corporate social responsibilities.

Increased resources to meet learning needs
Additional funding from such a new legal regime could be used to contribute to meeting the social and educational needs of communities. Beyond the immediate knowledge needs of corporations in terms of training and skills development or applied research, additional financial resources made available through corporate social responsibility schemes could attempt to respond to broader societal knowledge needs.

The de-professionalization of teachers
If education is to contribute to a new model of development, teachers are key. While dominant discourse repeatedly articulates the importance of teachers, a number of trends point to a process of de-professionalization of teachers in both the North and the South. These trends include the influx of unqualified teachers, partly in response to teacher shortages, but also for financial reasons; the casualization of teachers through contract-teaching, particularly in higher education; the reduced autonomy of teachers; the erosion of the quality of the teaching profession as a result of standardized testing and high-stake teacher evaluations; the encroachment, within educational institutions, of private management techniques; as well as the growing gap between the remuneration of teachers and professionals in other sectors.

Supporting the central and evolving role of teachers
While their role in the digital age of learning is evolving, the role of teachers and other learning professionals remains central for the change of mind-set that we seek in our quest for new sustainable models of societal development. No matter how we conceptualize education, the learning professions will play a central role in whatever we try to achieve. The role of the teaching profession is therefore crucial. It is very important to address the role of teachers and their role in setting standards for the profession.

Note: Other development trends were also touched upon during the discussions. These included the significant share of youth in many societies, the ageing of populations across various regions of the world, as well as the continuation of the process of urbanization and its acceleration in the context of emerging economies. In all cases, these trends are challenging the capacity of the State to provide education as a public good.

These and other trends, as well their implications for knowledge creation and reproduction, shall be further explored by members of the Senior Experts’ Group as they develop their report to be presented at the meeting of the UNESCO Executive Board in April 2014.
Towards a Vision of Education for the Future

Foundational principles for education in the 21st century

Crisis of the dominant model of development
A consensus appears to have emerged at the February 2013 meeting of the Senior Experts’ Group that the starting point for this process of rethinking education should be the crisis of the dominant (‘neoliberal’) model of development. A number of the experts argued that the multiple environmental, economic, social, political, and moral crises generated by the current context of globalization pointed to the progressive deregulation of the dominant model of development. Further, that the neoliberal development model which has led to the current crises can no longer be treated as a self-evident truth and must be challenged. It was agreed that the diverse crises generated by globalization cannot be resolved by education alone. However, the aspiration is that education help address some of the fundamental contradictions upon which the dominant model of development is based.

New visions of ‘development’
The increased complexity of the challenges associated with development requires new approaches. The vision of development and its practice is changing in some contexts. As we acknowledge the diversity of possible approaches to development, we will also need to consider a new language of education.

The need for an educational philosophy of aspirations
The aim of this first phase of the ‘Rethinking Education in a Changing World’ initiative is that the Senior Experts’ Group prepare a report (for April 2014) that will stimulate debate around the fundamental principles that can guide educational policy and practice in the decades ahead. The report should enable an ‘educational philosophy of aspirations’ based on social and economic confidence and hope. It was agreed that such aspirations should not be an unattainable utopia, but rather, a ‘necessary utopia’, in the spirit of what Paolo Freire would claim was an ‘optimistic realism’.

Imagining novel educational responses
What may be the elements of this new vision of education and learning? It may be argued that it is through education and learning that humanity will realise its hopes and aspirations. Indeed, education cannot ignore the transformations induced by globalization, and the accompanying crises and emerging social challenges. Teachers, learners, families, and communities cannot but transpose, to varying degrees, the effects of social changes they experience into the reality of educational systems. At the same time, there are growing political, economic, and social demands being placed on education to accompany these changes and/or to provoke new ways of thinking and living the world. The societal transformations associated with globalization have an impact on education systems and are forging new paradigms which not only suggest new practices, but also new prisms through which to understand education for development.

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11 In Latin American Andean communities, for instance, the notion of development is expressed through the notion of ‘sumak kawsay’, the Quechua word for ‘buen vivir’, or ‘good living’. Rooted in indigenous cultures and worldviews, sumak kawsay has replaced the traditional notion of development and has, in some cases, been incorporated into the constitutions of some countries in the Andean region.

12 Delors et al. (1996).
The three time-frames of education
What role should education play in promoting human dignity, respect for equal rights, in raising awareness about global issues, in fostering a sense of global responsibility that could lead to concrete acts of solidarity and common action at the global level? How can education help construct a new reality of global development? Can this be imagined in what Fernand Braudel referred to as the three time-frames of history? That is; the short-term that attempts to respond to more immediate and urgent concerns; the mid-term perspective that refers to policy, educational structures, pedagogical approaches; and the longer-term perspective that has do to with mentalities and a transformation of mental structures? It is this longer-term perspective, the transformation of our worldviews, which is the most challenging.

From vision to practice:
The need for common action
We know that one of the challenges of the Delors report was that of translating the vision into practice. In proposing a renewed vision of education, or the embryo of a vision, we also need to propose, or imagine, the resources and the means that would be required to realize it in practice. We need to imagine a global solidarity fund for education. If the means are neglected, then any renewed vision will remain an utopia.

Globalization and a ‘New’ Humanism
As an intellectual movement born of the Renaissance in Europe, humanism was characterized by an attempt to raise the value and dignity of the human spirit, in particular through a return to Greek and Latin sources. In this light, humanism stresses the shaping of the mind through classical literary and scientific culture. With the unfolding of the twenty-first century, the time has come to rethink humanism in a universal perspective. This can be done through an objective and in-depth re-reading of history, of the foundational principles and realities of cultural diversity and of the dialogue between civilizations, as well as through a novel approach to science and technology in an inter and trans-disciplinary perspective that links natural and human sciences. This is a challenge for the multiple dimensions of education in a longer-term perspective that is capable of transforming our mental structures based on a redefined universal ‘educational and scientific humanism’ already outlined in the 1972 Faure Report.

Reaffirming a humanistic vision of education for the 21st century
While the economic functions of education are important13, there is a need to go beyond the utilitarian vision that characterizes international development discourse. We need to recall the role of education as a means of cultural and social development. This highlights the importance of values in education. Education is not simply about knowledge and skills, but also about values of respect for human dignity and diversity required for achieving harmony in a diverse world. There is a need to ‘rediscover’, and rethink, the humanistic dimensions of education for the 21st century, recalling the 1972 Faure reference to ‘educational humanism’ (towards a ‘Humanistic Education for All’).14

Knowledge and education as public goods
The knowledge commons are an integral part of world heritage, and education is a public good that should be made available to all. While the State has a custodial role for formal education, it is important to recall that the delivery of formal and non-formal education is a collective responsibility that involves families, communities, civil society organizations, private business and other stakeholders. There is a need to rethink the ‘educational pact’ or the social contract on education.

Reaffirming the principle of the right to effective and relevant learning
Education is a basic human right. This is understood as the right of all children, youth and adults to learn throughout life through formal, non-formal and informal learning experiences. A broad vision of education is needed; one that is lifelong and life wide, and that encompasses formal and non-formal learning, articulating these with diverse informal learning spaces.

14 How does ‘humanism’ translate in different languages and cultural traditions?
Learning beyond the classroom
It is important to conceive education as not being limited to classroom teaching and learning. There is a need to be innovative in imagining mechanisms for learning that are not restricted to the classroom setting. Education cannot be reduced to formal schooling – there is a need to consider the role of non-formal education and informal learning.

Local knowledge systems and globalization
Due respect must be given to local knowledge systems which are losing out in a global economy based on the dominant industrialized model of knowledge. These systems must be recognized, not only as part of the present, but also by giving them a future and by imagining greater connections between alternative yet complementary knowledge systems and livelihoods and work.

The social role & status of teachers and other educators
There is an urgent need to rethink the evolving yet central role of teachers at all levels of education. This not only implies issues relative to teacher training and professional development, but also broader questions related to the evolving social role and status of teachers and other learning professionals.

Science education
Science education must be rethought beyond the training of specialists. It should include ethical dimensions of the development of science as a contribution to active and responsible citizenship.

Assessment of broader learning outcomes
Beyond literacy, academic knowledge and ‘transferable skills’ (such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication), how do we assess broader social outcomes of education?
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Appendix 2 – Meeting Agenda

Tuesday, 12 February 2013

09.00-10.00 Welcome coffee and registration

10.00-12.00 Opening Session
Welcome address, Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO
Welcome address, Mr Qian Tang, Assistant Director-General for Education
Self-presentations by members of the Senior Experts Group
Overview of project. Presentation followed by questions/answers
[REF: Concept Note]

12.00-12.30 Organization of work
Group discussion led by Chair/Co-chair
Nomination of rapporteur
Review of the provisional agenda and its adoption
Definition of modalities of work

12.30-13.00 Influence of previous world reports on education
Presentation (15 min.) and discussion (15 min.)
[REF: Revisiting Learning The treasure within]

13.00-14.30 Lunch

Session I Societal transformations and their implications for education

How are broader societal development trends in a changing global environment related to the various dimensions of education? What insight does this provide on the continuously renewed social contract on which education as a public good is founded?

14.30-15.15 Group discussion led by Chair/Co-chair based on the experts’ preliminary analytical contributions
[REF: experts’ preliminary analytical contributions]

15.45-16.15 Coffee/Tea break

16.15-17.30 Group discussion (continued)
Wednesday, 13 February 2013

Session II  Rethinking education and learning

Current conceptualizations of education are increasingly being challenged by a combination of both an acceleration of factors of change, as well as by structural crises and unforeseen shocks at the global level. How can we critically re-examine our conceptions of learning, processes of socialization, and the relevance of current modes of production and transmission of knowledge, skills, and values in an increasingly complex, interdependent and unpredictable world?

10.00-11.15  Towards a humanism of knowledge, action and cooperation
Presentation (30 min.) followed by discussion (45 min.)
[REF. 'Towards a humanism of knowledge, action and cooperation']

11.15-11.45  Coffee/Tea break

11.45-13.00  Group discussion led by Chair/Co-chair

13.00-14.30  Luncheon with the Director-General
(UNESCO restaurant, 7th Floor)

Session II  Rethinking education and learning (continued)

Group discussion led by Chair/Co-chair

14.30-15.45  Group discussion (continued)

15.45-16.15  Coffee/Tea break

16.15-17.30  Group discussion (continued)

Thursday, 14 February 2013

09.30-11.00  Articulation with global debates on education and development

11.00-11.15  Coffee/Tea break

11.15-12.30  Presentation of the draft final report of the meeting, planning next steps and closing
Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO

Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

I wish to thank each of you for coming to this first meeting of the Senior Expert Group. I created this group to rethink the fundamentals of education at a time when the world is changing profoundly.

Education policy is the ultimate long-term policy – it needs to be visionary, it needs to be strategic. Especially, I would say, at such a time of change.

Globalization is opening new opportunities for exchange and learning. But societies everywhere face rising pressures – from economic, food and energy crises, from the impact of climate change, from deepening inequalities.

Young people are often leaders of change – but they carry also its heaviest burden. This was the headline message of UNESCO’s 2012 Education for All Global Monitoring Report on ‘Youth and Skills’ – whose Advisory Board is just meeting to discuss our work until 2015, the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals.

Tackling these challenges calls for new thinking about the meaning of progress. It calls for a new vision of human dignity and capacity – something I have referred to as a ‘new humanism’. It calls for new perspectives on the kind of education we need for sustainability.

Thankfully, we do not have to start from scratch. Our first step is to reread two UNESCO landmark reports. The first report, Learning to Be (‘Faure Report’) was published in 1972 and introduced the ideas of lifelong education and a learning society. The ‘Delors Report’, Learning: The Treasure Within, published in 1996, proposed a holistic and integrated vision of education based on the four pillars of learning to be, learning to know, learning to do, and learning to live together. Both Reports proposed big picture visions of education – illustrating, for me, the role UNESCO plays as a global laboratory of ideas. Of course, much in these Reports remains relevant.

The Faure Report proposed ‘lifelong education as the master concept for educational policies in the years to come for both developed and developing countries.’ This remains true. The Delors Report wrote that education is ‘the principal means to foster a deeper and more harmonious form of human development and thereby to reduce poverty, exclusion, oppression and war.’ These words have not aged a day. The Delors Report spoke of the ‘sound and fury’ of globalization and its ‘dizzying’ impact on individuals and societies. All of these points are still valid – but the context has changed dramatically since 1996.

Globalization has accelerated. There has been tremendous growth, but also deepening inequalities. New technologies are revolutionizing the way we communicate and share information, the way we interact with others and live our lives. The need to learn to live together has never been more urgent, in societies that are increasingly connected and diverse. Almost one fourth of all countries may be considered ‘fragile states’ – in or emerging from conflicts, and undergoing political transition. The world is getting younger every day, and the expectations of young people are rising, for decent jobs, for dignified lives.

The world is changing – education must change too. Every woman and man today needs new skills to withstand the pressures of change and to make the most of all its opportunities. This requires education for creativity, education for solidarity and education for sustainability.
Mesdames et Messieurs,

Ce qui est en jeu, c’est d’atteindre les objectifs du millénaire pour le développement et de l’éducation pour tous, d’ici 2015, et le temps presse. Notre ambition est peut-être même plus grande encore, car il s’agit aussi de repenser l’éducation pour le 21e siècle. La moitié de la population mondiale a moins de 25 ans. Les besoins éducatifs de cette génération sont immenses et diversifiés : nous n’y répondrons pas avec les outils du passé.

Les nouvelles technologies … le brassage de la diversité culturelle … le partage mondial des savoirs … l’économie de la connaissance… ont fait éclater les murs de l’école. Nos sociétés sont de plus en plus des sociétés du savoir, dont la cohésion dépend de la capacité de chacun à maîtriser la connaissance et à s’en servir. La première condition de l’inclusion sociale dans les sociétés du savoir, c’est l’éducation.

Pour la première fois de l’histoire des Nations Unies, un Secrétaire général a placé cet enjeu au sommet de son agenda, avec l’initiative globale « l’Education avant tout ».

C’est l’opportunité de forcer le changement, sur trois axes :

➠ Mettre tous les enfants à l’école, filles et garçons ;

➠ Améliorer la qualité de l’éducation ;

➠ Construire une citoyenneté mondiale par l’éducation.


Elle appelle à définir les contours d’un programme de développement post-2015, dont l’éducation serait l’âme et le moteur – et c’est ici que ce groupe d’experts joue un rôle clé.

Les statistiques se limitent trop souvent à enregistrer le nombre des élèves qui franchissent le seuil de l’école, pour s’en réjouir ou s’en désoler. Nous devons dire que l’humain ne se réduit pas à des chiffres, à des indicateurs quantitatifs. Il faut entrer dans la classe, voir ce qu’on y apprend, et dans quelles conditions. Il faut regarder la qualité, l’équité, la pertinence. Imaginer des formes nouvelles de transmission, par les nouveaux outils, en dehors des classes. Évaluer la capacité de l’éducation à libérer la créativité.

Nous disons souvent que les nouvelles sociétés émergent, plus connectées, plus diverses – elles se transforment. De quel type d’éducation avons-nous besoin pour y vivre ? D’une éducation qui apporte les compétences du développement durable, qui apprend à travailler en équipe, à plusieurs cultures. D’une éducation mieux connectée au monde du travail, qui donne les moyens pour trouver un emploi. D’une éducation ouverte à tous, aux filles et aux femmes.

Ces questions ne sont pas des questions scolaires : de leur réponse dépend le type de société où nous voulons vivre. C’est un immense défi, et je tiens à vous remercier d’avoir accepté de le relever.

Je remercie le Professeur John Morgan, en particulier, d’avoir accepté de co-présider ce groupe, avec Mme Amina Mohamed, conseillère spéciale de M. Ban Ki-moon.

Nous présenterons, lors de la conférence générale du mois de novembre, un document concis et précis sur les mutations de l’éducation dans un monde en mutation.

Cette réunion est la première étape de ce processus, qui doit être inclusif, exigeant et ambitieux, comme à chaque fois où les mutations du monde appellent à transformer l’éducation, qui est le fondement même de l’humanisme.

Je vous remercie.