



# Education for change Change for education

” Manifesto

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

## Introduction

Given current levels of dissatisfaction with the status quo in education, there is a need for a fundamental change of mindsets and beliefs regarding what we hope to achieve through education and how we achieve these things.

This manifesto argues that there should be a stronger focus on education as preparation for *i.* life as active citizens in modern, complex and democratic societies of today and of tomorrow, and *ii.* personal development. This is because education should reflect broad aims about the type of society we wish to see; through education we should be able to promote a society based on living human rights, a culture of democracy, co-operation and equity, and which is sustainable. This also requires young people to develop particular competences to enable them to work together in innovative, creative and collaborative ways, thus ensuring their ability to thrive in healthy democratic societies. It is no longer appropriate merely to pass on fixed sets of knowledge to the younger generation.

This means education needs to focus more on “doing the right things” in the medium to long term; currently too much attention is focused on “doing things right” to meet short-term assessment outcomes.

Education should be built around a vision of empowering young people to engage in an ongoing debate about the type of democratic society that should be developed and the means by which this can become reality.

## Our challenges in a global environment

While it can be argued that the fundamental role of school remains the same, society has changed and so have the priorities for education. However, the challenges we now face mean we have to rethink carefully the direction in which we want education and society to go. Thus, as global issues increasingly affect local ones, making some feel disempowered, it is important to help people appreciate that their local actions can have a global impact. Education needs to promote attitudes, values and behaviour that will enable humanity to face a number of challenges. As such, education needs to focus on the following points.

- ▶ **The challenge of diversity.** We live in richly diverse and pluralistic societies, yet too often we ignore the positives that this bring, and allow stereotypes and prejudices to colour how

we perceive and treat “others”. Human advancement and social harmony will happen more powerfully where values such as respect, equity, solidarity, co-operation and integrity are at the heart of our action, where people are able to exist alongside each other in a mood of *convivencia*. A focus on the necessary attitudes, skills and knowledge to promote inter-cultural respect and democratic values needs to be a central tenet of education.

- ▶ **The digital challenge.** The digital revolution has transformed means of interaction and access to information; it therefore has the potential to transform ways of learning, enabling young people to be more self-directed and independent, through peer learning and access to new sources of knowledge. This revolution also has profound potential in promoting fundamental democratic values of transparency and openness to information, which cut across social and cultural boundaries. Although this level of interconnectedness can promote active participation, increase our human experience of empathy and help citizens to organise, protest and attempt to defend their human rights, opportunities to promote intolerance, hatred and violence are also greater.

■ As people become the producers and consumers of new digital developments, education faces the twin challenges of, firstly, finding ways to make dynamic use of new opportunities, using the opportunities afforded by technology to make learning more fluid, providing both independence and interactivity, and, secondly, developing responsible cyber-citizens.

- ▶ **The economic challenge.** Global economic trends mean that work patterns have changed, and employers increasingly require workers who possess transversal competences and soft skills, such as problem solving skills, international and intercultural competences, systemic thinking and collective knowledge building, critical thinking, navigating in multiple knowledge networks, adjusting rapidly to technological change with new patterns of work organisation.
- ▶ **A finite environment.** It is imperative to plan to live within the finite resources of the planet. This requires a radical reappraisal of how we live and how we can address the need to ensure a sustainable future. Means of production need to be re-examined, while the continual focus on the quest for economic growth needs to be questioned, in order to develop alternative ways of working and thinking to reduce humanity's impact on the environment. There is an overwhelming need to nurture appropriate values to support this vision and to ensure ways of working and economic developments that lead to sustainable practices.

## The world of education

Education is increasingly under scrutiny and criticised. Many young people are seen to be “failed” by schools; this is unfair as schools are being measured by how well they meet short-term requirements rather than the longer-term realisation of people’s potential. Yet a shift to a longer-term perspective does require a longer-term vision for education. Education is an investment in the future of a society.

Emphasis must therefore be placed on the values that should inform future developments and equip people with the necessary attributes and dispositions to face and solve challenges in a diversity of contexts. Schools do implicitly, and can explicitly, transmit and develop values in learners. Educators should accept this responsibility and be clear about the values that need nurturing through the language, curriculum and pedagogy that are adopted, while the ways in which school life is organised should provide young people with positive democratic experiences. By making learners feel empowered and engaged in their communities, they can take more responsibility for their learning, actions and role in society.

Curricula and pedagogy are not neutral. Decisions about what to teach and how to teach are political. Students require knowledge, but they also need to develop transversal competences. Subjects like mathematics, science and history not only give children knowledge, but should help them understand how knowledge and claims about knowledge are made. The choice of teaching methods, particular areas of the curriculum and the general ethos within educational institutions can develop vital transversal competences necessary for healthy, democratic and just societies. There is much that teachers can do now to promote democratic cultures, through co-operative learning, collaborative knowledge building and critical thinking. But current “school curricula” must be examined; too often they focus excessively on short-term outcomes, whereas there is a genuine need to examine the long-term needs of humanity.

At the heart of this is the role of the teacher. Not only must teachers be open to inquiry-based learning, learning about cognition and thinking about thinking, they need to ensure their pedagogy embraces the values of a democratic culture, as such values in turn shape the actions and attitudes of young people. Nurturing particular values requires a combination of knowledge, understanding and experience.

■ The transversal competences needed to shape people's values, attitudes and actions should become part of day-to-day educational practice. Young people need knowledge, for example, of legal frameworks, other cultural contexts and how the processes of stereotyping and discrimination come about. They need the skills to handle information and multiple perspectives, appreciating alternative views and operating in intercultural environments. They need to be able to choose to empathise, see the value of plurality and promote equity, as part of a range of attitudes required for a compassionate and healthy democratic society. They also need to experience the benefits and complexities of democratic decision making and appreciate its value in the promotion of social harmony.

■ This requires teachers to promote democratic values and competences, which in turn need to become a key element of teacher education. However, there are often tensions between what people value and what they do. Although someone may value equity, powerful forces, such as personal preconceptions, can shape beliefs and actions and be highly resistant to change. Therefore, if teachers are to be able to develop young people's values effectively and turn them into positive actions, teachers themselves need help in exploring their own values and preconceptions in order to develop democratic values and practices in their classrooms. Teacher education must be innovative and collaborative and requires investment in time.

■ At the same time, greater recognition of the importance of teachers and the crucial role they play in the success of any educational system is necessary. Teaching is a highly complex, yet valuable task. However, in too many societies teachers suffer from low economic and social status. Consequently, recruiting and retaining good teachers is a challenge in many countries. This is a waste of resources and makes it harder to develop highly trained professionals able to support the development of strong democratic values, which are vital for the future. More attention needs to be paid to recruiting teachers who have a clear vision of the role of education in promoting key transversal competences for participation in a democratic society and who have the necessary experience, skills and values to achieve this vision.

## Action for change

■ Change is needed – and change will happen – but we do have choices over the direction change will take. If we want a democratic future for our societies and a sustainable society, globally, that must be the driving force behind change in education.

■ It is vital that people feel they are part of the change process, and that they have a say in its direction and play an active role in its implementation. Successful change requires the contribution and active participation of actors at different levels of the process, from those who espouse change, to those who enact it and those who experience it. To achieve this change, to develop transversal competences for democracy, our action must address many areas. Foremost among these are the following.

- ▶ **Access to renewed knowledge.** Greater access to knowledge now means lifelong learning is possible for all. Teachers need to help people understand how knowledge is not simply acquired, but constructed, evaluated and validated. This access to knowledge bridges formal and informal learning environments and allows for greater interdisciplinarity, so schools must encourage cross-over activities.
- ▶ **Pedagogical and educational relationship.** Learning in formal environments occurs best when relationships are based on mutual respect and care. Learners need to be motivated and committed to learning, and teachers need to foster a love of learning. Care must therefore be taken to provide appropriate learning opportunities and approaches and safe spaces, utilising everyone's expertise and helping to develop their abilities in other areas. Schools are also social institutions, and should therefore provide young people the experience of participation in a positive, caring and democratic environment.
- ▶ **The serene exercise of the profession.** Education has become increasingly politicised, with teachers frequently buffeted by arguments over the nature of their profession, how they should be trained, what their role is and what their priorities should be. Instead, the complexity of teaching and the demands it places on individual teachers should be recognised. Consequently, more focus on teacher learning and development is necessary, thereby enabling collaborative working, access to research, opportunities to engage in action research to allow teachers to successfully take up the challenges they face, and so model the ways of working that they wish to encourage in their learners. This also requires a greater focus on the long-term goals of education rather than the relentless focus on short-term results.
- ▶ **School in society – society in school?** Schools have a complex mission to develop knowledge, support personal development, ensure individuals are able to contribute effectively to civic and political life and that young people are equipped to enter the world of work.

This requires a clear understanding of the relationship between schools, education and society. In some ways schools are closed spaces, providing a sanctuary from the outside world and giving young people time and space to develop as individuals; yet at the same time schools are intricately connected to the wider community and society. Schools therefore need to be a space where young people can experience the sort of democratic society that we wish to foster, promoting active and committed participation, providing places for exchanges of views and responding positively to multiple viewpoints, before making decisions for which people accept responsibility. Schools can also reach out as the focal point for a community, as a cultural driver and as a place to foster sustainable and harmonious relationships between different partners and groups. This also requires society to be clear about what schools can do and what they should be doing.

This manifesto for teachers for the 21st century of the conference on the Professional Image and Ethos of Teachers (April 2014, Council of Europe, Strasbourg) was prepared by the Community of Practice of the Pestalozzi Programme and the Education and Culture Committee of the Conference of International Non-governmental Organisations of the Council of Europe.

The following pages present the core ideas of the manifesto in a condensed form. The full text of the manifesto in different languages can be found on the web site of the Pestalozzi Programme of the Council of Europe ([www.coe.int/pestalozzi](http://www.coe.int/pestalozzi)) and on a web site dedicated to the follow-up of the action (<http://changeforeducation.info>).

**[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)**

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