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Volume 5

Global Education for a better and more resilient world:

How international policies,
curricula, materials,
and practices can help
transform learning

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Volume 5
**Global Education for a better and more resilient world:
How international policies, curricula, materials, and practices can help
transform learning**

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Acronyms

ANGEL	Academic Network of Global Education and Learning
CASEL	Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning
CEAAL	Latin American Popular Education Network
EFA	Education for All
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
ETS	Educational Testing Service
GCfSD	Global Citizenship Program for Sustainable Development
GEFI	Global Education First Initiative
GEMR	Global Education Monitoring Report
GENE	Global Education Network Europe
GERM	Global Education Reform Movement
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
ILSA	International Large Scale Assessments
KICD	Kenyan Institute for Curriculum Development
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NALS	National Adult Literacy Survey
NGDO	Non-Governmental Development Organisation
NISSEM	Networking to Integrate SDG Target 4.7 and SEL Skills into Educational Materials
NLSA	National Large-Scale Assessments
NPM	New Public Management
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner
PILNA	Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEGIB	Ibero-American Secretariat General
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TL	Tongan Language
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Foreword

This book was conceived and developed at a time when there are major challenges facing the world. Given the current geo-political, societal and educational context, one might dismiss as naïve a volume focused on the role of education in transforming the world towards greater justice, equality and sustainability.

To do so would be mistaken.

This volume is needed now more than ever.

The Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh, in a slim volume entitled *Self-Portrait*, wrote of two different orders of naïveté. The first is that of the young lad leaving home for the first time, going out into the world and believing that everyone is lovely and that he will be treated well. He is bound to be disappointed. The second order naïveté, according to Kavanagh, is like an older woman, an emigrant, coming home: she knows that the world is tough, that not everyone is a friend, and that there are some right nasty bastards out there. She knows all this, and yet she chooses to believe that most people are good, that the world is fruitful, and that justice will prevail. That choice despite some of the evidence, is a second order, a chosen naïveté, which, according to Kavanagh, is “the ultimate form of sophistication”¹.

This distinction – between a first and second order naïveté – may be what is needed right now. We must embrace real, grounded hope if we are to counter the nihilism that anti-democratic forces seek to promote. Truth, justice, peace, ecological regeneration are at the heart of a pedagogy of hope. We must, as darkness gathers, shine more light.

Given the way the world is, and the enormity of the challenges we face – existential, geo-political, human challenges that will determine the possibility of human co-existence in a planetary future – we need to ground our vision, our policy, our strategies, our practice in two things. We need necessary hope, and we require a functioning learning in solidarity that enables masses of people to become educated in the ways of the world and to learn, together, how to understand, discern and counter the current trends towards ignorance and inequity.

This is where transformative global education, and this book, is necessary now more than ever. Thankfully, we are not at the start of the road; much has already been done.

At international level, a broad consensus has emerged about the urgent need to transform education and for education to become “one of our strongest assets in shifting the world onto a better path”.² For education to transform the world, it is necessary to re-imagine and restructure education systems to ensure their relevance to the challenges we face now and in the future. Education can equip learners with new skills, capacities, attitudes, mindsets and action-orientations for a sustainable, peaceful and just future.

This conviction is not new: there has been a long-standing belief that education is an essential pillar in the construction of a better world. UNESCO was founded upon the idea that wars begin in the minds of people and that it is by beginning with their minds that the foundations of peace should be constructed.

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1 Patrick Kavanagh, *Self-Portrait*, Dolmen Press, Dublin. 1964.

2 Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 10: Transforming Education
<https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-transforming-education-en.pdf>.

In 1974, UNESCO member states adopted a Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, updated in 2023 for the 50th anniversary as the Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development.

The 2023 UNESCO Recommendation sets out guidance³ to Member States on how education should be oriented and supported to bring about lasting peace and human development. It lays out that education should ensure all people are equipped and empowered with the knowledge, skills including social and emotional skills, values, attitudes, and behaviours for effective participation in processes that advance peace and promote international understanding, cooperation, poverty eradication and tolerance. It stresses that education should emphasize the importance of preventing and addressing war, aggression and all forms of violence and human rights violations, and bring every person and community to understand and assume their responsibilities for peace. Education should also contribute to activities in the fight against racism, xenophobia and all actions and ideologies inciting hatred, all forms of intolerance, discrimination and violence.

The 2023 Recommendation now supports the development of national strategy, support and development of global education, variously understood, across the world⁴.

Various processes and policy frameworks have put forward different, often mutually reinforcing visions for education founded on the common belief that education is the foundation for building a better world. Noteworthy was the adoption in 2015 of the Sustainable Development Goal Target 4.7, relating to education for sustainable development, global citizenship and more, which are reflected in the 2023 Recommendation and the European Declaration on Global Education to 2050 (Dublin Declaration⁵). Our visions include processes within diverse areas of policy and practice in the field of Global Education and the related concepts of Peace Education, Human Rights Education, Global Citizenship Education, Development Education, Education for Sustainable Development, Anti-Racist Education, Intercultural Education, Diversity and Inclusive Education.

More recently, deepening global crises in peace, democracy, climate change, and social justice have underlined the value and urgent need of this vision for education, as it faces a direct and full-frontal assault from those who fear an educated populace, and who wish to profit from social injustice and to dumb down public discourse so that the few might be enriched at the expense of the many.

Policymakers, scholars, civil society actors, educators are mobilising with renewed efforts to transform education. Their shared aim is to ensure that learners of all ages are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and agency needed to navigate, with critical hope, the complexities of today's global challenges and to play an active role in creating a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world. This movement is rooted in an accumulating body of research as well as the engagement of numerous civil society organisations working to promote education for a better world.

.....
3 See UNESCO's Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development (2023)

4 For detailed histories in European countries, including regarding the influence of the 1974 Recommendation on the policies, strategies and practices of global education, see Scheunpflug, A. and Wegimont, L (eds) 2024; Global Education in Europe, National Histories, Vol. 1. GENE, Dublin.

5 <https://www.gene.eu/declaration>

It also reflects the visions of educators for the future of education and the concerns and priorities of learners faced with local, national and global challenges in an uncertain world. For real change to happen in education, what is most important is to recognise the commonalities across these diverse frameworks. While each reflects different traditions and concepts, they all point toward the same objective: education as a foundation for building a better world. In line with the 2023 UNESCO Recommendation and the Dublin Declaration this briefing seeks to bring these international processes into dialogue, recognising their value and joining them together to amplify their shared transformative power.

What has emerged is a vision of transformative education deeply rooted in values of social justice and international solidarity, which promotes respect for peace, human rights, gender equality, anti-racism, and diversity. It envisions an education that prepares learners to contribute to a better world that is more just to everyone, more equal, more peaceful, more democratic, and based on international cooperation and planetary sustainability.

It is a vision of an education which aims to equip individuals with the critical knowledge and skills necessary to understand global challenges, acknowledge the complexity and interconnectedness of global, regional and local problems, and to navigate uncertainties. The vision is of an education that inspires and empowers learners to take action to promote social, economic, civic and environmental transformation for the benefit of all.

Policymakers in this area promote active, participatory learning, placing students' questions, interests, and social and emotional learning at the centre of their educational processes, fostering a pedagogy rooted in hope, inquiry, cooperation, critical thinking, self-reflexivity and resilience. These approaches must, of course, be developed appropriately at national and regional level, based on local systems, cultures and contexts.

Central to this vision of education is the concept of critical hope, empowering learners to engage with the world's problems and injustices without feeling overwhelmed. This involves nurturing the ability for reflective thought but also to envision positive change, imagine different futures, and feel empowered to act for a better future for humanity and the planet.

This vision extends beyond formal education to include informal and non-formal learning, life-wide and lifelong learning processes, thereby fostering a society where learning is a process throughout life, and is essential for societal transformation in times of rapid change.

In summary, international education policies are converging on a transformative vision of education that will equip learners, now and in the future, in different modalities and throughout life, not just with knowledge about global and regional problems, but also with the principles, values, competencies, critical hope, courage, and vision to help build a world of peace, solidarity amongst peoples, justice, and environmental sustainability.

NISSEM (Networking to Integrate SDG Target 4.7 and SEL Skills Into Educational Materials) has, since 2018, been developing research and briefing materials to narrow the gap between aspiration and implementation in education for sustainable development and global citizenship education, alongside social and emotional learning, in line with Sustainable Development Goal Target 4.7. These briefings have consistently integrated the latest research, taken account of the needs of teachers and students and have a strong focus on national and regional examples of good practice and contextualisation. A key tenet of the NISSEM briefs has been the recognition that global and regional education policies and strategies are aspirational; they must be reflected in national, sectoral, curriculum, teacher education, and decisions relating to assessment and implementation.

This is why GENE – Global Education Network Europe – when approached by ANGEL, the Academic Network on Global Education and Learning, and NISSEM, was delighted to engage with the development and publication of this latest in the NISSEM Global Briefs series, with a focus on the 2023 UNESCO Recommendation.

In GENE, we work from the national to the international; we work on the basis of supporting the national initiative first, then bringing national experience together through networking for policy learning; and including stakeholders at all levels of the process. We are also conscious that sometimes international and regional agreements can seem, from a national policymaker's perspective, to be in competition. That is why the Dublin Declaration was developed in close dialogue with colleagues from other international organisations – particularly the European Commission, the OECD, UNESCO, and the UNECE – the UN Economic Commission for Europe; to ensure coherence between, for example, the Dublin Declaration and the UNESCO 2023 Recommendation.

In this publication, intended for educators, practitioners, policymakers, and researchers, you will find a clear focus on narrowing the implementation gap. Following a dialogical introduction by the editors, Section 1 explores international and regional initiatives to embed global education across concepts, policy, strategy frameworks and regional cooperation. Section 2 moves from policy to practice, through a range of foci necessary to accomplish change in practice, both in formal education: through curriculum reform, textbooks, teacher education, learning assessment, and classroom practice; and in informal education through youth engagement, participation and leadership.

Education has always been political. As long as there have been movements to effect change towards greater justice, there have been parallel educational movements dedicated to ensuring human flourishing and resilience through teaching and learning focused on enabling people to think critically, to act justly; learning how to resist oppression, and how to change the world. This publication stands firmly in these age-old traditions of education for justice, peace, and human liberation.

Liam Wegimont

Dublin
7th January 2026



Introduction

International education frameworks and regional instruments as a basis for hope: The challenge of the UNESCO 2023 Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development

An edited conversation between Aaron Benavot, Douglas Bourn, Margaret Sinclair, and Andy Smart, introducing NISSEM Global Briefs Volume 5

AARON BENAVIDOT: The theme of this volume reflects the concerns of NISSEM and the AN-GEL network about the role of international and regional agreements that ask educators to help solve current and future problems at this point in the 21st century. In particular, we consider the UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development, adopted by 194 states in 2023 (hereafter the 2023 Recommendation), and regional declarations such as the Dublin Declaration (European Declaration on Global Education to 2050), adopted in 2022.

Challenges for education

AARON: An initial question conveys an historical perspective: how do the kinds of social, political, economic and environmental challenges that education is being mobilized to address today differ from the kinds of challenges that were prioritized in the past?

DOUGLAS BOURN: The current global context presents multiple challenges for us as educationalists if we want to promote a sense of optimism and hope and that change is possible. I have written a lot about this topic recently, drawing inspiration from Paulo Freire.

ANDY SMART: I agree that education is an industry of hope. One of the challenges for us is to make this hope real for students. This fifth volume of NISSEM Global Briefs follows up on the 2023 Recommendation, which sets out an international consensus on personal, societal and environmental learning goals that can strengthen students' hopes. This is discussed by Jean Bernard in her brief. Liam Wegimont and Ana Larcher in another brief focus on the substance of the Dublin Declaration on 'Global Education'.

AARON: The goals involving education in these agreements are inspirational but also highly challenging. We know that the positive impact of education depends on many factors outside the control of national education systems. As a sociologist, I think of education sometimes as a double-edged sword that can have direct positive effects but also direct or indirect negative effects on some of the outcomes that have been articulated as desirable. For example, people that are the most educated often have the least sustainable lifestyles and have contributed the most to carbon emissions and global warming. On the other hand, if you're trying to foster processes such as climate adaptation and mitigation, education – whether formal or non-formal – is often seen as a core driver of change.

DOUGLAS: How we perceive education is important in this context – are we discussing formal, non-formal and/or informal education? Declarations often include all of these. Importantly, most people become informed about the world they inhabit today differently from say fifteen or twenty years ago. Research in the UK has shown that for many young people it is social media that is the main source, alongside schools, for learning about global issues. The information is often mediated through very partial and opinionated outlets leading to what has been termed ‘fake news’. The dominant influences on how many young people access information about the wider world are sound bites rather than a process of engaging with deep learning and differing viewpoints. The media outlets are controlled by multinational companies and wealthy owners with viewpoints. We know that a number of political events across the world have been heavily influenced by social media campaigns.

A conventional view of education?

AARON: Douglas, would you argue that some of the visions embedded in a document like the 2023 Recommendation tend to have a conventional view of education, mainly on formal education as a carrier of hope, even though the context in which learning takes place has changed?

DOUGLAS: Schools of course remain a very important influence on young people’s learning and values, but there is a need for greater research and understanding about the relationship between formal and non-formal learning and their impact. This can be seen, for example, in the brief contributed to this volume by Miri Yemini and Simon Eten and their research on student activism, a vehicle of hope for some young people. Their brief is based on a research study on student activism involving a number of institutions and academics around the world. There is a need for more research like this and for policy-makers to acknowledge that many young people learn differently now compared with even a decade ago.

The need for evidence and research in this area also links to the growing debates about the influence of artificial intelligence on education. How knowledge is constructed, what factors influence this, and the impact on student learning and values development need to be part of international policy debates. The brief by Dylan Wray suggests a path forward by integrating AI into more established media and information literacy (MIL) curricula.

ANDY: This discussion might make us reflect on how we use the terms ‘education’ and ‘learning’ as if they are somehow interchangeable. Mostly, when I’m talking about education, I’m talking about it as part of a system, part of an established program or framework. Whereas learning is something that happens naturally from the moment you’re born. So, there is almost a contradiction in the term formal learning. I think we should protect the idea of learning as something experienced within students themselves, which can include through opportunities organized by educators.

Formulating aspirational international policy documents – is the process sufficiently inclusive?

AARON: The present volume is primarily aimed at education policymakers, the stewards of education systems, and how they can promote learning experiences, at scale, to bring hope and a sense of agency and resilience to enrolled students. Do national education policymakers benefit from the 2023 Recommendation and regional attempts to promote Global Education and global competencies? And in what ways do they contribute to the formulation of these documents?

In thinking about how these aspirational policy documents come into being, one can look at the actors involved and the dynamics among those actors. One can explore the processes that brought countries to commit themselves to the text found in the document. And one can also think about the actual content – the specific concepts and normative statements included and their impact in specific contexts. Who are the key actors involved in articulating the vision in which education is presumed to play a part, both now and in the future? How would you characterize the relative weight or influence of international, regional and national actors? And have the dynamics between them changed?

DOUGLAS: Historically, we have talked about three pillars – namely, national governments, civil society organizations and educational professionals – in articulating the vision. In more recent years there is evidence that their respective roles have changed. For example, civil society organizations have often been the drivers for many of the themes in this volume such as sustainability, human rights, and global citizenship. In some countries in the Global North, due to funding restrictions, their influence could be said to have declined. On the other hand, the growth of research interest in these themes has led to greater recognition of the importance of academics as drivers of change. An example is the Academic Network of Global Education and Learning (ANGEL), which has engaged over a thousand academics and researchers around the world. This network's Global Education Digest is a testament to the growing interest in many of the themes discussed in this volume.

Coordinating bodies for policymakers such as Global Education Network Europe (GENE) have also become important. In 2023, GENE, under the leadership of Ireland and Luxembourg, coordinated the development of the very influential Global Education to 2050 framework (the Dublin Declaration), referred to earlier. The links between GENE and ANGEL have demonstrated the need for a close relationship between research and policy development.

The changing role of civil society organizations

ANDY: One of the things that has changed in my own work in low- and middle-income countries is that I see a greater balance between the poles of academia, civil society, and government, compared to 25 years ago. When I work in a country for the first time, I am thinking about where to find the knowledge centers.

There are now some very strong national NGOs and sometimes networks of education NGOs. They may rely on some funding from outside organizations, but they are sustainable. Likewise, I think some academic institutions in the Global South are now much stronger centers of knowledge creation and dissemination than they have been in the past. These developments mean that countries in the Global South can play a stronger role in the construction of global and/or regional aspirational policy frameworks than previously, if they so wish.

AARON: We should not neglect the role of powerful private actors, either in the construction of policy or its implementation. What first comes to mind is that private actors in education are typically seeking profit, in contrast to the documents that we are discussing here, which articulate visions for the common good, the public good. Can a private actor foster change in education that serves the common good? Given the tightening of government expenditures in recent years, one of the natural pathways that some organizations consider is to mobilize resources from the private sector to enable specific programs and events to go forward. How might researchers shed light on the roles played by private actors in the construction of the policy documents under discussion here, as well as seeking possible roles in implementation?

DOUGLAS: It's not easy to study these questions. Given economic and confidentiality sensitivities, it can be difficult for researchers to get inside private sector organizations and to have informed conversations.

AARON: In terms of intergovernmental declarations on education policy, the presence and influence of non-state actors has increased, though this was less the case before the Millennium. Civil society has progressively become much more organized, resourceful and outspoken, as was evident at the 2000 World Education Forum (WEF) in Dakar, Senegal and the 2015 WEF in Incheon, South Korea. Certainly the 2023 Recommendation involved an elaborate consultation process in which academics, NGOs and civil society groups had opportunities to comment on the draft. But in the end, it was UNESCO Member States, through their officially designated representatives, who negotiated the final formulations and voted to adopt the document. These negotiations are very detailed – in some cases, over each and every word in a paragraph. The diplomats overseeing the negotiations have to make all kinds of last-minute changes to overcome disagreements and differing views. Once adopted, the standing and legitimacy of the document carry some weight, helping countries to shift or repurpose educational reforms. That said, it is often civil society groups and potentially faith-based groups and others that are deeply involved in the implementation of forward-looking recommendations, since governments are constrained by lack of capacity, resources, or other factors.

Thus the staff of international and regional agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, and the European Union are important actors during these negotiations, typically positioned behind the scenes. For example, when certain terms or statements are contested by member states, the staff of these agencies search for diplomatic compromises so that the draft text can move forward and expand areas of consensus.

Is education as political as climate change?

ANDY: I would like to pose a question at this point. By and large, reports and frameworks emanating from UNESCO arouse less conspicuous dissent than some other international reports in other sectors. Is it because education is not seen to be as political or as critical as climate change, for example?

AARON: I would say that there has been more contestation than meets the eye. For example, the Danish historian Jens Boel, who has explored the history of intergovernmental declarations promoting peace and international understanding, notes how long it took for UNESCO Member States to agree on a declaration that promotes peace, a major mandate of the organization. The UN Secretary General asked the UNESCO Director General in 1949 to develop a normative instrument around peace education or how education can promote international peace and security. UNESCO disseminated a survey asking countries what principles and guidelines should be incorporated into such a non-binding document. There were very few areas of agreement. It was only in the late 1960s and early 1970s, after a concerted effort by many different actors, that consensus was achieved around the forward-looking text of the 1974 Recommendation – the predecessor of the 2023 Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development, as described in the brief by Jean Bernard.

However, in non-binding documents such as these, it doesn't cost countries much to affix their names to the document. It enhances their reputation to sign on rather than be an outlier among countries, the black sheep so to speak. Indeed, even if there are concepts that a country disagrees with and even if they have no intention to seriously address the language and guidelines found in the document, they see benefits in including their country's name among the document's adopters.

One indication of the disconnect between country adoption and implementation is that no more than 40% of UNESCO member states have responded to the quadrennial follow-up survey detailing their implementation of the 1974 Recommendation, even though this was required in the text they had agreed to. Many responding countries sent minimal responses, ticking boxes without providing concrete evidence of relevant activities and programs undertaken. Thus we often have an official consensus around the vision and the role that education is meant to play, but the extent to which countries make good on their commitments in practical terms is another matter altogether. Much of the evidence is sparse and unvalidated.

The impact of international policy agreements

DOUGLAS: The Dublin Declaration, coordinated by GENE and led by their member states, was an updating and development of a similar European policy document produced in 2002, known as the Maastricht Declaration. The new document was a result of a very lengthy consultation process involving a range of actors from governments to NGOs, from academics to professionals, young people and invited experts from the Global South. This process was resourced with funding from the European Commission and GENE member

states, which helped to ensure a sense of partnership, collaboration, and eventual consensus. This process is described in the brief by Wegimont and Larcher. The Dublin Declaration's influence and inspiration has reached other regions, as can be seen in the briefs contributed by Libby Giles, La Salete Coelho and Manuela Mesa, and Ditta Dolejsiova and Celina del Felice. Since the launch of the Declaration a number of countries have started the process of implementing its main recommendations. A theme that was included in the Declaration and which has become increasingly important in influencing the direction to be taken by national governments has been that of democracy. This has been because of the concerns about populism and challenges to democracy in a number of European countries.

UNESCO's 2023 Recommendation includes some of the most controversial issues internationally, such as peace, human rights, sustainability, and their reflection in education for global citizenship. There may be an appearance of consensus internationally, but in a number of countries terms like global citizenship are regarded as too ideological.

AARON: It's an interesting point you raise, Doug. In my experience, one of the ways in which international agency actors work behind the scenes to further a new agreement is by looking back to the terms and concepts found in past international agreements and finding ways to reference them into the new agreement. However, some terms are relatively new. Part of the reason for creating the 2023 Recommendation was to update, conceptually and normatively, an international education document that was 50 years old. New terms had arisen – for example, Education for Sustainable Development, Global Citizenship Education, and Information and Media Literacy – and they needed legitimacy and anchoring for a new generation of leaders.

Culture and context affect the interpretation of key concepts

AARON: Regional declarations can allow more contextualization and encourage collaboration and coordination among some of the regional actors. The terms used, taking account of the mix of cultures in a particular region, may resonate more with national educators, compared to a global declaration that is perceived to be distant and less relevant.

ANDY: I've found that in many countries, although an international policy is embraced at one level, at another level there's resistance if it is seen as undermining national heritage. For example, the term global citizenship education carries challenges with it because citizenship is related to national identity, especially in parts of the Global South.

DOUGLAS: Regional declarations may better reflect cultural contexts. I think the discussions in the brief by Libby Giles reveal the influence of the bi-cultural traditions in New Zealand. The importance of indigenous voices can also be seen in the brief by Coelho and Mesa on Ibero-Latin American perspectives. But the recognition of the importance of national contexts and culture by those negotiating agreements varies.

There is increasing recognition in many international bodies of the need to understand different contexts. For example, some of the more recent literature on global citizenship does begin to recognize this (Sharma, 2024). Synergies are seen between terms like ubuntu and global citizenship (Pieniazek, 2020) and attention is given to the role that spiritual movements have played in reminding everyone about cultural connections to preserving

the natural environment. This can be seen in the use in Latin America of the term planetary citizenship.

There is also the linkage between the term global citizenship and the desire in some low- and middle-income countries to equip their workforce with the skills to work in a global economy.

Another theme that connects to how terminology is perceived and interpreted is that of decoloniality and the ways in which organizations are recognizing the need to question their own assumptions about how we relate to what is happening elsewhere in the world. There is awareness of potential forms of cultural appropriation which has sometimes happened with ubuntu. There is a need for greater understanding of the roots of terms and how they are applied in differing contexts.

ANDY: I would agree with that. In the South Pacific where I've been working recently, there are strong cultural terms, concepts that go unrecognized in global declarations or recommendations. As English speakers who may speak only one or two languages, probably largely European, it is difficult for us to really understand a concept coming out of China or the South Pacific, South Asia or Sub-Saharan Africa. We may be able to read the term but we lack a deeper understanding of its meaning. When formulating an international document, do we consider how a term like global citizenship may look to a speaker of another language in another part of the world? When we use a word like *ubuntu*, do we understand what it means to a speaker of Kiswahili or other languages in which the word carries deep meaning? In the South Pacific, there is *talanoa*, which describes a sort of conversational way of being. It includes telling and talking and a sense of exchanging. So, *talanoa* can serve as a principle of conflict resolution, as a principle of social cohesion, and as a principle of education. We need to think more about how to better incorporate valued concepts from non-Western cultures when preparing international policies and guidance on education.

There are also cultural differences within countries. A country may be highly diverse, encompassing different ethnic groups and languages, and it's difficult to reflect all of this diversity in national education policies and national contributions to the creation of international norms. Likewise, educators may interpret the terms in an international framework in a way that suits their cultural context rather than following – for want of a better phrase – the script which is set by the center. This is a constant question in the work I do, often in centralized national education systems. There are clear differences in the way education sectors are organized, reflecting differing resource levels and national traditions, the extent of centralization, and to some extent the political role within education. In a centralized system, you issue directives that go out to every school and the local supervisors are obliged to try to follow up. When it comes to such centrally-approved or centrally-developed teaching and learning materials, however, it is more difficult to reflect diversity.

From policy to practice

MARGARET: Many countries already have education policy documents that embody ideals of education as contributing to personal, national, and global well-being. Sometimes these national policies feed into the content of international declarations. Likewise, the presence of these normative goals in an international declaration may help strengthen motivations of national actors to contextualize them and create momentum for action. Section 6 of the

2023 Recommendation lists a set of competencies – cognitive, social and emotional skills and values that are set in the context of peace, human rights and sustainable development. This is a big step forward, reflecting years of development of social and emotional learning (SEL) programming and research into its effectiveness. Inclusion of SEL in the school program can improve the academic, social, and economic futures of students.

Implementation is difficult, however, as I found in a study of transformative education in the Asia Pacific region (UNESCO, 2022). It may be inhibited by a lack of funding and resources, as well as by cultural and teacher beliefs and extant pedagogies. Moreover, families as well as teachers may prefer a focus on preparing students for high stakes examinations, which are seen as the main route to improved economic and social status. Teaching and learning for personal development and for developing agency for societal and environmental goals may be seen as taking away precious time from examination preparation, unless the new elements are to some extent embedded in examination questions. And, crucially, teachers are often not familiar with the themes and topics included in the 2023 Recommendation and related policy formulations. It is not easy for teachers to see how these themes can be integrated alongside existing curriculum frameworks and subject syllabi.

AARON: Indeed, when a low- or middle-income country adopts a major reform that involves curriculum or pedagogy, there is often minimal training to support the reform and many teachers may be unable to access it. The brief by Nele Noe notes that teachers and educators in low- and middle-income countries may be employed under limited contracts, and sometimes take from their own funds to provide classroom materials. Many of them have, let's say, an ambivalent attitude toward training that might require travel they cannot afford and absence from home, partly because of very centralized ministries of education making policy and determining how it's going to get implemented. There's little engagement with the realities that teachers face in local schools and classrooms. These conditions often reproduce the status quo and create little space for transformative education in practice.

ANDY: The work I do specifically on textbooks usually relates to education systems that are highly centralized and therefore have a common content, common core for everybody. Sometimes, every textbook in every child's hand is the same wherever you are in the country. Or there are a number of government-approved textbooks. In principle, therefore, it's easier to introduce the themes of the 2023 Recommendation in centralized systems, although there are practical obstacles. On the other hand, the curriculum and textbooks will not necessarily have local ownership because there wasn't enough time to reflect and engage with different stakeholders and centers of knowledge, as we discussed earlier, such as NGOs and academic centers, let alone other stakeholders.

In the textbook development exercise I'm engaged with in Tonga, the national curriculum team and writers first generated subject frameworks based on reflection both on national challenges and on how to address them using contextualized content and pedagogy, as described in my contribution to the brief written jointly with Susan Iannuzzi and Wendy Morell.

At the same time, textbooks may sometimes be seen as old-fashioned or – if teachers are obliged to follow them – as barriers to introducing the pedagogy and content relevant to students' current lives and 21st-century futures, and students' potential roles as agents of positive change. NISSEM sees textbooks as offering the possibility of supporting teachers who are new to the themes and pedagogy considered here, helping mitigate the problems referred to earlier.

MARGARET: Curricula, syllabi, and textbooks that are well aligned to personal, societal, and planetary goals will have limited effects if priority is given to teaching and learning for high stakes examinations. It is critical that national examiners are included in developing new approaches and materials so that they can incorporate related supportive elements in future examination questions. The brief by Camilla Addey describes a need to build skills for formative assessment into teacher training in support of the goals of the 2023 Recommendation. At the international level, the brief by Andreas Schleicher of OECD shows a first experiment at international level of assessment of ‘global competence’.

Problems of scaling up

MARGARET: Some schools and education institutions do achieve good results in relation to the topics under consideration here by reflecting students’ agency towards 21st century challenges at personal, societal, or environmental level. They benefit from the committed action of champion educators who have spontaneously addressed pressing issues and/or have developed contextually and culturally contextualized approaches within innovative initiatives. These leaders press for national and international policies that reflect their meaningful impact on their students and society. However, their achievements may not be scalable to system level without adaptation and without more resources and/or their own leadership role as champions.

In my brief, co-authored by Jennifer Batton and Mary Kangethe, on education for conflict resolution and transformation (a competency listed in the 2023 Recommendation), we show how champion educators have introduced this typically on a limited scale, often as a stand-alone activity, to the benefit of many students. For example, conflict resolution and peer mediation were in the ascendant in the 1990s, linked to fear of nuclear war and, in some countries, a concern with violence in schools. Even so, this approach often reached only a limited number of schools. Teachers need training and ongoing technical support, as well as management support for allocating timetable time to an innovative competency of this kind.

Regarding the terminology of international agreements, we noted their different interpretations across cultures, but understandings also evolve with time. In recent years, conflict resolution competencies have been listed as components of ‘problem-solving’, one of the widely accepted 21st century competencies alongside collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity (all of which play a part in conflict resolution). Curriculum discourse may sometimes focus on solving problems that do not entail a conflict of interest between parties with different interests, more than on the ‘conflict transformation’ called for in the 2023 Recommendation – perhaps in response to recent highly publicized armed conflicts. Can the principles and steps of mediation be appropriately formulated and then built into the transformative curriculum, given that conflicts occur in or around all our lives, at personal through to global level?

New communications media enable scaling up, for example through teacher groups sharing experience and approaches on WhatsApp. And AI will doubtless bring changes that are as yet difficult to foresee. The brief by Dylan Wray shows how AI may be integrated with media and information literacy as required by the 2023 Recommendation.

Generating data on implementing key competencies and issues

MARGARET: The 2023 Recommendation suggests ‘creating observatories at the local, national, regional or global level, as appropriate, including repositories of materials, resources and data, concerning the implementation of this Recommendation, which all stakeholders can access and can contribute to.’ Is this a promising approach?

ANDY: We already discussed the non-response and limited reliability and meaningfulness of the data submitted in relation to the UNESCO 1974 Recommendation. It might be more productive to work with those who want to engage and to create examples that can inspire or give confidence and encourage other countries to follow suit. One of the things I would hope to see from the 2023 Recommendation and from similar international commitments is a process that sows seeds that can germinate and provide examples for other countries to respond to. If there were the resources and the commitment, the energy behind the 2023 Recommendation could lead to mechanisms for sharing promising practices and achievements.

DOUGLAS: What all stakeholders need to do more of is to collaborate and engage more directly in owning progress towards policy goals. Although it was maligned by some at the time, the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development from 2005 to 2014 did provide a road map and vision of how progress could be made. We should try to generate and synthesize evidence around what seems to work and consider the types of evidence that are feasible and useful, even if not matching the gold standard of randomized experiments of one kind or another. Lack of ‘evidence’ sometimes means that countries’ interests and motivations get sideswiped, get squandered when they’re searching for resources to implement some of these internationally recognized priorities. What kind of an evidential base might one develop that would provide a better indication of things that are happening on the ground in countries that are committed to making progress in these areas?

In the areas of, let’s say, curriculum change and the content of textbooks, or teacher practices in the classroom, we don’t have good means of reflecting what actually goes on. And there is no consensus about how you go about doing it in a way that is valid, reliable, and meaningful. Andy has expressed the need to share examples of positive learning in relation to the aspirational themes discussed here. Can we share details of areas where innovators and champions are doing promising work and make sure that this information is circulated to interested countries and stakeholders? The 2023 Recommendation shows a willingness to diversify the follow-up and review methods, which I celebrate and congratulate.

Final reflections

MARGARET: The 2023 UNESCO Recommendation is the primary focus of this volume. The volume brings together recent perspectives on education for transformation and seeks to stimulate wider recognition of this high-level policy framework, which was adopted by all 194 UNESCO Member States. Importantly, Sustainable Development Goal target 4.7 is reiterated in the text of the Recommendation, without the time limit of 2030 for the SDGs. The 2023 Recommendation incorporates recent developments, including a focus on climate

change and ecological concerns, on misuse of social media and misinformation/ disinformation, and on conflict. It integrates social and emotional as well as cognitive learning in a list of competencies/learning objectives that is more comprehensive than in the earlier 1974 UNESCO Recommendation; and integrates previous frameworks related to particular themes such as sustainable development and global citizenship education.

The challenge remains, however: how to move from these policy goals to practice? How to improve the experience of students in schools across the world, especially those in low- and middle-income countries which are the primary focus of NISSEM's work? Among possible future steps, we may highlight the need to organize and fund regional and national processes to engage key stakeholders in the development of regionalized and national declarations and plans that take account of diverse contexts and cultures.

The idea of 'observatories' and other approaches to sharing progress and innovative approaches could provide support to practical implementation in the years ahead but will require engagement with multiple partners. There is an acute need to bring together champions of transformative education curricula to convince donors, finance and education ministries, and civil society actors. We would hope, for example, to see better sharing of policy to practice approaches, illustrated in this volume by Andy's work on textbooks in Tonga and elsewhere, and to develop better arrangements for the modest funding they require. This will enable support to teachers through textbooks that become carriers of transformative competencies and content rather than barriers, and enable consultations at local, national and sub-regional levels. I personally would like to see greater emphasis on education for conflict resolution and mediation, as a contribution to more peaceful relationships at personal, national, and international levels. I also hope that the current interest in AI will help educators to collaborate and bring into existence contextualized curricula, syllabi, education materials, and teacher training supportive of education for peace, human rights, and sustainable development.

The NISSEM Global Briefs series began in 2019 (<https://nissem.org/nissem-global-briefs/>). The series seeks to share global experience on social, emotional and sustainability dimensions of education and to build agency among students to address the societal and environmental goals brought together in 2015 in the Sustainable Development Goals Target 4,7 relating to education for sustainable development and global citizenship, including gender equality, peace, human rights and respect for diversity. These goals also underpin the UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development (<https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-education-peace-and-human-rights-international-understanding-cooperation-fundamental>), which is the focus of volume 5 along with regional declarations. This fifth volume is a joint enterprise between NISSEM (Networking to Integrate SDG 4.7 and Social and emotional learning into Education Materials: <https://nissem.org/about-us/the-nissem-state-ment/>), the ANGEL network (Academic Network on Global Education and Learning: <https://angel-network.net/>), and GENE (Global Education Network Europe: www.gene.eu). The editors of this volume comprise Doug Bourn of ANGEL and Aaron Benavot, Cecilia Bibbo', Margaret Sinclair and Andy Smart, of NISSEM.

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The background is a textured collage. It features a base of mottled blue and purple hues, overlaid with large, organic, brown shapes that resemble torn paper or natural elements like leaves and roots. The overall effect is layered and artistic.

Part 1:

**International frameworks
on education as a support
to societal and environmental
goals: A basis for hope?**

1.1 A new Recommendation for a new era: Can UNESCO's 2023 Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development help to shape the future we want?

Jean Bernard

Abstract

This brief focuses first on the common roots of UNESCO's two standards-setting instruments on education adopted as highly influential guidance documents for systems around the world—the first issued in 1974 and the second adopted by consensus five decades later in 2023. While the earlier document succeeded in influencing and inspiring numerous initiatives aimed at promoting international peace through mutual understanding among nations and societies, the intervening years brought significant shifts in global priorities for education along with new commitments to education for peace and human rights. Together with the emergence of new approaches to teaching and learning, growing awareness of looming threats to the sustainability of the planet demand more than incremental improvements to different components and dimensions of education systems. In response, the international education community called for coordinated, urgent action to transform education to respond to the crises of our times, culminating in the drafting of the new Recommendation in 2023. Following review of the key ideas, events and initiatives that fostered its evolution, the concluding section of this paper addresses the larger question of whether the 2023 Recommendation, alongside its companion declarations and commitments, can help to change the world for the better and, if so, what will it take to make it happen?

1 Introduction

In November 2023, all 194 UNESCO Member States voted to adopt *the Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development*, commonly known as the *Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development*, or simply the '2023 Recommendation'. In UN parlance, a 'Recommendation' is a non-binding legal instrument that formulates principles and norms for the international regulation of a particular question of interest to member states (UNESCO Rules of Procedure, updated 2024). In the case of the 2023 Recommendation, the 'question of interest' is about 'why' and 'how' teaching and learning should evolve in the 21st century to bring about lasting peace,

reaffirm human rights and promote sustainable development in the face of contemporary threats and challenges (UNESCO, November 2023).

Since the founding of UNESCO in 1945, only two Recommendations on education have been issued, the first having been adopted in 1974 and the second, the 2023 Recommendation, almost five decades later. Technically, the 2023 Recommendation is not a replacement, but rather an updated and revised version of the first. While the prominence of the 1974 Recommendation¹ as a framework for programmatic activities had faded over the years, especially with the introduction of new visions for education and expanded definitions of human rights at the turn of the century, it would be an oversight to conclude that the earlier document had failed to accomplish its aims.

Inspired by the outcomes of the [UNESCO International Commission on the Futures of Education](#) (UNESCO, 2021) and guided by the [UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), a two-year collaborative drafting process began in 2021 resulting in a draft ready for deliberation and adoption at the 22nd UNESCO General Conference in 2023. The approved final draft, consisting of 17 pages packed with new definitions, goals, guiding principles and implementation strategies, remains grounded in the fundamental principles of its predecessor yet integrates guidance on how education can respond to ominous new threats to global peace and sustainability.

2 Evolution of the 2023 updated and revised 1974 Recommendation

Widely hailed as visionary for its time, the 1974 Recommendation was to become the main standards-setting instrument for programs and lines of action led by the Education Sector for the next five decades. The guiding principles, action areas and language of the 1974 Recommendation reflected a world view held especially among industrialized countries in the 1960s and 70s—a time when world peace was increasingly threatened by competing ideologies and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Climate change had yet to be widely understood as an existential threat to the survival of the planet, and the rights of women, children, indigenous people and persons with disabilities had only begun to emerge as priority issues in the international education discourse. ‘Learning technologies’ referred mainly to print media, textbooks, educational television and audio-visual equipment, and artificial intelligence was the stuff of science fiction. As observed by UNESCO Peace Education Laureate Toh Swee-Hin (2023):

During the five decades since the Recommendation was adopted, the world has become more industrialised, economically globalized, technologically advanced and populated. Yet, the problems facing humanity in 1974 have persisted and even escalated into crises. Hence, core ideas in the vision articulated in the Recommendation are still very relevant for guiding the educational policies of nations...(p. 9).

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¹ Full title: [Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education related to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms \(UNESCO, 1974\).](#)

By the time Member States convened for the 21st General Conference it was clear that the aging 1974 Recommendation was in urgent and drastic need of revision and updating. What occurred, in fact, was a transformation from a relatively short listing of principles and guidance notes into a significantly lengthier, robust document that establishes a broad conceptual framework and accompanying set of actions that Member States can take in response to the conditions and challenges of a different era.

2.1 Common roots

As explained in detail by UNESCO archivist and historian Jens Boel², the origins of the idea of establishing an international standards-setting instrument predates the founding of UNESCO. Recognizing the potential of textbooks to promote peace through international understanding, the League of Nations (1920–1946) issued a Declaration on the teaching of history and geography textbooks. As the United Nations came into existence following the end of World War II, its Charter stated that its main purpose was to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war (UN Charter Preamble, 1945). Along with the founding of UNESCO (1945), the potential of education to construct the defences of peace in the minds of men (and women) was carried forward through a series of resolutions³, consultations and initiatives that eventually led to the drafting of the 1974 Recommendation. The role of education as a driver of international peace was further articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948):

Education should be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace (UDHR, Art.26).

Having come into being during the Cold War (1945-1991) and amidst seemingly intractable conflicts in Southeast Asia, Northern Ireland and the Middle East, the 1974 Recommendation prioritized efforts to make education an instrument of peace. The opening paragraphs refer directly to Article 6 of the UDHR (quoted above) as its main guiding principle as well as to the UN Charter, the Constitution of UNESCO and the Geneva Conventions for the protection of victims of war (1949).

No explicit definition of ‘peace’ is offered in the text of the 1974 Recommendation, but the implied meaning is the cessation of war, with the added caveat that recurrence of war can be avoided through the maintenance of a peace among societies and nations that is just and durable. The main role of education in preventing future conflicts was conceived as a collaborative effort among nations and peoples to promote international understanding and co-operation, which the framers considered to be reciprocal aspects of an indivisible whole (1.b), applicable to all stages and forms of education (2). Echoing

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2 In a short documentary film ‘[At the origin of the 1974 Recommendation](#)’, produced by UNESCO (n.d.)

3 For example, C/Res.6 of the First General Conference (1946), Improvement of textbooks and teaching materials

the guarded optimism of the mid-twentieth century, guiding principle III.6 further directs nations to 'stress the inadmissibility of recourse to war for purposes of expansion, aggression and domination, or to the use of force and violence for purposes of repression and should bring every person to understand and assume his or her responsibilities for the maintenance of peace. To accomplish this, the text goes on to advise Member States to develop education policies aimed at 'increasing the efficacy of education in all its forms and strengthening its contribution to international understanding and co-operation, to the maintenance and development of a just peace, to the establishment of social justice, to respect for and application of a just peace'... (IV. 7).

The 1974 Recommendation set out a long list of challenges for education to contribute toward world peace and human rights. Among these, threats continued to be fueled by 'racialism', fascism, prejudices, misconceptions and apartheid. Recommended solutions are listed in the form of practical steps that Member States can take; for example, to strengthen civic training, strengthen environmental education, promote the study of diverse cultures and take action to emphasize the use of science for the purposes of peace and progress.

While remaining true to the core principles of its parent, the 2023 Recommendation charts bold new directions inspired by redefined concepts, action areas, emerging technologies and a holistic vision of how education can and should contribute to a peaceful and sustainable future. The main departures in underlying concepts in the revised and updated document are a (relatively) new definition of 'peace' and recognition of the centrality of education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship (GCED) in shaping a more peaceful, sustainable future. Some of the key differences in the scope, aims and key action areas of the 1974 and 2023 Recommendations are summarized in Box 1 next page.



COMMON GROUND

Human rights and fundamental freedoms
Peace through mutual understanding
Awareness of increasing global interdependence

1974 Recommendation

SCOPE: all stages and forms of education

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- Strengthen development of attitudes and behaviors in learning and training processes
- Promote active civic training
- Include critical analysis of factors underlying tensions and study ways to build international cooperation and world peace
- Promote study of different cultures and ways of life
- Direct inter-disciplinary study of learning toward eradication of problems affecting human survival (including use, management and conservation of natural resources)
- Overcome lack of teaching aids and improve their quality
- Ensure textbooks are free from elements that cause misunderstandings, contempt or hatred of other groups or peoples
- Develop a special component of mass media education to help students analyze information conveyed

2023 Recommendation

SCOPE: education as a life-long, equitable, inclusive, process covering all contexts and forms

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- Support mainstreaming of principles through a whole-of-society approach (Member States) provide necessary support
- Build specific skills sets (e.g. critical thinking, self-awareness, collaboration, conflict resolution, information literacy, communication and digital skills)
- Promote gender equality, inclusion and respect for diversity
- Infuse an ethic of care and solidarity
- Adopt a transformative approach across all areas of study
- Create safe and supportive learning environments
- Invest in up-to-date, high quality and accessible materials and digital learning resources that support innovative approaches to teaching and learning

Table 1: Summary of scope and key action areas of original (1974) and revised (2023) Recommendations

The world view reflected in the call to revise and update the 1974 Recommendation was foreshadowed in part by the spread of extremist ideologies that continue to wreak havoc across the globe, disregard for human rights, increased frequency of extreme weather events attributable to climate change, loss of biodiversity, the Covid-19 pandemic and the continued threat of nuclear war. In the words of Stefania Giannini, the Assistant Director General for Education, 'New and more elaborate responses are needed to harness the potential of soft power' (UNESCO, n.d.) What has not changed since the hopeful deliberations at the League of Nations (1920-1946) between two world wars is the belief that education has the power to change the course of history for the better—to create peaceful, just and sustainable futures.

2.2 The intervening years

The 49 years between adoption of the 1974 and 2023 Recommendations brought a new set of global priorities for social and economic development together with new visions for the role of education in fulfilling UNESCO's mandate to 'build the defences of peace' in the minds of men and women. In the two decades immediately following adoption of the 1974 Recommendation, a series of Initiatives in curriculum and textbook revision aimed at fostering peace through mutual understanding among nations and peoples evolved into a broader pathway for promoting diversity, gender equality and inclusion.

2.2.1 Fostering peace through curriculum and textbook reform

These lines of action, which continued well beyond the turn of the 21st century, were framed by the 1974 Recommendation's guidance to 'take appropriate measures to ensure that educational aids, especially textbooks, are free from elements liable to give rise to misunderstanding, mistrust, racist reactions, contempt or hatred with regard to other groups or peoples' (1974 Recommendation, para 39). A look at some of the samples of research and revision⁴ reveal how the definition 'other groups of people' broadened along with the expanding definition of human rights:

- German-Polish Textbook Recommendations (1977)
- Guidelines for textbook writing, prepared by participants in the UNESCO textbook writing workshops for national liberation movements (UNESCO Tanzania, 1978)
- History in black and white: an analysis of South African school history textbooks (UNESCO, 1983)
- Down with Stereotypes! Eliminating Sexism from Children's Literature and School Textbooks (Michel, 1986)
- 'Disarming History: UNESCO Conference on Combating Stereotypes and Prejudice in the History Textbooks of Southeast Europe' (23-25 September, 1999).
- Euro-Arab dialogue: the image of Arabo-Islamic culture in European history textbooks (2004)
- Fostering peaceful co-existence through analysis and revision of history curricula and textbooks in Southeast Europe (2006)
- Thinking and building peace through innovative textbook design (Georgescu & Bernard, 2007)
- Promoting gender equality through textbooks: a methodological guide (Bruguielles & Cromer, 2009)
- UNESCO guidebook to textbook research and revision (Pingel 2010)
- Textbooks and learning resources: guidelines for developers and users (UNESCO, 2014)

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4 For a review of the history of textbook research and revision under the auspices of the League of Nations and UNESCO, see Pingel, F. (2010).

Additional examples of activities framed by the 1974 Recommendation at regional and national level's included a 'World Studies' program in the United Kingdom, experimental projects in teacher training in Turkey and Czechoslovakia and in Zimbabwe, new disciplines added to the curriculum.

Much of the progress made under the guidance of the 1974 Recommendation is still relevant today, particularly in the area of curriculum and textbook reform. Yet, by the end of the 20th century, parts of the underlying conceptual foundations and language of the document were already beginning to crumble. New participatory and constructivist approaches to learning and teaching accompanied by an ever-expanding list of specialized terms and catch phrases had gained prominence in the international education discourse. Gender equality, which is not mentioned in the 1974 document, had become a major cross-cutting issue by the 1980s. And, validated by a broadened definition of human rights that includes *all* humans and a growing body of scientific evidence confirming the impact of climate change on both people and planet, these new priorities and approaches, combined, eventually amplified the call for a complete transformation of the aims, processes and structure of education systems.

2.2.2 Expanding the definition of human rights

In his introduction to [The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the 21st Century: A Living Document in a Changing World \(2016\)](#) Gordon Brown⁵ reflects on how our understanding of human rights has evolved since 1948, when 'the world was a very different place.' Beginning in the 1980s and through the first decades of the 21st century, newly ratified legal instruments enshrined and specified the human rights of women, children, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples. These instruments did not replace the concept of human rights embedded in the 1974 Recommendation but, rather, expanded and elevated it to include the inalienable rights inherent to all humans without regard to nationality, sex, ethnic origin, color, religion, language or any other status. The four global agreements which paved the way for this new definition and ultimately fed into the 2023 Recommendation are:

- Women: [UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#) (1979)
- Children: [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (1989)
- Persons with disabilities: [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (2006)
- Indigenous people: [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People](#) (2007)

Each of these instruments included articles referring to education; for example, Article 28 of the CRC affirms the right of all children to accessible, free primary education 'on the basis of equal opportunity'. It also directs governments to ensure that disciplinary measures are 'administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity.' In a similar vein, Article 24 of the CRPD instructs States Parties to 'ensure an inclusive education system at all levels...directed to the full development of human potential and sense of dignity and

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5 Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (2007- 2010) and Chair of the Global Citizenship Commission

self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity.’

In line with the vastly expanded UN human rights legal framework and the Global Citizenship Commission’s report, the [UN World Programme for Human Rights Education](#) (2005-ongoing, coordinated by OHCHR) regards human rights as both universal and inherent. Its action areas for integrating human rights education into schools, institutions of higher learning and more broadly into all segments of society are structured in five successive four-year phases, each designed to accomplish specific objectives. Notably, the final phase is meant to align with Sustainable Development Goal Target 4.7, ‘taking into account the different concepts and educational methods mentioned herein’ ([UN OHCHR website](#)).

2.3 New global commitments to action

Alongside the series of legal instruments adopted between 1999 and 2007 that effectively expanded the concept of human rights and the parallel emergence of sustainable development as a top priority of education for the 21st century, the international education community set about establishing new agendas for action. These global and regional commitments differed from recommendations and resolutions issued by UN agencies in that they require education systems around the world to commit to taking actions to achieve certain agreed goals within a specific time frame.

2.3.1 Education for All (2000–15)

The global commitment to education for all translated the principle of education as a fundamental human right into six actionable goals. Grounded in core principles expressed in the 1974 Recommendation, the [Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments](#) placed the right of all people to an education of good quality at the heart of its agenda, stressing a rights-based approach to learning, with priority for addressing global and regional concerns over inequalities, particularly of education available to women and girls, vulnerable and disadvantaged children and adults, and all whose education had been stalled by conflict, natural disasters and other obstacles to both access and quality.

By the time the 2015 GEM Report⁶ came out with its final assessment of achievements and remaining challenges under the banner of EFA, priorities for education had begun to shift toward the potential role of education in dealing with the rapidly unfolding climate crisis and its increasingly visible impacts on the survival of the planet. Concurrently, alarm among educators worldwide over stubbornly high numbers of out-of-school children and faltering learning outcomes of those who were in school reoriented attention toward bolstering the quality of learning and taking steps to promote inclusion of vulnerable groups and out-of-school children and youth in low-income countries. Looking ahead to the transition to a new global agenda for education after 2015, the [2013/2014 GEM Report](#) points out, ...‘unfinished business will remain across the six EFA goals, while new priorities are likely to emerge’ (UNESCO GEM 2013/4 Summary, p. 13).

.....
6 Full title: [2015—Education for All 2000-2015: achievements and challenges](#)

2.3.2 Earth Charter (2000–ongoing)

The Earth Charter is a global consensus document drafted by an International Commission⁷ together with National Committees, partner organizations and other concerned groups over a period of five years (1995–2000). The document presents sixteen interrelated principles organized under 4 pillars with the aim of inspiring nations to ‘join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice and a culture of peace’ (Earth Charter preamble, 2000).

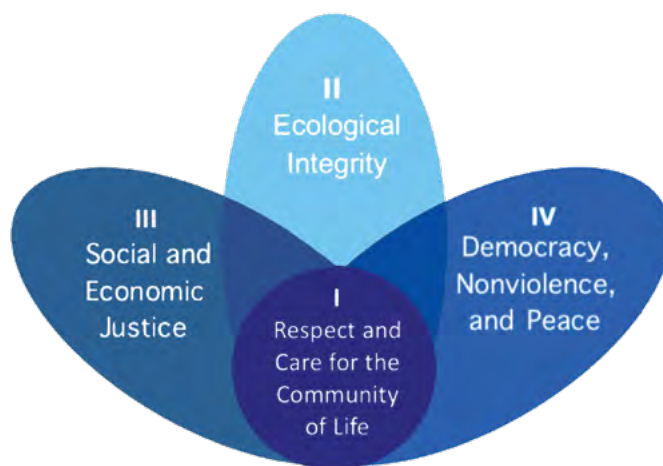


Figure 1: The four pillars of the Earth Charter

Adapted from: Earth Charter International [website](#), 2000–24

From the standpoint of the Earth Charter, the sustainable global society it envisioned 25 years ago was threatened by numerous problems, caused in large part by the dominant patterns of production and consumption. Under each pillar, the Charter calls for acceptance of principles and commitments to action, from ‘promote the recovery of endangered species’ to ‘reduce, reuse and recycle materials used in production and consumption systems’ (Pillar II). The principle related specifically to education, (14, Pillar IV) ‘Integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values and skills needed for a sustainable way of life’ is a closely phrased precursor to the thematic areas defined in Sustainable Development Goal 4 (2015).

The Earth Charter and the global movement it continues to inspire linked the threat of environmental degradation directly to the threat of social and economic injustice (Pillar III) as well as to the threat of war and authoritarian forms of government (Pillar IV). These links were to be further amplified by the framers of the 2023 Recommendation.

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⁷ Consisting of 20 members from Africa and the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and North America

2.3.3 UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015–30)

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) embedded in the [UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) encompass a broad vision and plan of action to be taken collaboratively by governments and all stakeholders for the benefit of ‘people, planet and prosperity’. [SDG 4](#), the ‘Education Goal’, calls upon education systems to ‘Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’. It further specifies in SDG Target 4.7 that education authorities should take steps to...



...ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

Many of the topics grouped under the wide umbrella of ‘sustainable development’ in Target 4.7 had already found their way into the curricula of a growing number of national education systems, although under an assortment of different terms. For example, a [review](#) (McEvoy, 2016) of efforts to implement the 1974 Recommendation in light of 3 education-related SDGs in reports from 94 countries revealed that references to climate change education/environmental awareness had doubled (from 13.5% to 26%) between 2009 and 2012. Among the findings of a wide ranging [study](#) (UNESCO, 2019) on how and to what extent references to GCED and learning themes across three dimensions of learning⁸ appeared in the official curriculum documents of 10 countries, the analysis showed that such references had increased significantly in number between 2005 and 2018. Separately, a focused [review](#) of the extent to which environmental issues are integrated into primary and secondary education policies and curricula across 46 countries (Benavot & McKenzie, 2021) revealed that while issues related to sustainability were mentioned in national policy documents in a majority of countries, references to climate change and biodiversity were less frequent, and in many cases issues were not treated in sufficient depth. Clearly, the report concludes, ‘more has to be done to prepare learners with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to act for our planet’.

2.4 New visions for education

The five decades between adoption of the 1974 and 2023 Recommendations also saw the development of newly configured aims for learning, new methodologies for achieving these aims, and frameworks for restructuring and ‘modernizing’ education systems to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

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8 The cognitive, the social and emotional, and the behavioral

2.4.1 The Delors Report (1996)

The publication of Learning: The Treasure Within; Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century (1996), widely known as the 'Delors Report', added fresh legitimacy to the role of education in fostering personal and social development. At the same time, the Report laid out a radically different approach to achieving the ideals at the heart of the 1974 Recommendation. Through its delineation of four pillars of learning (learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together), it challenged education systems to connect the dots between past and future perceptions of how education can have a major role in building a more just and peaceful world, 'a better world to live in' (Delors, p. 19).

The Delors Report also placed fresh emphasis on learning throughout life, citing the increased importance for individuals to return to education to deal with increasingly complex situations that arise in their personal and professional lives. Lifelong education can and should constitute a *'continuous process of forming whole human beings and....enable people to develop awareness of themselves and their environment and encourage them to play their social role at work and in the community'* (Delors, p.21). However, returning to education as envisaged by the Commission does not necessarily mean returning to school; non-formal adult learning planned and organized by the students themselves can take place in various forms⁹ and virtually anywhere.

2.4.2 Global Education First Initiative (2012)

Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Global Education First Initiative (GEFI) launched in 2012 called on the international community to 'face the fact that we have a crisis in education'. To deal with the education crisis, the GEFI laid out three main priorities: (1) Put every child in school; (2) Improve the quality of education; and (3) Foster global citizenship. While the first two priorities reinforced and expanded upon the Education for All and Millennium Development Goals, the third introduced a new concept, a new term and a new set of recommended actions for equipping people to deal with contemporary threats to peace and sustainability. Barriers to global citizenship include the current examination-based systems, outmoded curricula and learning materials, lack of teacher capacity and inadequate focus on values such as peace, human rights and respect for diversity. In a strongly worded call to action, the introduction to the area of global citizenship urges education systems to undertake action that is not only progressive, but transformative:

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⁹ The Report provides the example of popular adult education in Sweden, which may take the form of study circles organized under the aegis of voluntary educational associations (Delors, p. 104)



Figure 2: Introduction to GEFI priority 3: foster global citizenship (Ki-Moon, 2012, p. 12)
2.4.3 Report of the International Commission on the Futures of Education (2021)

The Final Report of the International Commission on the Futures of Education¹⁰ looks ahead to explore the ways education can and must fulfill its promise to help shape peaceful, just and sustainable futures. The picture it paints of the present is uncompromisingly bleak:

Widening social and economic inequalities, climate change, biodiversity loss, resource use that exceeds planetary boundaries, democratic backsliding and disruptive technological automation are the hallmarks of our current historical juncture....Looking to the future, it is all too easy to paint a darker picture (UNESCO, 2021, p. 3).

Humanity is, in the words of the Report, 'at a turning point' at which we have an obligation to both current and future generations (p. 6) to collectively change course toward a future that ensures just and peaceful societies, a healthy planet and shared progress that benefits everyone. Education, broadly defined as the way learning is organized has always been a driver of change; but if the power of education is to be harnessed to change societies in ways that can assure sustainable futures, education must itself be transformed.

.....
10 Full title: Reimagining our futures together: a new social contract for education

3 A turning point

The first two decades of the 21st century brought heightened awareness not only of intensifying threats to global peace and stability, but also to the sustainability of life itself on a rapidly warming planet. Signs of the unfolding climate crisis in the form of rising sea levels, soil degradation, melting glaciers, droughts and extreme weather events began to capture the attention of national governments and the general public. Youth-led environmental movements such as Plastic Free July, FridaysForFuture, and the Sunrise Movement were successfully mobilizing young people around the world to demand action to reverse the devastating effects of human-caused climate change. Gradually, during these same years, the saliency of the issues addressed in the 1974 Recommendation had begun to fade along with much of its outdated terminology.

Simultaneously, the UN and other global organizations were taking steps to create the foundation of a new global agenda in response to what was becoming the defining crisis of our times. Underscoring the urgency of the need for education to be transformed to meet its collective global commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its education-related goals, the three-day [UN Summit on Transforming Education](#) was convened in New York in September 2022 to respond to a global crisis in education that had been heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic. By coalescing around five thematic action tracks¹¹ the Summit called for education systems to transform ‘toward peaceful, inclusive and sustainable futures of humanity and planet’ (UN, 2022).

3.1 A new recommendation for a new era: Education for a sustainable future

Drawing on the evolving vision of education as a transformative force for sustainable futures and to establish guiding principles and areas of action for realizing such a vision, the *2023 Recommendation for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development* puts forward an expanded conceptual framework and proposes a practical roadmap for transformative change. While some of the innovations that gained prominence after 1974 were foreshadowed in the original document, such as ‘inter-active learning’, ‘pollution of the environment’ and ‘audio-visual aids’ the terms used to describe these had largely been replaced by the end of the 20th century. In short, the 1974 Recommendation needed to ‘catch up’ as a coordinating framework and to clearly align its guiding principles and recommended actions with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

3.1.1 A (relatively) new definition of peace

In a significant departure from its 49-year-old parent, the 2023 Recommendation explains in an exceptionally long paragraph the concept of ‘peace’ as more than the absence of war,

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11 Thematic action tracks for transforming education: 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools, 2. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession; 4. Digital learning and transformation; 5. Financing of education

but as a condition that can be sustained only if certain requirements are met. This line of thinking echoes Norwegian scholar Johan Galtung's notion of 'positive peace' (1996), which in turn was influenced by the concept of *satyagraha*, offered to the world by Mahatma Gandhi, the idea that violence could only be overcome through non-violent means, and lasting peace maintained by the communal force of truth, love and firmness, in what Martin Luther King, Jr. referred to as 'the beloved community'. In the more secular language of the Recommendation, the maintenance of sustainable peace requires not only the cessation of hostilities, but also the creation of just societies in which the human rights of all are respected. Furthermore, lasting peace can only be achieved in tandem with sustainable development. In recognition of this principle, the Preamble clearly reaffirms that 'there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.'

The introductory sections of the revised Recommendation (I, II and III) elaborate its purpose, provide definitions of key terms and explain its aims, thereby giving shape and substance to what education can and should do to support the building of 'peaceful, just, inclusive, equal, equitable, healthy and sustainable societies'. For education to be transformative, the text asserts that curricula should focus on building strong foundational literacy and numeracy in order to enable the development of 12 specific skill sets that potentially empower people to 'reflect critically, become agents of change and protagonists of their own future' (para. I.1i). Included among these, for example, are self-awareness, the ability to feel and show empathy for others, a sense of connectedness and belonging to a global community, respecting the needs and rights of others as well as of all living things, and peaceful conflict resolution and transformation skills.

This non-exhaustive but lengthy list of desired outcomes marks a major departure from the language and aims of the 1974 Recommendation, which do not explicitly refer to specific skills or call for systemic change. The scope of the revised and updated Recommendation is also much broader, covering not only traditional schooling for children and youth and some aspects of adult non-formal education, but education for all people, in all settings (formal, non-formal and informal, using different modalities and pedagogies, and at all levels, of all types and provisions). In effect, this is a clarion call for education without boundaries, adaptable and available in many forms to everyone at any stage of life.

3.2 A roadmap for change

The guiding principles, learning objectives and action areas that form the centerpiece of the Recommendation present a detailed guide for all education stakeholders—'from policy makers and teachers and tradition-bearers—as a baseline to transform their policies, practices and approaches to build empathetic and inclusive learners.' (UNESCO 2024b). Several of the references to human rights and fundamental freedoms (guiding principles b, c, e, f, j) are grounded in the foundational legal instruments as well as the landmark conventions on gender equality, inclusion and human rights adopted between 1974 and 2023. Others reflect current thinking and approaches to holistic, humanistic education (d, g, h, k, m, n), including references to promoting competencies such as an ethic of care and solidarity, safety, health and well-being of learners, and responsible use of technologies that fall within the social and emotional domain. The Recommendation's priority action areas are grouped into two broad categories: (1) system-wide requirements and (2) specific requirements per level and type of education.

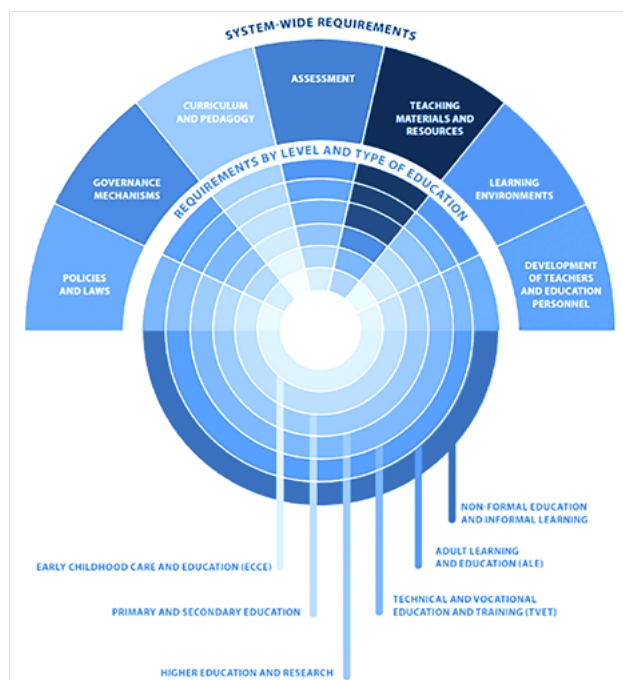


Figure 3: Requirements and priority action areas of the 2023 Recommendation (UNESCO, 2024a)

The system-wide requirements specify actions to be taken collectively by all stakeholders within a system for achieving the aims of the Recommendation, while the second group specifies at what level and in what form of education the said actions should take place. From a holistic, transformational perspective, none of these action areas should exist in a vacuum. Activities in any one of these areas cannot be expected to accomplish their own objectives or the overall aims of the Recommendation without the combined support of all the others. For implementing bodies and organizations focusing on one or more of the system-wide requirements, it is important to engage with a ‘whole-of-society’ and a ‘whole institution’ approach and to reinforce, at all stages of implementation, essential linkages across areas of action.

3.2.1 Curriculum and pedagogy

In the area of curriculum and pedagogy, for example, Member States are called upon to support the development of contextualized curricula, include content that supports education for peace and human rights, and embed a transformative approach across all areas of study and at all levels. Such a momentous innovation has to be accompanied by reforms in assessment practices, development of new textbooks and learning materials, comprehensive teacher training and professional development programs and design and implementation of inclusive learning environments. Further to these general recommendations, specific actions are suggested for physical education, teaching and learning of history and social sciences, natural science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Across all areas of a system’s curriculum, action should be taken that includes the

study of diverse cultures, strengthens a sense of belonging, activates social and emotional learning (SEL), enhances social cohesion, promotes gender equality, fosters media and information literacy, and integrates climate education.

3.2.2 Assessment and evaluation

In a significant departure from existing assessment and evaluation practices, programs should be transformed in ways that strengthen collaboration, cooperation and support for learners' development and well-being in place of high-stakes examination systems. To accomplish this, it is important to develop high quality assessment and evaluation tools that not only measure academic knowledge and cognitive growth, but also assess SEL, behavioral and psycho-motor competencies that promote the overall aims of the Recommendation.

3.2.3 Learning and teaching materials and resources

With its focus on integrating SDG 4.7 themes and SEL into learning and teaching materials and resources, NISSEM's core mission aligns closely with many of the requirements in this area. In particular, paragraph 35 advises Member States to ensure that all teachers and learners have access to quality teaching and learning materials and resources that are infused with the guiding principles set forth in this Recommendation. In short, this calls for action for education systems to integrate the topics identified in SDG Target 4.7 into textbooks and other learning materials, whether print, electronic or digital. Additionally, learning and teaching materials, including textbooks, should include guidance for learners and teachers in building SEL skills and media literacy in a systematic way through language and level-appropriate content across the curriculum.

4 Gazing into the golden globe: Can the revised Recommendation help to shape the future we want?

Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai famously declared that 'one child, one teacher, one pen and one book can change the world'. If the child and the teacher are representative of learners and teachers across the globe and if together, their numbers can grow to become, a critical mass of empathetic learners skilled to become protagonists in their own future' (2023 Recommendation para. I.1a). Together with its precursors and ongoing global commitments, the new Recommendation sets up the conditions and shapes the tools for Malala's vision to become a reality, perhaps even in her lifetime. Quality learning must be both informative and transformative. The teacher must have the necessary skills to facilitate learning that engages both the mind and the heart. The book—whether a printed textbook, an e-book, or an online lesson—must activate quality learning, locally defined, and the pen—the technology for co-creating and sharing content—must be fully functional and accessible to all.

Even if all these conditions are met, however, there is no guarantee that the 2023 Recommendation will help to bring about a better and more resilient world. It is, after all, a guidance document and not a decree. Over the long term, successful implementation will rest on (1) the capacity of institutions to adopt a ‘whole of society approach’ involving *all* stakeholders; (2) access to the necessary levels of financial and technical support; and (3) sustained political will to affirm the vision and advocate for its implementation over the long term.

At this point in the evolution of life on Earth, it is increasingly difficult to maintain a positive outlook on how the future may unfold and whether education will be able to fulfill its potential to contribute to a more peaceful and sustainable world. The scale of violence that has escalated during the years leading up to the adoption of the 2023 Recommendation and in the short period since has inflicted catastrophic levels of suffering on civilians and the environment. The climate crisis has also intensified. Both 2023 and 2024 have been confirmed by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) as the warmest years on record, each by a huge margin. These foreboding events, together with the rise of authoritarianism around the globe and ever-widening social and economic inequalities paint a bleak picture of the present and constitute an urgent call to action. Reflecting on the breathtaking advances in science and technology that have come to pass in the decades between the two Recommendations, one can only begin to imagine what updates and revisions to the 2023 document will be needed in the coming years to harness the power of artificial intelligence and integrate theories of learning based on new discoveries in neuroscience. For the immediate future, what we can dare to hope for is that education transformed will soon take the lead in creating the critical mass of empathetic, informed and skilled global citizens needed to shape the future they (and we) want.

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1.2 Education for a better world: How the European Declaration on Global Education to 2050 is making its way into policy and education practices

Liam Wegimont and Ana Larcher Carvalho

Abstract

This chapter explores how the European Declaration on Global Education to 2050 is making its way into policy and practice across Europe, from regional frameworks and national strategies, to education systems, and ultimately to learners and society. Drawing on monitoring processes using GENE's habitual engagement with member countries, the chapter examines the mechanisms through which this shared policy framework is being implemented. It also looks into the vision and development process of the Declaration, as this, we argue, laid the foundation for a common vision and fostered ownership across diverse stakeholders. Building on this, the chapter introduces an analytical framework to trace how the Declaration is influencing change across multiple levels. It documents the concrete effects already visible since the Declaration's adoption in November 2022. The conclusion calls for continual critical engagement with the changing world and with our own policies and practices in Global Education to ensure it remains a force for transformative learning and a more just and equal world.

1 Introduction

The European Declaration on Global Education to 2050, commonly known as the Dublin Declaration, was adopted in 2022, as a strategic framework to inspire and guide the advancement of Global Education across Europe, towards the day when all people in Europe – in solidarity with peoples globally – have access to quality Global Education (GENE, 2022). It outlines a shared vision and commitments of European countries and various stakeholders to promote Global Education up to the year 2050.

The Declaration builds on a firm foundation of international policy frameworks including the landmark 1974 UNESCO Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which was under revision during the Declaration's development. Above all, the Declaration is grounded in the Maastricht Declaration on Global Education (Council of Europe/GENE, 2002), which provided a European strategic framework for strengthening and expanding Global Education to 2015 and serves as the principal basis for the Dublin Declaration.

The Dublin Declaration reflects profound and far-reaching changes in Global Education policy and practice, as well as in the political, social, and educational context over the last 20 years, both in Europe and globally, which prompted the need for the drafting of a new declaration to address these significant shifts and provide a clear roadmap for the coming decades (GENE, 2022).

The process, facilitated by Global Education Network Europe¹² (GENE) and led by a drafting committee of member states, chaired by Ireland and co-chaired by Luxembourg, generated a consensus document which has a classical international agreement format, together with a process designed to include divergent voices and differing stakeholders. This consensus was achieved over an 18-month period and incorporated academic research and the views of many stakeholders, using stakeholder streams, multi-stakeholder moments, a Global Critical Friends process, and a series of drafts that were circulated and agreed by member states while also including the systematic integration of stakeholder perspectives. This in turn made the Declaration an actionable tool – a strategy framework – for the advancement of Global Education (GE) in different countries and for various stakeholders, rather than simply a policy document.

The Global Critical Friends process was particularly important, involving more than 40 experts from different regions of the world who were invited to contribute. This process – which has continued beyond the Declaration process – was in direct response to the experience of development of the Maastricht Global Education Declaration, which had attempted to include a “Southern perspective” but did not adequately include voices from the Global South systemically within the process. The Dublin Declaration process, learning from the strengths and weaknesses of Maastricht and other processes, attempted to do so in a more structured way.

Since the adoption of the Declaration, GENE has been supporting its implementation and monitoring its effects across Europe and beyond, with particular emphasis on national policies, inter-ministerial cooperation, curriculum development, teacher training and more. In this article, we present some of the changes that have been identified during these first two years of implementation of the Declaration.

This chapter starts with an overview and some insights from the process behind the development of the Declaration. It highlights the participatory and co-creational nature of the process, ensuring the integration of multiple perspectives and priorities and helping to develop a sense of shared responsibility. This section also introduces the conceptual framework of the Declaration, which provides a common policy language that enables a variety of educational concepts and terminology and their respective constituencies to come together for greater policy effect.

Secondly, we present a policy analysis framework developed to understand and capture the effects of the Declaration at various levels, from international policy to organizational changes, knowledge production, education practices through to broader societal change. We will explore these changes, highlighting several examples, to provide a picture of how the Declaration is making its way from regional policy to educational practice.

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12 GENE is a network of Ministries and Agencies across Europe with national responsibility for Global Education and the essence of its approach lies in bringing together policymakers, facilitating the sharing of national experiences and insights, and fostering mutual learning on policy matters related to Global Education. At its core, GENE's goal is to work towards a future in which every individual in Europe, in solidarity with peoples worldwide, enjoys access to quality Global Education.

The concluding section will look toward the future to reflect on the challenges and on what steps are needed to ensure that the promises of the Declaration are fulfilled, and that education continues to evolve and be transformed into a central pillar in the creation of a more just, peaceful and sustainable world.

2 Why a European Declaration on Global Education to 2050?

The need for a new European policy document on Global Education emerged in response to profound global challenges that, though already apparent by the end of the previous century, have been reinforced and intensified since the beginning of the 21st century. These include global poverty and rising inequality, the climate and environmental crisis, intensification of war and conflicts¹³ and rising threats to democracy and human rights violations, with the growth of intolerance, discrimination, polarization, and misinformation (GENE, 2022, p.5).

The concept of polycrisis¹⁴ defined by Morin & Kern (1999) may be useful here to understand the role of Global Education in addressing global challenges. Morin and Kern (1999) use polycrisis to describe the interconnected social, economic, ecological, and political challenges which are increasingly complex, interconnected, and sources of uncertainty and ambiguity. But importantly, they emphasize that uncertainty and ambiguity are inherent to the human condition in the context of the polycrisis and they should be seen as a source of both tragedy and hope and an opportunity for learning, creativity, and transformation. They proposed the concept of complex thought to navigate this polycrisis and uncertainty (Morin & Kern, 1999).

Several other authors discuss the type of Global Education needed to face global challenges. Stein (2021) uses the term VUCA world, volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, used in several fields to describe overlapping challenges and agrees that “existing paradigms and approaches to education appear increasingly insufficient”. Andreotti (2021) suggests the need for “depth education” to create conditions for learners to face humanity in all its complexity, and highlights “the importance of learning to walk a tightrope between naive hope and desperate hopelessness, with honesty, humility, humor and hyper-self-reflexivity”.

These perspectives highlight the critical role of Global Education in equipping learners to navigate these complex and deep issues with critical analysis skills, self-reflexivity, open-ended pedagogies, finding meaning and possibility in the midst of uncertainty.

The need for a new Declaration also arose from the emergence of new concepts and ideas emanating from research in education and Global Education, which were analyzed in depth in the research paper developed by Doug Bourn on key policy trends in the run-up to the Dublin Declaration (Bourn, 2024). A key initial point in the discussion is the extent to which Global Education has moved, since 2002, from being understood as a series of

13 Especially since 2021 there has been a surge in large scale war making the last 4 years the most violent years since 1989 (Rustad, 2024).

14 The term polycrisis was popularized by Morin and Kern and subsequently taken up and reinterpreted by numerous scholars and organizations. Polycrisis describes the challenges the world faces as a “complex intersolidarity of problems, antagonisms, crises, uncontrolled processes” (Morin & Kern, 1999).

“adjectival educations” to a coherent and distinct educational field (Bourn, 2020). Key ideas shaping research include the recognition of how concepts such as development, human rights, the environment, and citizenship have become increasingly interconnected; the growing body of research concerning democracy, human rights, and the impact of rising xenophobia; and the increasing attention to Global Education in teacher education and higher education. Finally, reflecting on the changing ways in which people of all ages learn and engage with global issues, there is a focus on how Global Education is fostering public engagement in global and development issues (Bourn, 2024).

This new Declaration arose equally from changes in Global Education policy and practice since the Maastricht Declaration of 2002, and other Europe-wide and global initiatives to strengthen the policy environment for Global Education in Europe and beyond. Over recent decades, there has been a growing international consensus on the need to transform education so it can help “shift the world onto a better path” (United Nations, 2023). Rooted in the long-standing belief that education can provide the foundation for peace, the very principle on which UNESCO was founded, Global Education policy has evolved through a wide range of international and regional frameworks. Central to this are global agendas such as Agenda 2030 and SDG 4 (particularly target 4.7), and several recent UNESCO frameworks on Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Education. An important milestone is the revision of the 1974 UNESCO Recommendation, which was underway during the development of the Dublin Declaration (UNESCO 1974, 2023). At the European level, several policy documents on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education emphasize the transformative potential of education in fostering democratic values, global solidarity, and sustainability. The Declaration contains specific references to several of these international frameworks, which form part of the policy foundation on which the Declaration itself was developed.

GENE had been centrally involved in the development of the previous Maastricht Declaration on Global Education to 2015 (Council of Europe and GENE, 2002) so the Dublin Declaration was built on the legacy of the Maastricht Declaration which provided a foundational framework for the work in Global Education across Europe. Conceptually, it laid out a definition of Global Education that opened up spaces for deep transformation and questioning; and politically, it explicitly demanded not just equality, but above all also justice (Suša, 2019). It has also become the basis for many national strategies in Europe on GE and a huge milestone in Global Education (Wegimont, 2023).

The Dublin Declaration sought to provide a new vision for Global Education and guidance for implementation, in the context of the new realities and challenges of the 21st century.

3 The process of development of the Dublin Declaration and its importance

The Dublin Declaration was the result of a deeply participatory and inclusive process which was paramount to ensuring the engagement of policymakers and stakeholders and to reflect a diversity of perspectives. While there were many conceptual and practical disagreements within the process, the process of consensus coupled with the feedback loops with stakeholders led to an agreed definition and declaration that was, and remains, agreed by European member states and stakeholders. This approach was also essential for fostering a sense of shared responsibility for implementing the Declaration.

The development process, lasting from June 2021 to November 2022, was based on research regarding similar processes, and was interactive, iterative and participatory in character, involving hundreds of stakeholders from Europe and world-wide (Seiffert, 2023).

It was led by Ministries and Agencies of Foreign Affairs and Education from across Europe. As part of their role in support of international cooperation, including ODA (Overseas Development Assistance), Ministries of Foreign Affairs have a lead role in ensuring that their publics can understand, critically engage with, and even support international solidarity, through Global Education¹⁵. A growing number of these ministries and agencies, including ministries of education across Europe, have joined GENE to facilitate policy learning and to develop common strategies at the European level.¹⁶ Policymakers formed a drafting committee with representatives from eight countries led by Ireland and Luxembourg, working collaboratively and in consultation with all GENE member states and facilitated by the GENE Secretariat.

While the process was clearly led by the policymakers, it was also distinguished by its cooperation and engagement with various interest groups. Consultation was established with key stakeholders in structured streams, led by umbrella organizations, and involving other key organizations. These included separate stakeholder streams for youth organizations, development NGOs and other civil society organizations, local and regional governments, international organizations, researchers/academia and Global Critical Friends (a group of over 40 experts from other regions of the world).

This process yielded very rich inputs for the Declaration and careful attention was given to analyzing and incorporating the central concerns of each stakeholder group¹⁷ (Seiffert, 2023). It should be noted that GENE worked on the basis of existing democratically represented sectoral representative bodies – e.g. the European Youth Forum, national youth councils, etc.

Regarding the drafting Committee, GENE drew on the experience of seasoned diplomats from the Ministries and Agencies from countries with strong traditions of Global Education. Of course, the process was not without its heated debates and engaged disagreements (with one question, for example being “why planetary rather than global; surely we’re only speaking of the one planet”); the fact that many of the government officials taking part in the drafting committee had national responsibility for funding and policymaking in this area meant that they were well versed in the contemporary arguments and challenges of the field. This, combined with the clear leadership towards consensus by the co-chairs, Ireland and Luxembourg, and their commitment to guaranteeing the inclusion of stakeholder perspectives, ensured that the long process could lead to a smooth outcome.

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15 This is why, since the 1970s, the OECD DAC recognizes spending on public awareness and Global Education as “Dacable”, meaning it is recognized as part of ODA, and why in many countries in Europe and other regions, Ministries of Foreign Affairs and their international development units or agencies lead national strategy development and interministerial coordination in this field. For more detailed examples in Europe, see McAuley and Wegimont (2022) and the GENE Knowledge Base (<https://knowledge.gene.eu/>). For the growing work at national level in Latin American countries, see the Ibero-American Programme on Global Citizenship (<https://ibercidadaniaglobal.org/>).

16 GENE was founded in 2001 with 6 ministries and Agencies in six European countries and has grown to now include almost 60 from most countries in Europe, sharing policy learning. See www.gene.eu.

17 See the testimony of Andrew Tabura, Ministry of Education, Uganda and member of the Global Critical Friends group regarding the inclusivity of the process in Seiffert, 2023.

The role of GENE in providing a Secretariat to the drafting and stakeholder processes allowed GENE to act as an honest broker/friend to the co-chairs when drafting challenges arose. Consequently, the final document articulates a long-term vision for Global Education that reflects the concerns and aspirations of a broad range of stakeholders. It puts forward a complex vision that integrates various perspectives on the problems we face as a society and creates a strategic framework on how Global Education can help tackle them and contribute to building a fairer world. This is one of the key factors enabling the substantial support the Declaration is receiving (Larcher Carvalho & Wegimont, 2024).

The participatory nature of its development, along with the emphasis on cooperation and coordination throughout both the drafting and implementation phases, are key factors behind the strong support the Dublin Declaration is receiving.

4 The vision of Global Education in the Dublin Declaration

The vision underpinning the Declaration reflects both the inclusive process of its development and the diverse perspectives of the stakeholders involved. At the same time, it is also deeply rooted in a rich and evolving tradition of education for transformation and the common good. It draws from international policy frameworks and initiatives led by the UN, UNESCO, the OECD and the European Commission among others, but also on decades of critical reflection and practice by institutions, civil society organizations, educators, researchers, and practitioners. It has longstanding historical roots in the traditions of peace education, human rights education, sustainable development, and citizenship education.

Research has also played a central role in informing the development of the Declaration, building on GENE's own research work – over two decades, GENE's *State of Global Education* reports, national peer reviews, and numerous publications have created a solid base for policy development – and on longstanding partnerships with leading research institutions through the Academic Network on Global Education and Learning (ANGEL). This close collaboration created spaces for in-depth reflection on the evolution of concepts, the changing Global Education landscape over the past 20 years, and future directions. Of particular importance is the paper developed by Doug Bourn, identifying *Key Trends in Research on Global Education beyond Maastricht*, informed by the work on the Global Education Digest, which provided critical insights that helped shape the Declaration.

The policy framework on Global Education at European level emerged in 2002, with the Maastricht Declaration. There is clear continuity between the Maastricht and the Dublin vision and definition – but also a number of substantial changes reflecting issues that were less evident 20 years ago (Wegimont, 2023). The Dublin Declaration reflects the changes in context and its increased complexity, evolving ideas and concepts in Global Education research and builds firmly on existing policy commitments at European and international level. It also analyzes and recognizes the progress made in Global Education and defines more in depth commitments both at national and international levels, incorporating also a system for monitoring progress.

The Declaration also develops a more detailed and renewed definition of Global Education – building on the Maastricht definition but going beyond it. It included 'a deeper understanding of the nature of human knowing, human becoming, learning and human action', by introducing the concept of opening hearts as well as eyes and minds and by emphasizing the importance of hope and imagination in Global Education (Wegimont, 2023).

Global Education seeks to foster more in depth knowledge and understanding of the complexity and interconnectedness of global problems and injustices that confront our societies and their root causes. It is based on the recognition of underlying global power inequalities and on the role of historical heritage, including the legacies of colonialism, and geopolitical and economic unjust structures and relationships as reflected in global problems. It also values different perspectives and knowledge of all cultures.

Global Education has as one of its core values a commitment to pedagogical practices that are inclusive, participatory, centred on the learner, and that foster the development of critical thinking, skills and competencies, attitudes, and values essential for informed, self-reflective and meaningful action (GENE, 2022).

Ultimately, The Dublin Declaration on Global Education is founded on a vision of education with the power to bring about a world of global social justice, peace, international solidarity, sustainability and international understanding, all grounded in the fundamental respect for human rights for all.

One of the main strengths of the Dublin Declaration, which is in keeping with the Maastricht Declaration, is that it recognizes and unites a variety of educational concepts under one umbrella for greater policy effect. These include Anti-Racist Education, Development Education, Global Citizenship Education, Education for Global Citizenship and International Solidarity, Education for Sustainable Development, Human Rights Education, Intercultural Education and Peace Education, and several other related terms (GENE, 2022).

While some may argue that this bringing together of concepts blurs conceptual clarity; the plethora of competing and closely related concepts has acted to fragment focus, create silos and ultimately undermine coherence at all levels – from the classroom and youth club to the national education system levels. Various authors have indeed argued for the need for an umbrella term to capture the shared transformative aims of various educational approaches: Grieg, Pike and Selby (1987) highlighted the complementarity and mutual reinforcement of these approaches; Richardson's 'Elephant Education' metaphor (1985), which evokes the parable of people each describing only part of an elephant, called for a more holistic and integrated perspective (Richardson, 1985).

The Declaration recognizes the commonalities in these related educational concepts, building on them to develop a common and comprehensive understanding of Global Education. At the same time, it recognizes the richness of various concepts and different national uses; and cherishes the rich and diverse histories and practices of each. It advocates not for overshadowing, nor synthesizing differing concepts, but rather for joining forces to amplify the potential joint policy effect and transformative power. This approach promotes coherence, fosters policy learning and peer collaboration while discouraging operating in isolated silos, with a view to achieving a more impactful collective effect (Larcher Carvalho & Wegimont, 2024).

As a testimony to this approach, in the follow up to the Declaration, GENE started a new series on the histories of Global Education, in the making for more than a decade, that explores in depth the distinct national histories of GE, recognizing their diversity and richness, and written by authors deeply engaged in these national histories (Scheunpflug & Wegimont, 2024).

5 A framework to follow the transformations sparked by the European Declaration on Global Education

To better understand and map the changes driven by the Dublin Declaration, we have updated and expanded a policy analysis framework, building on prior work (Larcher Carvalho and Wegimont, 2024). We started by identifying a typology of effects or domains in which the Declaration may cause change. This framework will be the basis to explore the types of effects of the Dublin Declaration on Global Education in Europe.

To identify these effects we drew from the work of several researchers on the assessment of effects of international policy (Golden, 2020; Oliver and Parolin, 2018; Reisman et al., 2007), and supplemented it with insights derived from research on the development of Global Education in Europe (Hartmeyer and Wegimont, 2016, GENE, 2019) along with the national and international commitments articulated in the Declaration (p. 7 and p. 8).

The key areas of policy effect in Global Education reflect a comprehensive approach to fostering meaningful change across multiple dimensions. First, there is a focus on changing attitudes and behaviors toward Global Education (GE) within international organizations, ensuring that GE is placed at the heart of international education policy and processes.

At national level, it involves the development or renewal of GE strategies and the integration of GE into education and connected policies. This is complemented by strengthening organizational capacity and coordination, enabling institutions to implement GE more effectively. Here we consider both ministerial and agency level, school level and other organizations involved in the implementation of GE. Another key element is the reinforcement of alliances that support peer learning and facilitate the implementation of GE in formal and informal education at various levels and through various stakeholders.

Another critical area is knowledge, which involves generating, sharing, and utilizing knowledge to inform practices and policies. Global Education also requires a strengthened base of support, fostering widespread understanding and endorsement of GE principles with the wider public. These changes will lead to change in access to Global Education, in understanding and support for GE, in understanding of global issues and their interconnectedness and in the capacity to act for a better world. Together, these areas highlight a rounded and strategic approach to advancing Global Education at all levels.

AREAS OF CHANGE	DIMENSIONS OF CHANGE
Changes in attitudes and behaviors towards GE at international level	<p>Greater international recognition of GE, common understanding, greater coordination</p> <p>Engage in mutual learning and support regarding the development of regional structures for networking between policymakers, and other stakeholders, inter-regionally, and globally</p>
Improved education and connected policies	<p>Greater recognition of GE at national level</p> <p>Changes in international policy frameworks</p> <p>Changes in connected national policies</p> <p>Changes in national GE policies and strategies</p>
Strengthened organizational capacity and coordination	<p>Changes in organizational capacity at ministerial and agency level</p> <p>Changes in the organizational capacity in the formal education sector (whole school approaches, structures of support for educators, teacher training, curriculum revision)</p> <p>Changes in organizational capacity in the non-formal, informal life-wide and lifelong education systems</p>
Alliances supporting peer learning in Global Education	<p>Strengthened networking and peer learning between policymakers</p> <p>Greater cooperation at international level</p> <p>Strengthened stakeholders' engagement</p> <p>Work with peers and colleagues from other regions of the world</p>
Advancing research, knowledge and peer learning	<p>Develop policy research (state of GE, peer reviews, knowledge bank, mappings)</p> <p>Strengthened capacity for policy research on GE (support and resource research, support angel)</p> <p>Learning spaces and research to policy</p> <p>Greater support for innovation in GE</p>
Strengthened base of support (public support)	<p>Investment in communications, public awareness, reaching out to new publics</p>
Changes in people and society	<p>More people with access to Global Education opportunities.</p> <p>Increased interest and engagement among citizens and learners.</p> <p>Greater support for educators and teachers to explore and engage with Global Education; strengthened interest in GE and leadership in reflective practice and learning.</p> <p>Strengthened individual and collective capacity to reflect and act on global challenges.</p>

Table 1: Policy analysis framework
(based on Larcher Carvalho and Wegimont, 2024 and revised)

This analysis of the effects has followed the approach of Oliver and Parolin (2018). Their approach is based on ‘contribution mapping (Kok et al., 2012; Morton et al., 2015), in which a new policy is followed over time, and impacts are identified through interviews, documentary analysis, or other multi-modal means’ (Oliver and Parolin, 2018).

This analysis was also based on the Country Reports that GENE member countries have for many years been sharing twice a year at GENE Roundtables. These are fed into the regular State of Global Education in Europe report (McAuley & Wegimont, 2022). Since the adoption of the Dublin Declaration, the structure of these reports has been adjusted to gather information specifically related to progress on the core commitments of the Dublin Declaration. The reporting process has been designed to ensure that it is coherent with other reporting requirements (UNECE; UNESCO 1974/revised 2023 Recommendation etc.). The GENE Secretariat uses this information for policy analysis and to report on progress toward achieving the aims and vision of the Dublin Declaration.

The implementation of the Declaration has also been the focus of a number of sectoral Conferences (HAND International Conference ‘Shaping Tomorrow through Global Education’, 28 November 2024, *Platforma*), and a number of hearings with partners in the European Parliament, and in the European Union Member States Council on Development Cooperation, most notably under the Czechia (Nov 2022), Belgian (April 2024) and Polish (June 2026) EU presidencies.

It was on the basis of these monitoring processes that the policy analysis framework was developed to capture and systematize the main areas and dimensions of change identified.

6 Following up the Dublin Declaration: Transforming policy into practice

The Dublin Declaration on Global Education to 2050 has brought about important changes in Global Education across Europe, shaping policies and practices in many ways. Two years into its implementation, the Declaration’s effects can be seen in various areas, showing its potential to transform education systems.

Changes in attitudes and behaviors towards Global Education at international level

The Dublin Declaration has contributed to strengthening shared international commitment to Global Education. Partnerships with UNESCO, the OECD, and other international organisations have strengthened cooperation and mutual reinforcement in advancing this shared agenda. As Stefania Giannini (UNESCO, GENE Roundtable 50) observed:

‘The Dublin Declaration and the revision of the 1974 recommendation represented an unprecedented consensus of the importance of Global Education in improving lives. They serve as a navigational compass in challenging times’ (Stephanie Giannini, GENE Roundtable 50).

Similarly, as a result of a partnership with the OECD, GENE contributed to the OECD's Development Co-operation Report 2024 with a chapter underlining the importance of GE in addressing global poverty and inequality (Foley *et al.*, 2024) and its natural place as part of foreign and development policy.

At the international level, collaborative work inspired by the Declaration in several regions has led to important regional initiatives that extend the influence of the Declaration beyond Europe. Examples include collaborations with recently formed African Union's Global Education Network Africa (GENA) on a roadmap and potential projects such as a policymaker network and peer review process. In the Asia-Pacific region, policy dialogues inspired by the Declaration contributed to the development of a regional strategy for Global Education and in development of a Roadmap on education for peace, human rights, and sustainable development. Latin America has seen progress through the support to the Ibero-American Initiative on Global Citizenship for Sustainable Development, a staff training program, with the participation of the GENE secretariat and aligned with the Dublin Declaration and a planned webinar to launch the results of a mapping exercise on policies, concepts, and key actors, facilitated by SEGIB's¹⁸ participation in GENE Roundtable 50 in Madrid.

At national level there have also been initiatives to achieve greater recognition of GE: for instance, in the United Kingdom, the Declaration, and the international consensus it represents, was used to make 'The Case for Global Learning', a 'manifesto' - which details evidence of the wide-ranging benefits for teachers and learners of Global Education (Global Learning Network/DERC, 2024).

Improved education and connected policies

Changes in international policy frameworks

The Dublin Declaration complements and reinforces existing international and national policy frameworks. Its relevance is reflected in its explicit mention in Council of the European Union conclusions, under the French Presidency, on 'The transformative role of education for sustainable development and global citizenship as an instrumental tool for achieving the SDGs' (Council of the European Union, 2022), in which it 'also welcomes [...] the ongoing process towards a new European Declaration on Global Education to 2050 under the aegis of the Global Education Network Europe (GENE).' This reference illustrates the growing alignment and dialogue between the Dublin Declaration and European-level policy discussions.

Changes in national connected policies

The Declaration has influenced broader national policies and frameworks, including education, foreign affairs, and development cooperation policies. Examples include:

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18 In Spanish this acronym refers to the Ibero-American General Secretariat (www.segib.org/en/who-we-are/)

- **Czechia:** The Declaration has been integrated into policies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs funding rounds and within work of the National Strategy group, as well as across various departments in the Ministry of Education. Efforts are being made to integrate Global Education in the long-term plan for the development of education and the education system of Czechia 2023-2027.
- **France:** A new strategy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for 'civil society and civic engagement' acknowledges the Dublin Declaration as a reference framework.
- **Cyprus:** The National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development and Green Transition 2030 reflects the Declaration in its focus on whole-school approaches and youth involvement and the need to establish networks of collaboration between all the interested parties and stakeholders.
- **Montenegro:** Looking to use the Declaration as a reference framework for the purpose of development of the new National Education Strategy (GENE annual report 2024).

Changes in national GE strategies

The Dublin Declaration has inspired the development or strengthening of national Global Education strategies in European countries, ensuring alignment with its principles:

- **Portugal:** The recently designed National Strategy for Development Education (ENED) integrates the Declaration's principles.
- **Belgium:** A new strategic note on Global Citizenship Education, informed by the Declaration, aims to raise the profile of GE in development cooperation and education policies.
- **Slovakia:** The new action plan for Global Education includes the Declaration's values and goals, enhancing its structure and focus.

These examples show how the Declaration acts as a guide for both national policies and specific Global Education strategies, shaping education frameworks and creating consistency.

Strengthened organizational capacity and coordination

The Declaration has also improved organizational abilities in Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Agencies, and educational institutions. Countries like Austria and Portugal have used its ideas to enhance cooperation and build capacity. For example:

- **Portugal:** A whole-of-staff training programme on Global Education, developed collaboratively between GENE and Camões, was designed to strengthen institutional coherence by positioning Global Education as a transversal and unifying theme capable of bringing together staff from across different departments.
- **Luxembourg:** The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs has adopted a new evaluation model for GE, based on the Declaration's recommendation to develop more appropriate evaluation models.

In formal education, curriculum reforms and teacher training programs have increasingly included GE principles. **Latvia** is using the Declaration to guide reforms in both curriculum and teacher training, while efforts are being made in **Slovakia** to align its new secondary education curriculum with the Declaration.

Building alliances supporting peer learning in Global Education

The Dublin Declaration has strengthened partnerships and peer learning among policymakers, educators, and civil society organizations. GENE's roundtable discussions, and a recent Central European policy dialogue¹⁹, have supported knowledge sharing and cooperation across regions. These efforts highlight the Declaration's role in encouraging international collaboration and boosting collective efforts to address global challenges.

Advancing research, knowledge and peer learning

Investments in knowledge processes have been another key result of the Dublin Declaration. While grounded in existing processes, these developments represent a significant advance, driven in large part by more robust stakeholder engagement. The State of Global Education 2024 report as well as GE mapping projects, such as the recently published mapping of GE in Malta (Mifsud, 2024), show progress in sharing and using GE knowledge. The ANGEL Conference 2025 organized by ANGEL in partnership with GENE, BMZ, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and Engagement Global - the central contact agency in Germany for development policy initiatives- explored evidence regarding the relationship between GE and democracy, peace, human rights, sustainability and global social justice, as well as new ways to connect research, policy, and practice in GE.

Additionally, initiatives like the GENE Global Education Youth Award²⁰ celebrated innovative, youth-led projects, demonstrating the ability of GE to inspire social change. This focus on research innovation ensures that GE practices continue to grow and adapt to emerging priorities.

The follow-up work to implement the Dublin Declaration shows the power of the Declaration to bring about meaningful change in Global Education. By encouraging international cooperation, improving policy frameworks, and promoting organizational strengthening, knowledge development, and collective transformation, the Declaration has created a strong foundation for achieving its goal of giving access to all people to Global Education, for a more just, inclusive and sustainable world. However, continued efforts are needed to realize its potential, in the face of global challenges and threats to Global Education and international solidarity.

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¹⁹ HAND International Conference 'Shaping Tomorrow through Global Education', 28 November 2024

²⁰ The GENE Global Education Awards recognize innovative initiatives in Global Education across Europe, promoting peer and policy learning. <https://www.gene.eu/awards>

7 How can we advance and sustain the aims of the Declaration in challenging times?

While significant progress has been made in implementing the Declaration, numerous challenges remain, particularly those arising from the complex crises that affect the world and threaten Global Education. Efforts to advance Global Education and the implementation of the Declaration must continue, addressing challenges on a country-by-country and sector-by-sector basis.

In order to uphold and implement the Declaration amid global challenges, it is crucial to explore concrete ways of working together, learning from diverse approaches, and engaging critically with the complexities that shape Global Education today. The key dimensions of this work include:

- Reinforcing the collaborative work with international partners, including integrating and strengthening the Global Education /Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) dimensions of existing international frameworks.
- Continuing working at country and sector levels, stakeholder by stakeholder, to support Global Education development and improve quality, with a focus on learning with and supporting policymakers.
- Supporting inter-ministerial and stakeholder cooperation.
- Continuing to promote policy learning processes that enable the sharing of experiences, knowledge and reflection and creating space for engagement, dialogue, and critical reflection among policymakers, civil society organizations, youth, and researchers.
- Continuing meaningful dialogue with various stakeholder groups and engaging them in policy processes, recognizing their vital role in GE and supporting their work.
- Continuing the dialogue with colleagues from other regions and ensuring critical debate, exchange of ideas and support to the development of regional structures.
- Strengthening links between policy making and research, promoting the development of policy relevant research and facilitating the use of research to improve Global Education policies and practice.
- Supporting research that can challenge, question, and foster critical thinking including critical reflection on historical and current power imbalances, the effects of colonialism and coloniality.
- Investing in monitoring and evaluation, both in regard to the implementation of the Declaration as well as reflection about quality and evaluation in GE.

8 Conclusion

This paper builds on previous analyzes and publications following the adoption of the Dublin Declaration in late 2022, examining how its effects, that build on progress achieved in the past 20 years, are deepening at both national and international levels, with a transformative impact on Global Education.

However, fulfilling the promises of the Dublin Declaration – ensuring Global Education reaches all people, in solidarity with peoples globally – demands sustained commitment and a concerted, intensified effort at all levels: national, regional, and international.

The work in Global Education is never complete. We owe it to future generations to persist in reflecting, analyzing, and critically assessing the work in Global Education. It is essential to ask whether we are truly meeting their aspirations, hopes, and dreams. We must also remain committed to addressing the shortfalls in Global Education, striving to include countries with limited access to GE, marginalized populations, communities and organizations whose voices and perspectives remain unheard and learn from them.

It is vital to learn from others, from colleagues working with different concepts of education for a better world, be it anti-racist education, peace, international understanding and human rights, social justice education or education for sustainable development, to ensure a rich, deep and holistic understanding of the challenges and to enable concerted, joint efforts.

It is essential to remain critical; and criticality also entails an active reflection on coloniality. This involves critically examining the lingering effects of colonialism in educational policies, practices, concepts, and content. Decolonization also fosters a critical reflection on historical and current power imbalances. It emphasizes the importance of valuing diverse sources of knowledge, worldviews, and educational practices, ensuring perspectives from the Global South are recognized and integrated alongside others in our understandings of Global Education. While decolonization is a deeply complex process, engaging with this debate and the scholarship around it is essential.

By embracing diverse knowledge systems, concepts, ideas, aspirations and challenges, Global Education can be a transformative force for everyone, everywhere, for fostering global solidarity and justice.

The achievements in Global Education are not linear and the road is filled with progress and setbacks. In a world fraught with challenges that threaten the progress of Global Education in many countries, this work remains essential. Global Education serves as a unifying force, bringing people together in meaningful ways to advance the shared goals of global justice, equality, peace, and sustainability and ensuring that no one is left behind.

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1.3 Step up to the World | Tū māia ki te Ao: Progressing together with courage and responsibility

Libby Giles

Abstract

In the call to transform education for a peaceful, fair, and sustainable world, this chapter emphasizes the importance of understanding the concept of global citizenship. Drawing on an Aotearoa New Zealand perspective that is underpinned by the ideas of identity, connections, and responsibility, it provides a glance into the origins of global citizenship from indigenous knowledge systems and the ancient world, to modern interpretations. Understanding that global citizenship is not about becoming the same, empowers us to bring the richness of our differences to building a better world through education. The narrative examines the challenges of implementing global citizenship education and underscores the significance of partners and friends in realizing global goals. Drawing on observational reflections and the successful outcomes of the Dublin Declaration and the Asia-Pacific Regional Dialogue, the chapter advocates for regional approaches, coordinated and supported by cross-sector international educational communities and organizations. It concludes by calling for a renewed commitment to honoring global agreements and delivering on educational frameworks that promote a more peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable world. *Step up to the World | Tū māia ki te ao* is the call for global citizens to take up those commitments with courage and responsibility.

1 Introduction

He waka eke noa
We are all in this canoe together
(Māori proverb)

The contributors to this volume are brought together by a commitment to the belief that education is vital for the construction of a better world; to the international policy frameworks and agreements that bind us and provide pathways for implementation; and to local and regional approaches to delivering on those frameworks and honoring agreements. A commitment to agreements that form the basis of the multilateral cooperation that prioritizes global interests such as peace, human rights, and sustainable development.

The educational policy frameworks referenced share a common understanding of global interests that connect, strengthen, and challenge us, on the basis that we have different national and regional needs and priorities.

My interests and background in teaching philosophy contribute to my deep sense that transforming education is the path to a more peaceful, sustainable, inclusive, and equitable

world. We are all party to a number of agreements and frameworks that set out to do just that. When I read through these documents and see examples of best practice in action, it feels like we have arrived at where we need to be, yet mainstreamed, impactful implementation remains elusive. Common themes, ideals, and policies are evident in national frameworks and curricular documents but these don't necessarily equate to changes in pedagogy and practice. That would require a deep commitment by political leaders and policy makers and a well-resourced, coordinated effort. Understanding who we are, what binds us, and the power of working together, just might be the key to progress, along with some help from our friends.

This chapter offers a narrative that advocates for changing the way we think and learn, with a sense of identity and collective responsibility. Partners, friends, and local contexts are positioned as central to the authentic implementation of global citizenship education (GCED) and delivery on global goals and agreements. GCED is the umbrella term used in this perspective, to be understood to encompass transformative, holistic education for a more peaceful, inclusive, just, and sustainable world.

The narrative begins by exploring the nature, origins, and understanding of the notion of global citizenship, from its blueprints in indigenous knowledge systems and ancient civilization to a modern view. It showcases the power of diverse voices and collective action; and agreements are presented, not only as the foundations for multilateral cooperation, but as the basis for the notion of global citizenship itself.

The effectiveness of and challenges to the implementation of global agreements, notably the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights, and Sustainable Development, are discussed with reference to existing examples, current developments, and future pathways.

I trace the road from global critical friendship in the lead up to the Dublin Declaration (the European Declaration on Global Education to 2050), to partnership in an Asia-Pacific regional dialogue road map, to a closer-to-home prioritization of Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific region. The strength of dialogues, agreements, and collective action in the regions comes into focus – how progress can be achieved through unity and shared goals, while honoring diversity and local contexts.

While referencing examples of such agreements and partnerships, we can explore the development of local and regional agreements and their potential for effecting change. International policy frameworks that connect us to our common humanity and 'planetary interest' (Graham, 1999) can inform local policies and legislation. Local and regional approaches are able to promote context-honoring and relevant support for implementation. The actual transformation of education faces enormous challenges, such as competing demands, lack of resources, and political will. I would suggest that key to effective global citizenship education is understanding the concept of global citizenship itself at a philosophical and personal level.

I do not assume any authority to write about philosophies and worldviews. My writing reflects thoughts, observations, and experiences as I develop an understanding of who I am, my connection to the world, and how I ought to live. Worldviews are inherently different, yet at their core share common values, identified in agreements such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I touch only lightly on examples of indigenous, ancient, and modern thought on global citizenship.

Weaving in te ao* Māori (the Māori world) perspectives brings an Aotearoa New Zealand perspective to the concept of global citizenship and the practice of global citizenship education. Our approach, developed at the University of Waikato, is underpinned by three big ideas: Identity (Tuakiritanga), Connections (Hononga), and Responsibility (Kaitiakitanga). This is about understanding who we are, how we are connected, and our responsibility

to take care of each other and the Earth for generations to come. *Step up to the World | Tū māia ki te ao* is a call we take forward to empower learners to embrace opportunities and meet challenges with courage, confidence, and responsibility.

I whānau mai ahau ite taha o te moana o te Whanganui-ā-Tara
I raro i te maunga o Te Ahumairangi
He uri ahau nō Airini, nō Wera, nō Ingarangi, nō Aotearoa hoki
Kei te noho ahau inaiane ki Tāmaki Makaurau
He kaihautū ahau mō Arohaina te Ao
Ko Libby Giles toku ingoa
I was born by the sea of te Whanganui-ā-Tara (Wellington)
Beneath the mountain of Te Ahumairangi
I am a descendant of Ireland, Wales, England, and Aotearoa (New Zealand)
I live in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland)
My leadership is for a love of the world
My name is Libby Giles

This is my *pepeha* — a traditional Māori way of introducing oneself, sharing something of where we are from and who we are. Through my *pepeha*, I acknowledge my ancestry, honour the places that hold meaning for me, and offer a glimpse of the values that guide my path.

As a Pākehā (New Zealander of European descent), I share this *pepeha* with humility and respect. Using a form of *pepeha* that is appropriate for Pākehā, allows me to honour the tikanga (values and protocols) of Aotearoa and to express my connection to place, people, and purpose in a way that acknowledges and upholds the values of *te ao Māori*.

My *pepeha* is also a declaration of intent, a way of signalling my commitment to living and working in relationship with the land and communities of Aotearoa, as part of a shared journey of understanding, reciprocity, and partnership under the founding partnership agreement of Aotearoa New Zealand: Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty).

Learning Māori language and tikanga is one of the things that I can do to honor this agreement, an agreement that allows me the privilege of citizenship in a bicultural nation. This learning journey also helps me to understand, in a broader sense, where I come from, how I am connected to others, and how I ought to live.

I am a global citizen, therefore, not by rights vested in me by a sovereign, but through my understanding of and responsibility to honor the relationships and agreements that sustain our collective wellbeing.

2 Understanding global citizenship

Embedding agreed sets of knowledge, skills, and values into our education systems seems unlikely to transform the way we think and learn, if we don't understand who we are as citizens of the world, individually and collectively. That understanding begins with knowing

who we are in the place we stand. A healthy sense of self enables us to engage with our communities, address local challenges, and promote positive transformation. Having that secure sense of identity allows us to engage in the world with confidence and gives us the agency to effect meaningful change. In the absence of a meta sovereign, the legitimacy of global citizenship relies on agreements and responsibility to act for the global common good, at the same time as meeting the diversity of interests within the collective.

Global citizenship is not a new concept; blueprints are found in indigenous knowledge systems and the foundations of ancient and classical thought. Over the past four centuries, however, the Westphalian era of the nation-state has introduced and strengthened the concept of national citizenship to one of political dominance (New Zealand Centre for Global Studies [NZCGS], 2024). Much has been written around global citizenship – more than I can honor in this chapter. In his ‘Global Citizenship’ essay, NZCGS founding director, Kennedy Graham, begins with the idea that global citizenship “rests on five millennia of unrealized universalism, qualified by four centuries of dominant nationalism” (Graham, 2014, p. 1). His enquiry is focused on “how the tension between universalism and individualism will play out through this century” (Graham, 2014, p. 1). Graham provides a narrative that explores philosophical, geographical, and psychological domains of global citizenship and implications for global governance, political leadership, education, and daily life (Graham, 2014). Graham’s work has inspired my understanding of global citizenship and my approach to global citizenship education.

With increasing interconnectedness, shared interests and challenges, the idea of global citizenship has gained significance. In 1968, Apollo 8 astronaut and self-described “arch cold warrior”, Bill Anders, captured the image of a glistening blue and white marble, suspended in space, now known as ‘Earthrise’. On the first manned mission to observe and orbit the moon, the astronauts saw the world as our singular, fragile, beautiful home. Anders felt that this awesome image had a message for humanity: “This is the only home we have and yet we’re busy shooting at each other, threatening nuclear war, and wearing suicide vests... it amazes me.” (Sample, 2018) Anders’ ‘Earthrise’ gave us a view of the world that we hadn’t seen before and which has remained an inspiration for thinking beyond internationally, to globally.

Since the mid-twentieth century, the term global has gained prominence through a range of contextual lenses. For example, commercially it’s about scale, reach and influence, politically about international relations and governance, and environmentally, ecological protection and sustainability. When ‘global’ draws our attention to globalization and economic hegemony, we can think of that image of the ‘world’ from space, “...which is linguistically related to whole and holism, has allusions of ecology and harmony with nature, which align well with Indigenous ways of thinking. The word ‘world’ draws our attention to the natural world, as against ‘global’ that calls to mind ideas such as ‘the global economy’.” (Stewart, 2021, pp. 4, 5)

2.1 The first global citizens

The great passion of indigenous worldviews and cultures is unity with the natural world. We see earth, sea and sky as our parents and believe that all things are born from the earth. And because all things are born from the earth, all things are therefore kin. Life is to be lived consciously within this grand weave of kinship relationships (‘the woven universe’) and our humanity is experienced and understood through kinship relationships with the natural world. Indigeneity is the core wisdom of indigenous cultures and worldview. (Royal, n.d.)

There is no single Indigenous or Western way of knowing or thinking, but broad distinctions may be made. Several characteristics are considered common across many Indigenous peoples, cultures, histories, and contexts. “Together, these emphasize an approach to knowledge that is metaphysical, holistic, oral/symbolic, relational, and intergenerational” (Stinson, 2018, p. 1).

Indigenous knowledge systems provide ways of knowing who we are, our connections (past, present, and future) and our roles as guardians, to each other and the living world.

For example, in Albert Wendt’s 1976 conceptualization of the Pacific as Oceania, he challenged conformist thinking, arguing that “we must discover and reaffirm our faith in the vitality of our past, our cultures, our dead, so that we may develop our own unique eyes, voices, muscles, and imagination” (Wendt, 1976, p. 51, as cited by Samu, 2024, p. 121).

2.2 In the foundations of Eastern and Western thought

Confucianism contains a deep sense of collectivism, emphasizing the mutual flourishing of both self and community. The notion of global citizenship from this perspective involves a sense of responsibility based on relationships derived from Confucian ethics (Choo, 2020). Hindu Vedas “favoured the protection of the environment, provided respect for diversity, and acknowledged the promotion of universal brotherhood” (Chowdhury, 2023, p. 47).

Cosmopolitanism, the idea that human beings have equal moral and political obligations to each other based solely on their humanity, without reference to state citizenship, national identity, religious affiliation, ethnicity, or place of birth, came from ancient Greece. When questioned about political allegiance, Diogenes of Sinope and Socrates both declared “I am a citizen of the world” (Oxford Reference, n.d.).

Diogenes and Socrates would be no such thing, according to former British Prime Minister, Theresa May. In setting out her post-Brexit vision, May (2016) bluntly declared, “If you believe you’re a citizen of the world, you’re a citizen of nowhere. You don’t understand what the very word citizenship means.”

2.3 Global citizens in the 21st century

Mrs May had a point, if we’re to define citizenship solely as the state of being vested with the rights, privileges, and duties of a citizen by a sovereign. But a second meaning found in dictionaries is to do with character, behavior, and responsibility as a member of a group. The Cambridge (n.d.) dictionary defines global citizenship as the idea that you should show loyalty and support for the world as a whole as much as for your country.

While the notion of global citizenship goes beyond geographical or political borders, its responsibilities are grounded closer to home. Josei Toda’s *chikyu minzoku shugi* philosophy of global citizenship does not deny or reject local or national identities but promotes a steady expansion of our more immediate loyalties until they expand to embrace the entire world. Toda’s view came out of the extreme forms of nationalism in the 20th century, particularly in Japan, and the immense suffering endured during World War II (Toda, n.d.).

Global citizenship assumes universality; a position that a universal ethic applies to all, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, or any other distinguishing feature. This view is clearly reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The assumption of universality, however, does not mean everybody should become the same.

Philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah says we are all global citizens and argues the case for cosmopolitans (Appiah, 2007). The fact that there are disagreements around the world should not make us think that we can't live together. Appiah challenges us to be global citizens with shared moral responsibilities, while also accepting and valuing our differences. His slogan is 'Cosmopolitanism is universality plus difference' (NYU Law Magazine, 2014).

Global citizenship is not about the watering down of cultural and national identity. It celebrates identity and diversity – focusing on our common humanity while celebrating what makes us different. It is also not about being somewhere else. Socrates didn't go anywhere, but he knew who he was (tuakiritanga), how he was connected (hononga), and how he should live (kaitiakitanga).

My view is that 'responsibility' and 'agreements' give legitimacy to the notion of global citizenship. It is also my view that understanding who we are (as individuals and as nations), how we are connected, and where our responsibilities lie, is essential to the honoring of agreements and delivering on the shared goals set out in policy frameworks. It is responsible global citizens who will achieve those goals.

3 Global Citizenship Education (GCED)

In response to contemporary challenges, GCED is seen as a key tool in transforming the way we think, learn, and live. It is one of a number of terms used in frameworks and agreements to describe education for a peaceful, sustainable, inclusive, and just world, that operates effectively in different contexts. GCED, as I understand it, is consistent with the definition of 'Global Education' as set out in the Dublin Declaration. Beyond the broad range of life-long and life-wide educational opportunities, it empowers learners with confidence, courage, and responsibility to bring about a more peaceful, inclusive, just, and sustainable world. Central to this definition too is the critical understanding at local and global levels of who we are, how we are connected, and how our actions can effect change for a better life for all. At its core, GCED emphasizes the fundamental values of empathy, compassion, respect, and responsibility. By embracing GCED, we are equipped to analyze global issues, contribute to positive change, think beyond borders and work collaboratively.

Such ideals are not without challenge of course, particularly in an environment of rising nationalism and geo-political tensions. Rather than accepting that self-interest will prevent the achievement of goals, let us draw on the strengths that we bring to the agreements that bind us, such as inclusion, diversity of voice, context, and partnerships.

No passing fad, GCED has deep roots in the establishment of UNESCO and has made great gains. Much has been done to raise awareness of the need for teaching and learning to be holistic and to prioritize the values, skills, and knowledge necessary for a hyperconnected, complex world. Nobody owns GCED – it is an aggregation of knowledge, wisdom, and practice, collaboratively framed and supported.

Not just a 'nice to have', the principles of GCED are embedded in many policies. It is explicitly named in global agreements of significance that carry an expectation of delivery at national levels: notably, Target 4.7 of Sustainable Development Goal 4, and UNESCO's Recommendation.

4 International policy frameworks

As noted earlier, global citizenship is not about homogenization. State sovereignty reigns supreme on the world stage. Through numerous declarations and agreements, states honor commitments to the shared interests of humanity and the environment, even if mostly motivated by self-interest. It may be said that the 2015 Paris Agreement was a milestone in the thinking that states can no longer look after their own interests if they don't recognize the importance of what brings us all together – namely, the planet.

The key international policy frameworks drawn on in this context are the United Nations Sustainable Developments Goals (SDGs) and the 2023 UNESCO Recommendation as the global standard-setting instrument for Target 4.7 of Goal 4. The Recommendation underscores education as a transformative tool for achieving lasting peace, human rights, and sustainable development.

Adopted by consensus in 2023, the Recommendation marks a significant step forward and acts as a practical framework in the transformation of education. The themes and activities are connected across the cognitive, social-emotional, and behavioral domains of teaching and learning. Outlining guiding principles, learning outcomes, and priority action areas, the Recommendation covers lifelong learning across all levels and settings; and it applies to education stakeholders across all sectors. The inclusion of 'global citizenship' reflects the connection between people, global challenges, and collective solutions.

4.1 New Zealand and Pacific frameworks

In education, the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF) provides a regional blueprint for educational development across Pacific nations. It emphasizes values, environmental stewardship, indigenous knowledge, cultural identity, and resilience in the face of global challenges and existential threats.

In Aotearoa, global citizenship education has the potential to bridge the disconnect between the New Zealand Curriculum's (NZC) values, principles, and key competencies and academic learning areas. The curriculum encourages students to look to the future by exploring such significant future-focused issues as sustainability, citizenship, enterprise, and globalization (Ministry of Education, 2007). The key competencies are: thinking; relating to others; using language, symbols and text; managing self; *and* participating and contributing (Ministry of Education, 2007).

The refreshed curriculum, 'Te Mataiaho', is designed to provide a clear, inclusive, and future-focused framework for education. As well as focusing on critical and creative thinking, it emphasizes the importance of well-being, identity, inclusivity, and biculturalism. Te Tiriti o Waitangi sits at the centre of Te Mātaiaho, ensuring that Māori perspectives are embedded throughout the curriculum. GCED aligns with Te Mataiaho and is consistent with the spirit of the Treaty.

4.2 From policy frameworks to the classroom

These frameworks provide opportunities for the implementation of global citizenship education in ways that are impactful, context honoring, and relevant. The opportunities are endless, the challenge is to land them and turn 'can' into 'will'. Resources coordination and capacity-building, alongside collaborations and partnerships, will help.

Teachers can integrate GCED into all learning areas like social studies, science, and English by highlighting global case studies and encouraging projects with a global-local perspective. They can teach both local and global values: for example, balancing principles of global citizenship with the Treaty. Many teachers do integrate GCED into their classrooms, with impressive outcomes. For example, through the government-funded Centres of Asia-Pacific Excellence, programmes with demonstrated impact were developed to build capacity in and support the implementation of GCED, including from a Te ao Māori perspective. Good initiatives come and go, vulnerable to priorities of the day, budgets, and electoral cycles.

Like UNESCO's Recommendation, the NZC is a progressive, high-level document that promotes holistic learning and intends to guide and support rather than prescribe teaching and learning. All of this progress is now at risk of disappearing, with an increasingly inward focus and a call for getting back to the basics of numeracy and literacy and cutting the 'nice to haves'.

4.3 Supporting the policy makers

UNESCO's Recommendation is non-binding and even though it carries expectations that member states take steps to apply its principles, unwilling decision makers know only too well that they don't have to comply. For those of us on the ground, there is only so far that we can push the 'expectation to deliver on commitments to international agreements' line. Perhaps we can support the policy makers in ways that may appeal, including:

- Building capacity to understand global citizenship, from local perspectives (identity, connections, responsibility)
- Connecting with priorities (lifting achievement and innovation)
- Identifying the benefits (increased social cohesion, well-being, and productivity)
- Drawing inspiration from successful practices in countries with similar populations and aims
- Appealing to national pride through leadership
- Inviting international expertise from international education communities (GENE, ANGEL, UNESCO, APCEIU)

5 Supporting ourselves – with friends and neighbors

There are lessons to learn from our partners and friends in other places. Regional approaches to achieving global goals, including education, are valuable because they allow for tailored strategies that reflect the cultural, social, and political contexts. By fostering collaboration among neighboring countries, regional initiatives can address shared challenges and amplify the impact of local efforts. These approaches encourage the exchange of best practices, the development of locally relevant resources and the enhancement of educational outcomes. Regional cooperation resonates with teachers and learners – celebrating diversity and strengthening regional solidarity. These outcomes are evident across Europe and the Asia-Pacific GCED Network.

APCEIU's (2024) recent publication *Rethinking Global Citizenship Education from Asia-Pacific Perspectives*, offers engaging, thoughtful and relatable narratives from experts across the region. It draws together a diversity of voices within a vast region and connects them with global goals and frameworks for the delivery of global citizenship education. The volume celebrates the richness of our differences, while honoring what binds us and meeting our moral responsibilities. Such publications provide a point of connection for the expert contributors and readers and an inspiration to act. During ANGEL's first in a series of webinars on Global Education and learning in the Asia Pacific, contributor Tanya Samu shared how she was inspired by a process purposefully focused on context, diverse cultures, and philosophical traditions including indigenous. In her chapter, she sought to develop a framework informed by Pacific ways of knowing, being, and doing within which to locate and connect Global Education and learning (APCEIU, 2024).

Webinars offer great opportunities to share best practices and solidarity as well as to gain new knowledge and insight. The Asia-Pacific GCED network coordinated by UNESCO Bangkok and APCEIU is well established, providing regular opportunities to connect and learn. It is exciting to work with ANGEL as it spreads its wings into the region, bringing participants from other parts of the world. The inaugural session featured presentations on current work in Asia-Pacific, with particular examples in India, Japan and the Pacific. Questions were explored around the future and hopes for Global Education and learning and the ways that international educational communities, like ANGEL. Impressive examples were given of the evidence-based delivery of holistic learning materials and resources, with connections made across global citizenship, sustainability, and development. The group recognized the value of international policy frameworks such as SDG 4.7 and UNESCO's Recommendation but held little hope in the likelihood of governments honoring those agreements.. Implementation is largely the result of dedicated educational leaders and practitioners. To this end, the contributors emphasized the importance of the international educational communities to coordinate, support, and inspire Global Education and learning.

5.1 Europe: Friendships formed and paths laid forward

How very fortunate I was to be included in the group of 'global critical friends' to the process of the Dublin Declaration in 2022, which sets a forward-looking agenda to achieve universal access to high-quality Global Education. As 'critical friends', we brought a global voice and gained insights into developments and challenges in Europe, most of which we could identify with in our own contexts. The process, convened by the Global Education Network of Europe (GENE) involved policymakers, civil society, local and regional governments, academics, international organizations and 'global critical friends' from Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America to bring non-European perspectives and insights as well as support from their own countries and regions (GENE, 2022).

Since the signing of the Dublin Declaration, more than 20 countries have developed national strategies on Global Education. The June 2024 Asia-Pacific Dialogue and Roadmap set wheels in motion for sub regional approaches. Soon after, UNESCO Bangkok convened a successful, replicable, and scalable 'Regional Capacity Development Workshop on a Whole-School Approach to GCED'. Teachers and senior leaders from Bhutan, Vietnam, Philippines, and Thailand were supported by expert specialist presenters and facilitators. The roadmap and guidelines to the UNESCO Recommendation framed the presentations and workshops, where participants collaborated to develop action plans for implementation, aligned to their national frameworks.

5.2 Asia Pacific: A regional dialogue and roadmap

A direct outcome of the critical friends to the Dublin process, was an Asia-Pacific regional approach. Whether the process will eventually lead to a similar declaration in the Asia-Pacific, or any other region, will be a matter for member states to consider.

In June 2024 in Bangkok, Thailand, UNESCO and the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) hosted a regional policy dialogue, with the 2023 adoption of UNESCO's Recommendation as the focus. A timely plan, with UNESCO undertaking a series of follow-up measures to promote the newly adopted text and encourage its implementation. The overarching goal of this dialogue and launch event was to cultivate a shared commitment within the region to achieving a more healthy, inclusive, sustainable, and peaceful Asia-Pacific region for all, through education, guided by the principles outlined in the Recommendation. (UNESCO, 2024)

The process prompted critical thinking around the purpose and intention of the roadmap and the Recommendation itself. Important questions were raised, enabling conversations and focused attention on the potential for transforming education and the power of a regional response and direction. The roadmap is now available to “assist Member States in the Asia-Pacific region to contextualize the principles and priorities of The Recommendation and provide ideas for holistic approaches to implementation at country levels” (UNESCO, 2024, p. 1). Participants were inspired by GENE's purpose and process in Europe, vis-à-vis the Dublin Declaration, and could see value in borrowing ideas and processes – including the engagement of global critical friends, which was seen as original, thoughtful, and helpful.

Featured speaker, the Hon. Nanaia Mahuta (former New Zealand foreign minister) offered wisdom, not only from her experience in statecraft, but from the perspective of an indigenous woman and mother. Guided by her ancestors and carrying a clear vision for her future grandchildren, Mahuta brought wairua (spirit) to the conversation about what a regional roadmap to the implementation of a global agreement, which is inclusive, relevant, and context-honoring, might look like in our part of the world. Roadmaps rarely follow straight lines, they twist, bend, loop and take unexpected turns. Part of the purpose of the gathering in Bangkok was to raise questions about the nature of the region itself, representation and diversity of voice. With such a vast and diverse region, it is unlikely to have full representation at any one forum, but gaps can be identified, both in the language of the international frameworks and the people in the room. Forums such as the Bangkok dialogue, coordinated by established networks and international organizations are vital for supporting GCED in policy and practice.

5.3 The Pacific: The power of collective voice

“Peace, justice, and sustainability are not merely aspirational ideals; they are essential for our shared survival...we can hub our networks and expertise to foster shared values that benefit the Pacific and our wider region.” (Mahuta, 2024)

Of significance to the place where we live, the ‘Pacific’ of the ‘Asia-Pacific’ tends to be underrepresented. A commitment and an opportunity have come out of the Bangkok dialogue to not only increase Pacific engagement in the Asia-Pacific network, but to establish a sub-regional hub that supports global citizenship education, prioritising Aotearoa and our Pacific region.

Covering more than a third of the earth's surface, three culturally significant subregions, Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia divide the Pacific region of island and atoll nations with populations so diverse that up to 15,000 languages are spoken. To put that in con-

text, Melanesia alone is home to around 20 percent of the world's languages. There is no "singular Indigenous perspective for a vast, culturally and linguistically diverse region with complex colonial histories like the Pacific region" (APCEIU, 2024, p. 118).

Pacific nations share a strong sense of community. Faced with threats to security, livelihood, and existence, they are no strangers to the power of collective voice. The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), made up of 18 countries and territories, has effectively represented the interests of Pacific nations at the UN, particularly on issues like climate change, ocean health, independence, and sustainable development. The PIF has been a leading voice in global climate negotiations, emphasizing the vulnerability of small island developing states (SIDS) and advocating for stronger global action.

5.4 Progressing together as partners and friends by agreement

Partners enter into agreements, so it is partners who make good on those agreements. Partners support shared goals. Sustainable Development Goal 17 *promotes* partnerships but we *make* them. Through local and regional partnerships, we are better equipped to achieve our common goals.

Local partnerships play a crucial role in supporting regional and global agreements by fostering a shared vision, aligning with local knowledge systems, and developing contextually relevant programmes. Regional partnerships can empower local communities and countries to implement change by facilitating resource and expertise sharing, and addressing specific concerns within global frameworks. Barriers to participation are reduced through linguistic similarities and access to support from regional organizations and educational communities.

Effective partnerships include representation from public and private sectors, academia, local communities, and civil society. Local and regional partnerships provide tangible benefits for all parties – local partners gain access to global networks and resources, while global citizenship programs gain cultural and local relevance.

The idea of the global critical friends was inspired, bringing a diversity of perspectives to honor the global nature of the desired educational outcomes and incentivizing similar developments in other regions. The process was genuine and inclusive: we felt listened to, valued, and our contributions are evident in the declaration itself. For whatever we had to contribute, we had a great deal more to gain. The Dublin Declaration is a leading light in the transformation of education, pushing well beyond the deadline for the SDGs to 2050, a realistic timeframe for building political commitment and seeing the impacts of implementation. In just two years progress is impressive, with 20 countries in Europe having developed national strategies and integrated Global Education into policies and frameworks. A simple summary and guide have been created and the declaration has inspired other regions, including the Asia-Pacific.

The global critical friends model lives on, taking lessons learned and wisdom gained to other regions around adaptability, contextual relevance, sustainability, and the alignment of local priorities with global goals. And of course, the power of partnerships. Agreements don't exist without partners – and friends.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is a partnership agreement that provides the vision and mandate for New Zealand citizens to exercise their mutual responsibilities to each other. Knowing who we are, where we come from, and what makes us unique as a country, will enable a more confident international outlook that extends within and beyond our Pacific locality to the global opportunities offered across the world.

6 Conclusion – Stepping up to the world together with courage and responsibility

In a world where our futures are increasingly intertwined and challenged, the call to step up to the world | tū māia ki te ao – is more urgent than ever. This chapter has explored the philosophical, historical, and personal dimensions of global citizenship, emphasizing the role of education as the path to a more peaceful, sustainable, inclusive, and equitable world.

While international agreements and frameworks provide a roadmap for progress, their success depends on how effectively they are translated into action within local and regional contexts. An Aotearoa New Zealand approach, grounded in Te ao Māori principles, offers a model of global citizenship that is both deeply rooted and outward-facing.

Realizing the transformative potential of education requires more than policies alone – it demands leadership, commitment, collaboration, and courage. By fostering critical friendships, strengthening partnerships, and embracing diverse worldviews, we can move beyond rhetoric to meaningful change. The journey toward a more just, inclusive, and sustainable world is not an individual pursuit of Utopia, but a collective responsibility.

In a time marked by polycrises and a disregard for global cooperation, the role of international organizations, education communities, and regional networks to support our endeavors, cannot be underestimated. We gain the know-how and courage to step up to our responsibilities.

As we move to progress together in our own regions and beyond, let us remember the power of diverse voices and collective action in shaping a better future through education. As educators, policymakers, partners, friends, and global citizens, our task is clear: to honor the agreements that bind us and to deliver on the frameworks that will transform education for a safe, inclusive, fair, and sustainable world.

***Me whiria te muka tangata, ka whiria mo te ao -
Let us weave our people together for the benefit of our world.***

(Mahuta, 2024)

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1.4 Learning to live together – the PISA Assessment of Global Competence

Andreas Schleicher

Abstract

In our times, global connectedness is no longer just an issue for those who travel to faraway places. It has arrived at everyone's doorsteps. At work, at home, and in the community, people need to engage with different ways of thinking and different ways of working, and they need to understand different cultures. PISA, the global standard for measuring the quality of educational outcomes, included an assessment of 'global competence' in its evaluation of 66 school systems. To do well on this assessment, students had to demonstrate that they can combine knowledge about the world with critical reasoning, and that they were able to adapt their behavior and communication to interact with individuals from different traditions and cultures. According to the results of the OECD survey, the schools and education systems that are most successful in fostering global knowledge, skills and attitudes among their students are those that offer a curriculum that values openness to the world, provide a positive and inclusive learning environment, offer opportunities to relate to people from other cultures, and have teachers who demonstrate the values of global competence when interacting with their students.

1 Introduction

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.7 seeks to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development. Skills in reading and math provide a foundation for this, but in themselves they do not suffice for individuals to reconcile present with future needs, and to bridge social and cultural gaps for individuals and communities to live together. The OECD established the PISA assessment of Global Competence to provide countries with a tool to assess to what extent their education systems develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that can serve these goals effectively. Following a brief overview of the tool, this chapter provides a comparative analysis of the results from the 66 countries that took part in the first assessment of Global Competence.

The backdrop to 21st-century education is our endangered environment. Growing populations, resource depletion and climate change compel all of us to think about sustainability and the needs of future generations. At the same time, the interaction between technology and globalization has created new challenges and new opportunities.

Globalization and digitalization have connected people, cities, countries and continents in ways that vastly increase our individual and collective potential. But the same forces have also made the world more volatile, more complex, more uncertain and more ambiguous. The world has seen a growing disconnect between the infinite growth imperative and the

finite resources of our planet; between the financial economy and the real economy; between the wealthy and the poor; between the concept of our gross domestic product and the well-being of people; between technology and social needs; and between governance and the perceived voicelessness of people.

One might argue how education might have contributed to some of these challenges, but one can argue even more that education has a responsibility to respond to them. We should not underestimate the role that the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of people play in social and economic development and in shaping the cultural context. While digital technologies and globalization have disruptive implications for our economic and social structure, those implications are not predetermined. It is the nature of our collective responses to these disruptions – including through education – that determines their outcomes: the continuous interplay between the technological frontier and the cultural, social, institutional and economic agents that we mobilize in response.

In this environment, the SDGs, set by the global community for 2030, describe a course of action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all. These goals are a shared vision of humanity, the glue that can counter the centrifugal forces in the age of accelerations. However, the extent to which those goals will be realized will depend in no small part on what happens in today's classrooms. Our schools today will be our economy, our society and our democracy tomorrow. Education will be key to reconciling the needs and interests of individuals, communities and nations within an equitable framework based on open borders and a sustainable future, and it will be key to ensuring that the underlying principles of Sustainable Development Goals become a real social contract with citizens.

At the same time, the nature of education that will help people become successful is changing as well. Education is no longer just about teaching students something, but about helping them develop a reliable compass and the tools to navigate with confidence through an increasingly complex, volatile and uncertain world. Success in education today is about building curiosity -opening minds; it is about compassion -opening hearts; and it is about courage, mobilising our cognitive, social and emotional resources to take action (Scharmer, 2007). And those are also our best weapon against the biggest threats of our times: ignorance and the closed mind, hatred and the closed heart, and fear, the enemy of agency.

In the world of Artificial Intelligence, the kind of things that are easy to teach and test have become easy to digitize and automate. The future is about pairing the artificial intelligence of computers with the cognitive, social and emotional skills and values of human beings.

Even a construct as basic as literacy has fundamentally changed. In the 20th century, literacy was about extracting and processing pre-coded information; in the 21st century, it is about constructing and validating knowledge. In the past, teachers could tell students to look up information in an encyclopaedia, and to rely on that information as accurate and true. Nowadays, Google presents them with millions of answers, and nobody tells them what's right or wrong and true or not true. The more knowledge technology allows us to search and access, the more important becomes deep understanding and the capacity to navigate ambiguity, to triangulate viewpoints, and to make sense out of content. Contrast that with the finding from the PISA 2022 assessment of reading literacy where, on average across OECD countries, less than half of 15-year-old students were able to distinguish facts from opinion when the cues were implicit.

The fact that advancements in literacy skills have fallen sharply behind the evolution of the nature of information has profound consequences in a world where virality seems sometimes privileged over quality in the distribution of information. In the "post-truth" climate in which we now find ourselves, assertions that "feel right" but have no basis in fact become accepted as fact. Algorithms that sort us into groups of like-minded individuals

create social media echo chambers that amplify our views, and leave us insulated from opposing arguments that may alter our beliefs. These virtual bubbles homogenize opinions and polarize our societies; and they can have a significant – and adverse – impact on democratic processes. Those algorithms are not a design flaw; they are how social media work. There is scarcity of attention, but an abundance of information. We are living in this digital bazaar where anything that is not built for the network age is cracking apart under its pressure.

The conventional approach in school is often to break problems down into manageable bits and pieces and then to teach students how to solve these bits and pieces. But innovation is fostered by creating value through synthesizing different fields of knowledge and making connections between ideas that previously seemed unrelated, connecting the dots where the next innovation will come from.

In the past, schools were technological islands, with technology often limited to supporting and conserving existing practices, and students outpacing schools in their adoption of technology. Now schools need to use the potential of technologies to liberate learning from past conventions and connect learners in new and powerful ways, with sources of knowledge, with innovative applications, and with one another.

The past was also divided – with teachers and content divided by subjects and students separated by expectations of their future career prospects; with schools designed to keep students inside, and the rest of the world outside; with a lack of engagement with families and a reluctance to partner with other schools. The future needs to be better integrated – with an emphasis on the inter-relation of subjects and the integration of students. Providing cross-curricular learning is not easy, neither in advanced economies where learning is often deeply entrenched in siloed academic traditions, nor in developing economies where schools often lack the resources and autonomy to design integrated learning environments. However, the capacity for learners to think across the boundaries of school subjects, and for teachers to collaborate with other teachers from other disciplines, will become increasingly important as problem-contexts in work and life, particularly those related to sustainability, become increasingly interdisciplinary.

In today's schools, students typically learn individually and at the end of the school year, we certify their individual achievements. But the more interdependent the world becomes, the more we need great collaborators and orchestrators. We could see during the Covid 19 pandemic how the well-being of countries depended on people's capacity to take collective action. Schools need to help students learn to be autonomous in their thinking and develop an identity that is aware of the pluralism of modern living. At work, at home and in the community, people will need a broad understanding of how others live, in different cultures and traditions, and how others think, whether as scientists or as artists.

2 Global competence

The foundations for this don't all come naturally. We are all born with “bonding social capital”, a sense of belonging to our family or other people with shared experiences, common purposes or pursuits. But it requires deliberate and continuous efforts to create the kind of “bridging social capital” that enables us to experience and engage with diversity and through which we can share experiences, ideas and innovation with others, and increase our radius of trust to strangers and institutions. It is important that bonding and bridging social capital are not seen in opposition. In the same way, as learning a foreign language can enable us to better understand our mother tongue, as it creates awareness for grammatical structures and concepts that often remain unconscious in our mother tongue,

the awareness of other ways of thinking and diverse cultural perspectives can strengthen our sense of identity and belonging. In this way, global competency can strengthen the foundation for bonding social capital, and prevent us from building walls around us.

These considerations led PISA, the global standard for measuring the quality of educational outcomes, to include 'global competence' in its 2018 evaluation of 66 school systems (OECD 2018). To do well on this assessment, students had to demonstrate that they can combine knowledge about the world with critical reasoning, and that they were able to adapt their behavior and communication to interact with individuals from different traditions and cultures. Not all of the 79 countries took part in the PISA assessment of Global Competence, some of the 13 countries not administering this component of PISA had questions about the validity of this assessment in their context.

It is perhaps no surprise that countries that did well on PISA's assessment of reading literacy, i.e. where students are good at accessing, managing, reflecting on and evaluating information, also tend to do well on the cognitive test that was part of PISA's assessment of global competence. So the high-performers Singapore and Canada also come out on top in global competence. What is more interesting is that PISA high performer Canada does even better on global competence than the high performance of its students in reading, math and science predicts. Equally interesting, Colombia's students often struggle with the PISA reading, math and science tasks, but do far better on global competence than predicted by their reading, math and science skills. This country once torn by civil war made significant efforts to strengthen civic skills and social cohesion over the last decade, and that seems mirrored in the learning outcomes at school. To a somewhat lesser extent, students in Scotland, Spain, Israel, Singapore, Panama, Greece, Croatia, Costa Rica, and Morocco also do better in global competence than predicted. In turn, students in Korea and the Russian Federation do less well in global competence than their performance in reading, math and science predicts.

But the most interesting finding from this new PISA assessment is that many school activities, including the organization of learning at school, contact with people from other cultures and learning other languages, are positively associated with global competence.

3 What schools can do to support learning about global issues

This and the subsequent sections summarize key findings from the report (OECD, 2020). For a start, according to school principals, the most common learning activities to support global competence at school were learning about the beliefs, norms, values, customs and arts of diverse cultural groups and learning about different cultural perspectives on historical and social events. Less common were celebrations of festivities of other cultures and student exchanges with schools from other countries.

In many countries, the number of such learning activities in which students engage is positively associated with students' attitudes and dispositions. That is, students engaged in a larger number of learning activities around global competence tended to report more positive attitudes and dispositions to other people and cultures than students engaged in fewer activities.

The findings also show large differences in the extent to which global issues (public health, climate change, poverty, migration and conflicts) and intercultural understanding (communication with people from different cultures, openness to intercultural experiences and respect for cultural diversity) are covered in the curriculum. Countries where such

issues are commonly covered in the curriculum, according to school principals, include Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Russia. Countries where such topics are rarely covered include Baku (Azerbaijan), Bulgaria, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan and Moldova.

The coverage of global issues in the curriculum was positively associated with related student dispositions. The strongest associations were between coverage of climate change and global warming in the curriculum and students' awareness of these issues. Also associated were curriculum coverage of causes of poverty and awareness of migration and movement of people; as well as the coverage of hunger and malnutrition in the curriculum and awareness of this topic. However, there was substantial cross-country variation in the relationship between exposure to global and intercultural learning at school and students' attitudes and dispositions.

4 Securing equitable opportunities for students to develop global skills

The PISA results show important inequalities in access to opportunities to learn global competence. On average across OECD countries, boys were more likely than girls to report participating in activities in which they are expected to express and discuss their views, while girls were more likely than boys to report participating in activities related to intercultural understanding and communication. For instance, boys were more likely to learn about the interconnectedness of countries' economies, look for news on the Internet or watch the news together during class. They were also more likely to be invited by their teachers to give their personal opinion about international news, to participate in classroom discussions about world events and to analyze global issues together with their classmates. In contrast, girls were more likely than boys to report that they learn how to solve conflicts with their peers in the classroom, learn about different cultures and learn how people from different cultures can have different perspectives on some issues. These gender differences could reflect personal interests and self-efficacy, but they could also reflect how girls and boys are socialized at home and at school.

The findings also show that advantaged students have access to more opportunities to learn global and intercultural skills than disadvantaged students, differences that were largest in Australia, Canada, Hong Kong (China), Korea, Macao (China), New Zealand, Scotland (United Kingdom) and Chinese Taipei. But the data show an interesting pattern: disadvantaged students are less exposed to global and intercultural learning activities and report less positive attitudes than their advantaged peers. But students attending disadvantaged schools are more likely to be exposed to those learning opportunities. What this means is that the lack of access to learning opportunities does not result from lack of opportunities in disadvantaged schools, but rather from within-school mechanisms that result in lower engagement among disadvantaged students. Thus, when school curricula, educational practices and materials are developed, educators need to keep in mind that not all students are predisposed for global and intercultural learning. Those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds may be facing particular challenges and may require that content or teaching approaches be better adapted to their needs.

Also, when it comes to learning outcomes and student attitudes, the findings show clear socio-economic gaps in favour of advantaged students. Furthermore, in most countries, girls were found to have higher awareness of global issues, greater ability to understand different perspectives, greater interest in learning about other cultures, greater respect for

people from other cultures, more positive attitudes towards immigrants, greater awareness of intercultural communication, and greater agency regarding global issues. On the other hand, in a majority of countries, boys were more likely to show higher cognitive adaptability than girls.

It is noteworthy that in countries with larger immigrant populations (measured here by more than 5% of students with an immigrant background) the gap in learning outcomes between immigrant and native-born students tended to be less pronounced. In some countries, immigrant students reported higher awareness of global issues than their native-born peers, greater self-efficacy regarding global issues, greater ability to understand different perspectives, higher interest in learning about other cultures, greater respect for people from other cultures, higher cognitive adaptability and more positive attitudes towards immigrants. In some countries, having more than 10% immigrant students in school was also associated with more positive attitudes towards immigrants. It seems that more multicultural classrooms could create a culturally rich environment that helps both immigrant and native-born students learn about one another. But this finding holds mainly in long-standing immigrant destinations, suggesting that the positive association may be conditional on successful integration policies.

5 Promoting an inclusive learning environment

A very high proportion of students in PISA (more than 90%) attended schools where principals reported positive multicultural beliefs among their teachers on all four statements included in the questionnaire. Those questions focused on teachers' attitudes towards people from other cultural groups. The PISA measure of discrimination at school could be seen as both individual and institutional, as discrimination can be the act of one teacher or a reflection of a more institutional problem.

However, these positive views by principals were not always mirrored in students' perception of discrimination by the teachers in their schools, and those perceptions seem closely related to students' attitudes: the PISA results show consistent negative associations between students' perceptions of discrimination in their school and students' own perspective-taking, respect for people from other cultures, attitudes towards immigrants, and awareness of intercultural communication. Interestingly, students' perceptions of discrimination at school was less strongly correlated with the knowledge aspects of students' dispositions (i.e. awareness of and self-efficacy regarding global issues) than with intercultural attitudes towards people from other backgrounds. So students who perceived discrimination by their teachers towards particular groups, such as immigrants and people from other cultural backgrounds, exhibited similar negative attitudes themselves.

This highlights the role of teachers and school principals and perhaps the broader school climate in countering or perpetuating discrimination by acting as role models. Students are likely to emulate the behavior of their teachers. If discrimination becomes an institutional problem, then students may develop discriminatory attitudes towards those who are different from them. By contrast, when teachers do not exhibit discriminatory attitudes and set clear rules about intercultural relations, then students may become aware of what constitutes discriminatory behavior. Teacher support could also act as a protective factor for students who are at risk of being victims of discrimination.

6 Supporting teachers

Teachers play an important role in promoting and integrating intercultural understanding in their own practices and classroom lessons. The results do not generally show a lack of confidence by teachers in their ability to do so or an unwillingness to promote these topics. Most teachers reported that they are confident in their ability to teach in multicultural settings. In fact, more than 80% of students attended a school whose teachers reported a high degree of self-efficacy, as measured by five statements: 'I can cope with the challenges of a multicultural classroom'; 'I can adapt my teaching to the cultural diversity of students'; 'I can take care that students with and without migrant backgrounds work together'; 'I can raise awareness of cultural differences amongst the students'; and 'I can contribute to reducing ethnic stereotypes between the students'.

At the same time, teachers reported a high need for training in certain areas, such as teaching in multicultural and multilingual settings, teaching intercultural communication, teaching second languages, and teaching about equity and diversity. Indeed, the data show highly uneven teacher participation in relevant professional development activities. Across the 18 countries with comparable data, the most common activity was training for teaching about equity and diversity (about 45% of students attended schools where teachers have taken this training activity). By contrast, fewer teachers received professional development on teaching in multicultural or multilingual settings, second-language teaching, or teaching intercultural communication skills, and even fewer participated in such training activities in the previous 12 months. Moreover, few teachers reported that they received training on conflict resolution, on the role of education in confronting discrimination and on culturally-responsive teaching approaches.

7 The parent factor

Fourteen countries also asked parents questions that mirrored those in the student questionnaire. One set of questions focused on awareness of global issues, another on interest in learning about other cultures and a third on parents' attitudes towards immigrants. The findings show that the parents of students in Croatia, Germany, Ireland and Italy were more aware of global issues than the parents of students in Brazil, Chile, Hong Kong (China), Korea, Macao (China), Mexico and Panama.

Importantly, students' awareness of global issues was positively associated with levels of awareness of global issues among parents across all participating countries, even after accounting for students' and schools' socio-economic profile.

As for interest in learning about other cultures, parents in Croatia, the Dominican Republic and Germany reported the greatest interest, while parents in Hong Kong (China), Italy and Macao (China) reported the least interest. In all countries except Panama, students' interest in learning about other cultures was positively associated with their parents' interest in doing so. Furthermore, a positive association was found between parents' attitudes towards immigrants and those of their children across all 14 countries that collected data from the parents' questionnaire.

These results highlight the importance of parenting and the home environment in promoting global and intercultural interests, awareness and skills. Parents and teachers can play important and complementary roles in developing a positive intercultural and global outlook among adolescents. Parents can transmit knowledge about global issues and also act as role models in defining their children's behavior. Parents who show interest in other

people's culture, tolerance towards those who are different from them and awareness of global issues that affect us all are likely to raise children who share those attitudes. This, in turn, can help schools cultivate a climate that embraces those positive attitudes.

8 Communities can also play an important role

Contact with people from different cultures has the potential to stir curiosity, open minds and create understanding. Students in PISA 2018 were asked whether they have contact with people from other countries in different settings: at school, in their family, in their neighbourhood and in their circle of friends.

On average across OECD countries, 53% of students reported having contact with people from other countries in their school, 54% in their family, 38% in their neighbourhood and 63% in their circle of friends. However, there were substantial variations in those proportions between countries. The proportion of students who reported having contact with people from other countries at school ranged from 70% to 78% in Albania, Germany, Greece, Italy, New Zealand, Panama, Singapore, Switzerland, Chinese Taipei and the United Arab Emirates, but just from 20% to 30% in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Turkey and Vietnam. Those results were mirrored by findings for other settings where contact with people from other countries takes place, such as the family, the neighbourhood and the circle of friends.

In general, having contact with people from other countries at school (and in the family, neighbourhood and circle of friends) is positively, weakly to moderately, associated with students' intercultural skills and attitudes towards living with others. The most notable associations were found between having contact with people from other countries at school and students' self-efficacy regarding global issues, cognitive adaptability, interest in learning about other cultures, respect for people from other cultures, ability to understand different perspectives and understanding of intercultural communication.

The positive associations may suggest that contact between people of different origins and cultures could foster understanding and mitigate prejudice. In multicultural societies, contact arises naturally at school and beyond. However, in less diverse countries or in education systems that are highly stratified, educators may have to make special efforts to ensure that their students benefit from cultural exposure. Examples include student-exchange or study-abroad programmes that offer an immersive experience of another culture. While these programmes tend to be expensive, in the digital age educators can also use online platforms to organize collaborative activities based on the shared interests of their students. Engagement with local communities, such as visiting a community centre, a place of worship or a local market, is another method of introducing students to the diverse cultures existing within reach of their school.

9 The role of multilingual skills

Speaking multiple languages is a valuable skill that improves employability and fosters a range of abilities that extend beyond the realm of language proficiency. It has the potential to promote social cohesion and intercultural dialogue by opening the door to a range of content, including literature, music, theatre and cinema. By doing so, multilingualism

brings down barriers and gives young people direct access to content that would otherwise be inaccessible.

The associations between speaking two or more languages and students' attitudes were positive in almost all countries. This may reflect that language learning contributes to improving attitudes, but also that students who have positive global and intercultural attitudes tend to engage in learning multiple languages. Speaking two or more languages was positively associated with awareness of global issues, self-efficacy regarding global issues, cognitive adaptability, interest in learning about other cultures, respect for people from other cultures, positive attitudes towards immigrants, awareness of intercultural communication and the ability to understand the perspectives of others.

On average across OECD countries, 50% of students reported that they learn two or more languages at school, 38% reported that they learn one foreign language and only 12% reported that they do not learn any foreign language at school. The largest proportion of students (more than 20%) who reported that they do not learn any foreign language at school were observed in Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia and Scotland (United Kingdom). By contrast, in 42 countries, more than 90% of students reported that they learn at least one foreign language at school.

10 Conclusion

In our times, global connectedness is no longer just an issue for those who travel to faraway places. It has arrived at everyone's doorsteps. At work, at home, and in the community, people need to engage with different ways of thinking and different ways of working, and they need to understand different cultures. The foundations for this don't all come naturally, but need to be built. We are all born with what political scientist Robert Putnam calls 'bonding social capital' – a sense of belonging to our family or other people with shared experiences, cultural norms, common purposes or pursuits. But it requires deliberate and continuous efforts to create the kind of 'bridging social capital' through which we can share experiences, ideas and innovation, and build a shared understanding among groups with diverse experiences and interests, thus increasing our radius of trust to strangers and institutions.

The findings from the world's first assessment of global competence highlight that public policy can make a difference: according to the results of the OECD survey, the schools and education systems that are most successful in fostering global knowledge, skills and attitudes among their students are those that offer a curriculum that values openness to the world, that provide a positive and inclusive learning environment, offer opportunities to relate to people from other cultures, and have teachers who demonstrate the values of global competence when interacting with their students.

Getting this right is important. The global competence of our youths today may shape our future as profoundly as their reading, math and science skills. Not least, societies that value bridging social capital and pluralism will be able to draw on the best talent from anywhere, build on multiple perspectives, and be best positioned to nurture creativity and innovation.

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1.5 The Ibero-American Program on Global Citizenship for Sustainable Development: A space for exchange and learning

La Salete Coelho and Manuela Mesa

Abstract

This article presents the Program on Global Citizenship for Sustainable Development (GCfSD Program or just Program) carried out in seven countries: Andorra, Chile, Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Portugal, Spain, and Uruguay, identifying common elements as well as specificities. The Program's main aim is to contribute to the awareness among Ibero-American citizens of their role in sustainable development and the value of international cooperation in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at a global scale. The GCfSD Program was approved in 2021 in Andorra at the XXVII Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government. This Program seeks to promote, from the coordinating bodies of international cooperation, the creation and strengthening of national policy agendas in GCfSD in articulation with other relevant actors, especially from the Education sector. One of the first activities promoted by the Program was mapping the GCfSD in each country in three main areas – concepts used, existing policy frameworks, and leading actors operating in the field. This article presents the main results achieved in this Program and the lessons learned, and it explores how Global Citizenship for Sustainable Development could advance further in the Ibero-American space.

1 The Ibero-American community

The Ibero-American region comprises twenty-two countries on both sides of the Atlantic: 19 from Latin America and 3 from the Iberian peninsula in Europe (Andorra, Portugal, and Spain). Due to their common languages and colonial past, these countries have developed a specific cooperation system. This system consists of the member countries, the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB) and the Ibero-American Sectoral Organizations, namely the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI), the International Youth Organization for Ibero-America (OIJ), the Ibero-American Social Security Organization (OISS), and the Conference of Ministers of Justice of the Ibero-American Countries (COMJIB).

The Ibero-American Secretariat General (SEGIB) was created in 2003 to offer permanent support for the member countries, being an official space for convergence, work, supervision, and agreements in the Ibero-American region. SEGIB contributes to strengthening a space for Ibero-American dialogue and promotes Ibero-American Cooperation in the areas of education, social cohesion, knowledge and culture, promoting opportunities to develop multilateral joint Initiatives and Programs, always proposed by the country members, and, if approved by consensus in the Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government (every two years).

The scope of the cooperation exercises dictates the difference between Initiatives and Programs: i) an Ibero-American Program is a long- or medium-range action in terms of deadlines and objectives, in which the plans, lines of action and activities of the governments of the Ibero-American countries are articulated in a given area, converging with a multiplier effect on a common purpose; ii) an Ibero-American Initiative is an action limited in time and objectives, implemented by the governments in a specific area of interest to Ibero-American Cooperation priorities. Although an Initiative may fall into this category, it will become the germ of an Ibero-American Program.

2 The Global Citizenship for Sustainable Development Program

2.1 International frameworks

Latin America has a long history of educational processes aimed at social transformation, rooted in values of social justice and international solidarity, respect for human rights and sustainable development.

It has gone beyond the school and the traditional educational system and has been incorporated into social movements as a tool for social transformation. One of its promoters was Paulo Freire and his “pedagogy of the oppressed”. His proposals and ideas were widely developed by the Latin American Popular Education Network (CEAAL) in the 1970s and 1980s. Subsequently, the World Social Forum, with the slogan “Another world is possible”, gave a great impetus to education as a key element of social transformation worldwide.

In most Latin American countries, this experience of Education for Social Transformation promoted by civil society organizations has not been incorporated into educational institutions. However, UNESCO’s educational proposals, such as Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship Education have had great relevance.

It has also been an essential reference point for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the global goal of quality education (SDG 4), under which there is a target (target 4.7) on education for sustainability, global citizenship, gender equality, human rights, culture of peace and cultural diversity.

Also noteworthy is the 1974 UNESCO Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, considered, in many contexts, the basis for these fields. Recently, this document was updated and revised, under the title Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development (2023), bringing together themes such as education for global citizenship, human rights, sustainable development and peace.

In the European experience, namely in Portugal and Spain, the configuration of GCfSD has been influenced by the vision of education as a transformative practice. The Latin American experience of Popular Education has been a relevant influence in the development of GCfSD. In this process, the role of civil society organizations and NGOs has been vital as key actors and new stakeholders of a more institutional nature have gradually been incorporated.

Since 2022, the European Declaration on Global Education to 2050, known as the Dublin Declaration, promoted by Global Education Network Europe (GENE); is a new framework that guides the Global Education (GE) action of European countries. However, its participatory approach has inspired other processes beyond Europe.

The new international frameworks, such as the 2030 Agenda and the 2023 Recommendation, the Dublin Declaration, and the regional frameworks related to South-South cooperation and the Ibero-American space, open a window of opportunity to develop the GCfSD initiatives.

2.2 The Ibero-American GCfSD Program

Considered crucial to reinforce the competencies of the countries belonging to Ibero-America in these issues, under the Ibero-American Program to Strengthen South-South Cooperation, exchange processes have been carried out in the field of GCfSD in 2017 and 2018, making the most of the long Portuguese and Spanish tradition in terms of GCfSD and the relevant experience of many Ibero-American countries. The first exchange involved Portugal and Chile, and the second involved Portugal and Uruguay.

Following those moments, it was considered essential on the one hand to ensure the deepening of the work started with these countries and extend the discussion to the other members of the Ibero-American space and, on the other hand to explore opportunities for reflection and joint debate with different geographical areas.

In this sense, developing a new Ibero-American Initiative was considered strategic. In 2019, representatives from these countries, plus Spain and a representative from SEG-IB's Initiatives and Programs Support and Coordination Unit, held a workshop in Lisbon to develop further a collective proposal to be presented in the following Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government. This aimed to promote, from the coordinating bodies of international cooperation, the creation and strengthening of national agendas in the area of GCfSD, in articulation with other relevant actors.

The proposal, having built-in coherence with the values of GCfSD, resulted from a participatory, horizontal and collective process. The choice of its denomination – Global Citizenship for Sustainable Development – is proof of the openness needed to accommodate the diversity and plurality of the countries involved.

The Initiative, approved as an Initiative in 2021 at the Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government (Andorra), was joined by seven countries of the region: Andorra, Chile, Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Portugal, Spain and Uruguay. Its main objective is to contribute to raising the awareness of Ibero-American citizens about their role in sustainable development and the value of international cooperation for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals on a global scale.

This goal should be achieved by supporting processes for creating and strengthening national agendas in GCfSD in articulation with other relevant actors. It is mainly directed at institutions linked to international cooperation–ministries and development cooperation agencies–concerned with global citizenship and education in each country, and civil society organizations involved in GCfSD issues.

Within the scope of this Initiative, it is intended to:

1. build a shared understanding and strengthen the capacities of the bodies responsible for international cooperation to promote agendas in GCfSD, valuing the diversity of the realities of the Ibero-American space;
2. identify and articulate the different state and non-state actors in the process of elaborating and implementing these agendas;
3. promote dialogue and networking in Ibero-America and other regional and international organizations working on these issues.

At the meeting of the Cooperation Officers, held in Madrid (July 2024), the Initiative officially became a Program. This decision arose from recognizing that the Initiative met the requirements of several participating countries and annual resources. It is also a long-range action, with strategic planning until 2030.

The Program has also recognized the aim of enlarging its scope by inviting other countries to participate in the pursuit of common goals. In the XXIX Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government (Cuenca, Ecuador, November 2024), Ecuador has announced its commitment to join, and México officially adhered to the Program in March 2025.

2.3 The Program's key activities

This section provides an overview of the main activities developed so far.

2.3.1 Creating a common understanding

A reflection on the concepts and frameworks of Global Citizenship for Sustainable Development was promoted, providing spaces for deepening, first internally, and extending the Program's proposal to other public and civil society actors considered relevant in each country.

In the first workshop devoted to conceptualization, a shared definition was agreed upon:

We understand Global Citizenship for Sustainable Development as a fundamental learning process for people to acquire competencies to understand better global issues and the complex web of interrelationships between them, to reflect critically and to promote social, democratic, supportive, inclusive and ethical changes, based on human rights, towards social justice and peace.

This learning process encompasses formal, non-formal, informal and lifelong education.

Its modus operandi is based on establishing partnerships and promoting citizen participation.

The agreement on a standard definition is essential due to the decision to open up the use of terminology, making it adaptable to national contexts.

Several other dialogue spaces were promoted internally – such as a roundtable with policymakers to deepen the strategic reflections; and at an external level such as webinars to present the *Program* to other relevant stakeholders.

2.3.2 Recognizing the realities of each country

Diagnostic and mapping processes on concepts, policies, and primary stakeholders were carried out in each country, allowing the national actors better to understand the reality of Global Citizenship for Sustainable Development. A synthesis of these seven national reports was elaborated, which is the basis of the following section of this paper.

2.3.3 Organizing training sessions for staff of agencies and ministries responsible for international cooperation and other entities deemed relevant in each of the countries

Two courses have been implemented so far. One was dedicated to the staff of Camões – Institute of Cooperation and Language, the Portuguese cooperation agency, which brought together more than fifty people in three in-person sessions. The other, dedicated to all the countries in the Program, gathered around forty participants and was divided into two on-line sessions. The facilitation team was composed of representatives of the Program's Secretariat and the Global Education Network Europe (GENE), an international stakeholder.

2.3.4 Strengthening the capacities of agencies and ministries responsible for international cooperation and other entities deemed relevant in each of the countries

Within this result, an Exchange between Portugal and representatives of various ministries (Foreign Affairs, Education, Teachers' Education, Higher Education), agencies and national (related to youth) and international organizations (UNESCO) from the member countries of the Ibero-American Program took place in Lisbon.

This exchange included meetings with: i) the main actors and stakeholders of the Portuguese National Strategy for Development Education, the Monitoring Committee and the Entities that Sign up to the ENED's Action Plan; ii) formal education actors, with the Directorate-General for Education and a visit to a secondary school, where meetings were held with the school's management, the Citizenship and Development coordinator, colleagues involved in the projects, school students and partner civil society organizations; and iii) non-formal education actors, namely with some Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) from the Development Education and Global Citizenship group of the Portuguese NGO Platform, including a visit to a NGO Fair Trade shop.

This result also included support visits to countries to deepen policy development and implementation work. A visit was made to Chile to support the development of its National Strategy on Sustainable Development Education by a working group composed of several public entities and civil society organizations. Other visits are planned for 2025.

2.3.5 Identifying and involving relevant public and civil society actors at the national level

As part of the studies referred to previously, a mapping of the main actors – public and civil society – was carried out in each country. Based on these reports, each country developed a National Action Plan to involve the identified actors, articulating policies and advancing the elaboration of political agendas. The results differ in each country, illustrating the diversity of the countries' realities of the Program.

Within the Program, a Funding Mechanism was created to support the implementation of these National Action Plans.

2.3.6 Encouraging dialogue and mutual learning between regional and international organizations, affirming the Ibero-American space

After strengthening the relationship among the Program countries, it was decided to develop a strategy to engage with other countries in the region, inviting them to join the Program and explore partnerships with regional and international organizations working in the field.

A first example of collaboration took place within the process of elaboration of the Dublin Declaration with some members of the Program participating as Global Critical Friends, a group composed of representatives from different GE sectors of other regions of the world. This contribution highlighted the need to include a variety of perspectives and different sources of knowledge in GE frameworks.

More recently, a webinar was organized, with the participation of the Global Education Network Europe (GENE), the Ibero-American League of Civil Society Organizations, the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI), the Popular Education Council for Latin-America and the Caribbean (CEAAL), and UNESCO regional office in Latin-America and the Caribbean, which aimed to present each organization and explore future partnerships. It was easy to identify the common ground (the international and regional frameworks) and it became clear that it is crucial to articulate efforts to align goals and actions to avoid duplication of efforts and achieve a more substantial impact in society.

The participating countries in the Program collectively recognize the added value of the path of co-construction, sharing and exchange that has been experienced among the member countries, reinforcing the broader objective of Ibero-American Cooperation to promote collective learning processes that favour the establishment of relationships in the region, and place it in a privileged position to be an active voice on the international scene, contributing and influencing from the perspective of this partnership.

3 GCfSD diagnosis and stakeholder mapping

This section presents the principal elements of convergence in the diagnosis and mapping conducted in the seven countries that are part of the GCfSD Program. The country studies identified the principal concepts employed, the actors involved and the regulatory and institutional framework within which the GCfSD actions are developed.

3.1 Methodology

The research team comprised a general coordinator of the study²¹ and a researcher or researchers' team per country²², all with extensive experience in education and/or development cooperation. Additionally, an advisory board comprised the Program's Secretariat and government officials responsible for the Program, who participated in some meetings.

Agreed-upon criteria were established for the desk-based research phase and to identify critical actors. The methodology combined the review of documentary sources and interviews with key informants representing diverse sectors, including international cooperation, education, and civil society organizations. The legislative framework within which the GCfSD operates in each country was analyzed. In certain instances, focus groups were convened to elucidate the various dimensions of the GCfSD in greater depth and to gather proposals. The people who participated in the research process also validated the reports.

The joint meetings between the research teams enabled the sharing of diagnoses from each country, which greatly enhanced the outcome and recommendations of the study. Furthermore, it has facilitated the integration of a national perspective on the GCfSD with a regional and international perspective.

A synthesis report was elaborated to present a comparative analysis of the national reports.

3.2 Key ideas of the research

The reports indicate that the concept of GCfSD is still embryonic in some countries within the Ibero-American GCfSD Program. In contrast, other countries, such as Spain and Portugal, have a long history of engagement with the field. Nevertheless, a regulatory and institutional framework permits its implementation in all countries. This Program can contribute to its promotion and consolidation, although political will is needed to implement it.

Global Citizenship for Sustainable Development (GCfSD) is closely linked to each country's international and national context. These contexts are constantly changing, which gives GCfSD actions great dynamism in the definition of educational priorities and approaches.

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21 Manuela Mesa, Centre for Peace Education and Research (CEIPAZ) and from DEMOSPAZ-UAM Institute.

22 Andorra and Spain: Manuela Mesa (CEIPAZ and DEMOSPAZ) and Elena Boschiero (DEMOSPAZ); Chile: Cristián Cox and Renato Orellana (Centre of Education Compared Policies, University Diego Portales); Dominican Republic: Berenice Pacheco-Salazar and Pablo Lozano; Paraguay: Natalia Luisa Coppola; Portugal: Angélica Monteiro, Alexandra Sá Costa, Ana Cristina Torres, Dalila Coelho and Preciosa Fernandes (Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Porto); and Uruguay: Emiliano Clavijo (Faculty of Social Sciences, University of the Republic). It has also received contributions from a Scientific Committee: Cristian Cox, Javier Murillo Torrecilla, José Antonio Sanahuja and Preciosa Fernandes

3.3 International context

At the international level, profound changes occur in the international cooperation system in response to global transformations. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the visions of GCfSD. On the one hand, the pandemic highlighted ecological unsustainability, the care crisis, climate change, and biodiversity loss. On the other hand, it has reinforced the narratives and discourses promoted for years by GCfSD projects on their causes and global implications. Some analyzes and reports highlight existing inequalities and the urgency of protecting the most vulnerable. Various political and social spheres have pointed out the need to renew the social contract, and this implies making changes to improve democratic quality, social cohesion and social safety nets to protect the unemployed, children, and other groups at risk. A further challenge is the growth of far-right totalitarian movements and their use of social networks to disseminate fake news and hate speech. This situation has the potential to erode democracy and disrupt consensus around the values of solidarity and social justice.

Reinforcing public and development cooperation policies is necessary to address these global issues. The GCfSD, as part of these public policies, facilitates learning processes that prioritize the relevance of these issues, provides analytical frameworks that illustrate the existing global and local interdependencies, and examines the role that international cooperation and education can play.

3.4 Commitment to the 2030 Agenda

One of the critical elements of convergence in the country reports carried out is the commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals and to target 4.7, which proposes that by 2030 learners will have acquired the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development, which may be achieved through the implementation of education for sustainable development and the adoption of sustainable lifestyles. Additionally, learners will be expected to understand human rights and gender equality, promote a culture of peace and non-violence, promote global citizenship, and appreciate cultural diversity and its contribution to sustainable development.

This Agenda proposes a universalist vision of development and global justice, with shared but differentiated responsibilities according to country that go beyond the issue of development aid and focus on broader issues related to sustainability, global inequality and peacebuilding. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is one of the shared axes of the GCfSD Program. It has led to the creation of initiatives at the governmental level that facilitate its implementation in the various countries. Andorra and Spain, for example, have promoted a necessary multi-stakeholder consultative process to define the priority lines of action in their Sustainable Development Strategy and Strategic Plans. Chile has created a National Council and a Strategy for implementing the 2030 Agenda. Paraguay has a Committee and a National Development Plan for 2030. Portugal has a National Roadmap for the Sustainability of the 2030 Agenda and a *Portuguese Cooperation Strategy 2030*. The Dominican Republic has a Committee and a *National Development Strategy of the Dominican Republic 2030*. Uruguay also has an Action Plan for the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, the countries that are part of the GCfSD Program have produced voluntary national reports on the degree of fulfilment of the SDGs, where the degree of performance of SDG 4 and target 4.7 is analyzed in greater or lesser depth. Although this commitment is a good starting point for promoting the GCfSD, progress in this action area is needed, mainly with concrete programs and initiatives.

Besides the 2030 Agenda, another international normative framework favours implementing GCfSD actions. Particularly relevant are the UNESCO resolutions, which have greatly influenced various countries, such as Andorra, Chile and Uruguay. Resolutions related to protecting human rights, children's rights, and education rights are also relevant. Finally, the *Program Strategic Plan 2022–2026* (2030, from July 2024), in which this GCfSD Program is developed, supports work in the medium and long term.

3.5 National context

At the national level, the seven countries that are part of the GCfSD Program are diverse and have specific characteristics. They combine European and Latin-American countries: small countries, such as Andorra, with 81,588 inhabitants, and larger countries, such as Spain, with over 47 million inhabitants; countries implementing GCfSD activities for over 20 years, with others just starting out. In addition to this, government authorities change, legislation is updated, and institutional reforms are implemented. Therefore, various strategies to address global and local problems affect the population.

This diversity of experiences and contexts gives the GCfSD Program an enormous richness and plurality of visions but simultaneously poses considerable challenges. The GCfSD seeks to create tools that help articulate this diversity of experiences and dreams, turning it into a means of learning and cooperation. To achieve this, we have identified those elements that persist and have continuity over time, given that they are part of the state's commitments beyond changes of government and political leaders. The aim is to establish a medium-term strategy that contributes to consolidating programs and projects aimed at shaping citizenship, and committed to the global-local transformations needed to build a fairer, more egalitarian, sustainable world that respects human rights and is committed to peace.

3.6 The institutional framework

The institutional frameworks are highly diverse, yet all the country reports indicate the existence of normative frameworks at the national level that facilitate the promotion of GCfSD activities. In some instances, the normative frameworks are pretty general, such as the country's constitution (in the case of the Dominican Republic and Paraguay), which emphasizes the promotion of democratic coexistence based on human dignity, life, and rights as the foundation of this society for the family. In other cases, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Ministries of Education play a significant role. In contrast, in some other cases, the generic nature of the framework is such that it is difficult to ascertain the precise role of any one ministry.

Some countries have specific laws on international cooperation or education that regulate the incorporation of the 2030 Agenda into national curricula or cooperation programs. This is the case in Spain and Portugal, which have a Strategy for Global Citizenship Education in Development Cooperation, and the Ministry of Education has incorporated this into the school curriculum as part of the Education Law. In Uruguay, incorporating concepts promoted by UNESCO and other regional bodies plays a relevant role. In other countries (Andorra, Dominican Republic, Chile and Paraguay), GCfSD actions are mainly promoted by the Ministry of Education. Uruguay has a hybrid situation, combining experiences coordinated by the Ministry of Education and other autonomous education governing bodies.

In general, CGpDS initiatives are integrated within each country's development cooperation system and education system, so good coordination between them is essential.

3.7 The conceptualization of Global Citizenship for Sustainable Development

There are different denominations for the concept of GCfSD according to political contexts, national and international demands, and the type of organization and institution that promotes and funds it. For this reason, the starting point of this Ibero-American GCfSD Program must be establishing a shared framework on what Global Citizenship for Sustainable Development means, incorporating the specific terminology of each country.

The GCfSD should become a space for converging the various educational proposals and approaches to build a fairer and more united world. Conceptualization is an open process under permanent construction that incorporates the most relevant issues at any given time and considers the particularities of each country.

The aim is to create a common "theoretical corpus" on GCfSD, which would improve the quality of actions, deepen the analysis of global problems and their causation, exchange ideas and experiences, and define intervention strategies in formal and non-formal education. The complementarity between the different actions of the *GCfSD* should be further developed. This should be part of a participatory process that includes the visions of the various actors involved in development cooperation and education to facilitate ownership.

3.8 Institutional stakeholders

GCfSD involves numerous institutional actors, intergovernmental organizations, Ministries of Education, Ministries of Institutional Relations, formal educational institutions, and other social organizations (non-governmental organizations, higher education organizations, research centers, etc.).

Among the institutional actors, in the case of Portugal and Spain, it is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (through its cooperation agencies) that plays a fundamental role in the promotion of the GCfSD and interministerial coordination and coordination with civil society organizations. Ministries of Education have progressively incorporated GCfSD programs and actions, but their relevance has been slighter, and there is still ample space for development.

Andorra, Chile, Dominican Republic, Paraguay, and Uruguay have linked the most relevant roles to the Ministry of Education as the main actor in the GCfSD, including the role of higher education.

The Environment and Sustainable Development Ministries are also considered relevant institutional actors of the GCfSD. In Andorra, they have promoted the *National Strategy for Environmental Education for Sustainable Development*, which has involved the participation of other ministries and social entities and has taken the form of various actions in schools. Chile and Spain have also promoted educational activities focused on sustainable development. In Uruguay, the coordination of the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet) between the UNESCO National Commission and the Ministry of Education and Culture, was highlighted.

3.9 Social stakeholders

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society organizations play a very relevant role in the GCfSD in some countries (identified mainly in Spain and Portugal) and have been the driving force behind numerous initiatives. In contrast, their role is blurred in other countries and it does not seem part of their agenda. Clear progress has been made in building alliances between social organizations, NGOs, social movements, and interest groups and in the internationalization of GCfSD activities.

Under this analysis, the situation is different in these other countries. No coordination structures allow civil society organizations and NGOs to make joint proposals and define concrete positions in this field. Although they do valuable work, it remains dispersed and needs to be established in a joint framework (for example, Chile and Uruguay).

It is acknowledged that CGpDS practices require a broad dialogue between the different institutional and social stakeholders, promoting spaces for consultation, collective reflection and inter-ministerial coordination.

4 Recommendations and final remarks

The comparative research exercise inspired some recommendations proposed to the *Program's* leading actors:

- Strengthening the development mechanisms of a shared understanding of *GCfSD* that incorporates the common elements of diverse educational practices related to solidarity, social justice, human rights and environmental sustainability. The framework of the 2030 Agenda and target 4.7 is very appropriate. It implies the generation of updated information on global citizenship and sustainability.
- Training the staff of the public institutions participating in the *Program* to provide the conceptual and methodological tools that will enable them to promote GCfSD programs at the national and Ibero-American levels.
- Institutionalizing GCfSD practices and creating monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. To this end, national Secretariats are proposed to coordinate, monitor, and evaluate these practices; and to define educational strategies for GCfSD and action plans.
- Networking, strengthening multi-sectoral alliances and promoting articulated and sustained work over time between government organizations, civil society and international cooperation actors at local, national and global levels.
- Reinforcing the 'localization' of SDG 4 and target 4.7 within the South-South and triangular cooperation framework, which promotes joint projects and their appropriation by local particularities and singularities.
- Promoting teacher education and capacity building due to the importance attributed to the formal educational sector.

- Increasing budget allocation for GCfSD actions at the national level. It is proposed that specific lines of funding be opened, such as those in Andorra, Portugal, and Spain.

In short, the GCfSD Program offers enormous opportunities for learning, joint work and the exchange of good practices. It is an ideal framework for promoting dialogue processes between the various institutional actors and civil society organizations, as well as spaces for consultation, collective reflection, and inter-ministerial coordination. Doing this in the Ibero-American space is innovative and inspiring. It represents great wealth because these countries have a long history in popular education, defence of human rights and social justice.



Part 2:

**Moving from
policy to practice**

2.1 A path through the curriculum forest: How textbooks can provide a route from complexity to clarity

Andy Smart, Susan Iannuzzi, and Wendy Morel

Abstract

This paper describes a way of responding to the challenge of developing teaching and learning materials to help students learn *in* and *with* the world by recognizing difficulties, reducing complexities, and critically assessing circumstances in order to take appropriate action. Using the perspectives of content and pedagogy, the paper illustrates three case studies from different country contexts and subject areas: mother tongue literacy textbooks for primary schools in the Kingdom of Tonga, based on cultural values, 21st century skills, and critical thinking; non-formal educational materials supporting the national curriculum in India, aimed at social change, improving English-language skills, and competencies such as critical thinking; and finally, ten steps towards systems thinking in Mexican high schools, as exemplified in a high school teacher's manual. The paper concludes with three critical considerations for materials writers: visualizing a positive future with a focus on possible solutions (a dispositional dimension); using teaching and learning materials to organize complex ideas and reflect societal and environmental systems (an organizational dimension); and being aware of the socio-cultural realities of the classroom and the educational context (a pedagogical dimension).

1 Introduction

A curriculum framework is like a forest of flora and fauna, a complex mesh of organisms that all connect in one way or another to every other living thing. At the same time, particularly in low- and medium-resource education systems, a curriculum—as perceived by teachers—is a plan that is often expressed in the form of government-approved teaching and learning materials. How, therefore, can syllabus and materials developers turn the complexity and richness of a curriculum framework and its priorities into clear and practical resources that will help teachers and students appreciate and navigate the curriculum forest?

There is an idea in the minds of some commentators that textbooks represent a narrow, instrumentalist view of education in tension with constructivist views and teachers' professionalism. In his wide-ranging metastudy, Hattie (2003, p. 1) contrasted teacher

professionalism with “idiot-proof” solutions where the proofing has been to restrain the idiots to tight scripts—tighter curricula specification, prescribed textbooks, bounded structures of classrooms, scripts of the teaching act, and all this underpinned by a structure of accountability.’

The authors of the present chapter see this as a false dichotomy. Viewing teacher autonomy and textbooks as being in tension with each other does a disservice both to teachers and to textbooks, and even more to pupils. Ambitious educational approaches do not exclude a role for textbooks. On the contrary, in most low-resource education systems, textbooks form a vital link in a ‘curriculum chain’ that extends from high-level strategy to classroom practices. When this link is weak, the whole chain is weak.

We propose that well-written textbooks, based on well-written subject syllabuses, can act as levers for new curriculum ideas and changes in classroom practice. We also propose that the content of textbooks can address the challenges of engaging with a complex world that faces increasing societal and environmental challenges.

Finally, we propose that the textbook can clarify the work of teachers and of those responsible for the training and professional development of teachers and other stakeholders.

Clarifying the complexity of curriculum change by means of textbooks planned around appropriately organized content and pedagogy can provide a pathway through the forest and help realize the vision of the 2023 Recommendation.

2 Unpacking the 2023 Recommendation: Accentuating the positive

We live in a period of global changes and challenges. Current global challenges—including global warming, biodiversity loss, food insecurity, deforestation, political and social conflicts, poverty, hunger, peak waste, population growth, marginalised areas—are generally perceived by young people as impossible to solve. They may feel that little can be done or that it is not their concern. Constant negative statements (‘The world is about to end and it’s our fault’) can produce natural reactions to avoid painful emotions. This ‘fear appeal’ creates anxiety and can cause unintended effects, leading people to ignore or minimize the problems, depending on their perception of their individual vulnerability and their ability to take positive action (McKnight, 2010; Hoffmann, 2021). This in turn creates a gap between what we *say* we want to achieve and what we are actually achieving in everyday life.

SDG Target 4.7 and the 2023 UNESCO Recommendation, which are based on values, attitudes, ethics, and *actions*, can contribute to counteracting the ‘doom and gloom’ and helplessness that many feel about the enormity of environmental and social problems. Pedagogies that help to learn *in* and *with* the world can promote a positive change of perspective by recognizing challenges, reducing complexities, and critically assessing circumstances in order to take appropriate action. Visualizing a positive future with a focus on possible solutions can not only counteract the helplessness but also help promote action in the present.

The 2023 Recommendation aims to inspire an education that enables people to become agents of change, with the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and behavior to be able to take informed decisions and actions at individual, community, local, national, regional, and global levels. Textbooks can support and promote these objectives through a change of perspective based on action competence: that is to say, through a focus on knowledge, willingness, and self-efficacy in order to be able to contribute to an issue from a positive perspective.

The Handprint²³ concept provides one example of action for sustainability. It refers to an individual's action competence, which promotes the development of key competencies for sustainability, as outlined by UNESCO, to address global challenges. These include systems thinking competency, anticipatory competency, normative competency, strategic competency, collaboration competency, critical thinking competency, self-awareness competency, and integrated problem-solving competency (UNESCO, 2017). Integrating these competences should be based on ways of thinking: focused on identifying and describing objects and their constituent elements in the early years of primary school through a progression in later years towards developing conceptual thinking.

Textbooks that include strong curricular content and strong pedagogy can support a lifelong learning disposition that enhances students' motivation with the values, attitudes, behavior, and competencies to cope with global challenges (NISSEM, 2020). One approach might focus on the products of our society and environment that offer opportunities for the rich development of the perspectives and competences mentioned above. For example, in senior secondary classes, the deconstruction of a simple electronic device such as a radio or cell phone can teach otherwise abstract concepts of sustainability as follows:

Systems thinking competency: Describe what the device is made from and visualize where each part comes from in order to understand that everything is part of a system and interconnected.

Anticipatory competency: Evaluate multiple futures (possible, probable, and desirable). Ask about the possible future scenarios, i.e. What would happen if everyone bought a device? How many resources would we need? Or what would happen if we stopped using them? Assess the consequences of actions and deal with risks and changes. Anticipate possible scenarios to visualize strategies for action.

Normative competency: Knowing and reflecting on the norms and values that underlie one's own and others' actions, for example in the use and disposal of devices.

Strategic competency: Working together to create and implement creative initiatives that promote sustainability both locally and globally, i.e. What would be a good strategy to recycle the devices?

Collaboration competency: Being able to support cooperative and participatory problem solving by learning from others, and understanding and respecting their needs and views.

Critical thinking competency: Examining our own values, perceptions, and behaviors, about the consumption and use of devices, challenging conventions, practices, and ideas, and making appropriate decisions.

Self-awareness competency: Reflecting on one's own role in the local community and in the global society: how to promote good practices related to the use and disposal of electronic devices?

Integrated problem-solving competency: Applying different solutions to enhance positive actions towards the use and disposal of electronic devices.

What would a textbook integrating such a change of perspective with the vision of the 2023 Recommendation look like? Hoffmann (2021) provides an example. His geography

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23 Originally defined as a symbol of, measure for, and commitment to generating positive individual action towards sustainability, reflecting the spirit of hope, enthusiasm, and commitment to action that supports measurable changes in people's behavior (Pandya et al., 2013). It also has been defined as complementary to the footprint concept (Guillaume et al., 2020). It fosters the motivation to reduce consumption and engages the power of creativity, profit, and idealism (Biemer et al., 2013).

textbook, *Globale Herausforderungen, Die Zukunft, die wir wollen* (Global Challenges: The future we want, 2018) adopts a solution-focused teaching methodology.²⁴ The textbook uses the factual logic of the traditional problem-solving method, i.e. a linear, analytical approach. However, the novel element—the paradigm shift of this approach—is that it starts with solution ideas and dedicates the majority of the lesson to discussing the ideas critically and constructively without downplaying or ignoring the global challenges, their scope, or their potential risk. For example, the book includes a Smart Material house cuboid with bio-intelligence quotient (BIQ)²⁵. It is the world's first building with a bioreactor façade. Within the glass components that comprise its 'bio skin,' microalgae are grown, which can regulate light and offer shade in addition to generating energy (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Chapter 2 - Activity 2.1: 'Saving resources and energy in a creative way', page 37

The example of the Smart Material house stimulates students' curiosity, promoting positive reactions followed by questions about the effectiveness of the idea or solution. The next step focuses on analyzing the dimensions and quality of the problem that this solution

24 In Germany, the curriculum in each state is independent. However, the geography curriculum of the last two grades of high school in each state includes topics on the theme of 'global challenges'. The material in the Hoffmann textbook can therefore be used nationally.

25 For more information <https://www.internationale-bauausstellung-hamburg.de/en/projects/the-building-exhibition-within-the-building-exhibition/smart-material-houses/biq/projekt/biq.html>
<https://www.dw.com/en/microalgal-bioreactors-make-an-awful-racket-on-house-of-the-future-in-hamburg/a-17031998>

seeks to solve. Once this step is completed, the scope and transferability of the proposed solution is analyzed. Finally, the textbook examines the effectiveness of this solution-focused approach. In this approach, students are in an open-minded environment where they may be creative and tackle problems in a solution-focused manner. They may feel more capable of handling obstacles on their own. The most compelling argument in favor of this approach is that, when well planned, it avoids inducing depression or hopelessness.

Another example can be seen in *Teaching the Sustainable Development Goals* (Hoffmann and Gorana, 2017), a manual that emerged from a collaborative project of the ESD Expert Network and which was based on stories from four project countries: India, Mexico, South Africa, and Germany.



Story of Change

The curious case of Whali in Mangrol

When Kunal and his friends visit their fishing nets, which they place off the coast of Dujarat, they can see, already from a distance, whether their nets are going to be destroyed or not. Coming closer they see again one of the most impressive species of the ocean: a whale shark. Kunal bows over the edge of his boat, cuts several meters of the net and releases "Whali" to the open sea. Neither his father nor his grandfather would have done this. Rather they would have been delighted at such a huge catch.

In 2004, a spiritual Hindu leader, Maruti Bapu, addressed the village community of Mangrol, a small settlement on the coast of Gujarat in India, urging them to protect the whale sharks—the largest fish in the sea. Whale sharks reach lengths of 40 feet or more. Maruti Bapu called it Whali, which means "dear one". He used the metaphor of a daughter coming to her maternal home just like the Indian custom where a daughter, when possible, delivers her first child in the place of her own childhood. And, of course, nobody would consider harming her.

The Gujarat coastal region is a breeding area of the whale sharks. Whale sharks were being killed by the fishermen for liver oil and meat after getting caught in the nets. The population of the whale sharks on the Gujarat coast declined drastically from 1995 to 2000. In 2001, whale sharks were included in IUCN Endangered Species List. The same year, fish species were brought under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act of India. Since then, poaching whale sharks is punishable under the Wildlife Protection Act.

Seeing no abatement in the killings, the Wildlife Trust of India launched a massive public campaign

Impact on SDGs



14 LIFE BELOW WATER

15 LIFE ON LAND

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

– "Save the whale shark". This campaign included the local community, fishermen and Maruti Bapu. Tatra Chemicals stepped in to compensate fisher folks who had to cut their nets to let the big fish get away into deep waters. The compensation benefited both people and the whale sharks. The campaign led to the protection of 585 whale sharks and became one of the biggest whale community efforts to protect the largest species of fish. And indeed, Mangrol became the world's largest site for the protection of whale sharks! The efforts of the village community, fisher-folks, state forest department, international NGOs, and corporates made it possible to protect the whale shark.

Reflect

- ➔ What is the initial problem, which led to this project?
- ➔ How did the Hindu spiritual leader help the campaign to save the whale shark?
- ➔ What is the general aim of the project?
- ➔ Who came forward to compensate the fishermen who had to cut their nets?
- ➔ Which strategy is used to save the whale shark?
- ➔ Why did the guru equate the fish to a daughter?
- ➔ Is the integration of religious beliefs generally helpful in supporting sustainable development?
- ➔ Is it possible to transfer the Mangrol strategy to other parts of the world?

I. Learning objectives

- ➔ The learner understands the connection of many people to the sea and the life it holds. This includes understanding the sea's role as a provider of food, jobs and other opportunities. The learner learns about the threats to ocean systems such as pollution and over-fishing and recognizes and can explain the relative fragility of many ocean ecosystems including coral reefs and hypoxic dead zones.
- ➔ The learner is able to show people the impact humanity is having on the oceans (biomass loss, acidification, pollution, etc.) and the value of clean healthy oceans.
- ➔ The learner is able to debate sustainable methods such as strict fishing quotas and moratoriums on species in danger of extinction.

II. Achieved core competencies of learners

- ➔ Critical thinking competency
- ➔ Systems thinking competency
- ➔ Anticipatory competency
- ➔ Normative competency
- ➔ Integrated problem-solving competency
- ➔ Strategic competency
- ➔ Collaboration competency
- ➔ Self-awareness competency

III. Ideas to teach

- ➔ Researching habitats and migration routes of whale sharks
- ➔ Creating a concept map around the meaning of the whale shark for the marine ecosystem and humans
- ➔ Discussing connections and affinity of religious beliefs and sustainable development
- ➔ Creating activities and measurements to improve the marine ecosystem

IV. Ideas for your own practice

- ➔ Use personal consumer choices, especially food and chemicals, on preventing negative marine impacts
- ➔ Explore a snap shot of the state of the South African Marine Protected Areas by reading: http://oceansciences.wet.org.za/downloads/final_wet_marine_report_02_dec_2014_web_1.pdf. How could such concepts be applied in your region or country?
- ➔ Develop short courses on the oceans and coast. Arrange for presentations for staff and public on various marine conservation topics

Useful links

Whale Shark Conservation:
<http://mangrovetothefuture.org/news-and-media/news/india/2013/raising-to-the-challenge-of-whale-shark-conservation>

Figure 2: Chapter 5. Teaching the SDGs, Goal 14: 'Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development', pages 63–64

The manual adopts a solution-oriented approach in the form of a 'story of change.' It presents a brief, focused introduction to the global challenge that explains the core problems and their dimensions, consequences, required efforts in terms of the 17 SDG goals, and possible didactic-methodical approaches. For each objective a real story is told. For instance, for SDG 14, *Life below water*, the lesson narrates how the community of Mangrol, a small settlement on the coast of Gujarat in India, successfully created a movement to protect the whale shark as well as the fishermen (Figure 2). Other examples illustrate how to engage students of all ages with the SDGs as well as best practice examples to support topics related to each SDG.

These two textbooks interpret a curriculum by integrating new perspectives to develop the kinds of knowledge, values, attitudes, behavior, and competencies outlined in the 2023 Recommendation.

3 Pedagogical approaches

The pedagogical approach of a textbook can either support or hinder students' learning experiences and attainment of the desired knowledge, values, attitudes, behavior, and competencies. As the 2023 Recommendation supports enabling students to become agents of change, acquisition of knowledge is not sufficient: students need to develop the ability to think, analyze, communicate, collaborate, and persuade. Developing these skills is different from knowing what they mean. In other words, an *ability* to collaborate is different from knowledge of the criteria that define collaboration. Students who have developed the ability to collaborate possess many attributes, including but not limited to, open-mindedness, flexibility, empathy, patience, and self-confidence (O'Leary et al., 2012). Through practice, students can cultivate these attributes and develop the skill of collaboration, or any other competency.

Thus, effective textbooks incorporate pedagogical approaches that offer opportunities for students to develop the competences detailed in the cell phone example above. Such activities entail a range of cognitive engagement from lower-order thinking skills, such as factual recall, to higher-order skills such as the creative use of knowledge. Additionally, textbooks that include pair- and occasional groupwork can enhance opportunities for students to develop social and collaborative skills, when classroom and cultural conditions allow. Questions requiring reflection or self-assessment can contribute to developing normative and self-awareness competencies. A common denominator of many of these activities is their learner-centered nature, giving students greater control over the learning process and allowing them to help shape the discussion, collaborate, and learn from each other (Weimer, 2013).

Learner-centered and competence-based pedagogy in textbook activities needs to be appropriate to the teaching culture. In nearly all contexts, the teacher controls the use of the textbook in the classroom. This reality has led to differing views as to the value of textbooks and the effectiveness of certain pedagogical approaches. Those who view teachers as professionals deserving of autonomy may view textbooks as limiting, stifling teachers' ability to teach. At the other end of the spectrum, those who view teachers as largely lacking in the ability or will to engage their students view textbooks as a necessary tool for tightly scripted teacher instructions. In either case, the textbook is not utilized to its fullest capacity: it is either a hindrance to be largely ignored or it presents a narrow path that should be followed to maximize the chances of achieving the desired outcomes.

There is, however, a middle path in which students' and teachers' books provide sufficient structure and support to enable teachers to implement effective pedagogical instruction. For example, the student textbooks may follow a predictable pattern, beginning with discussion to activate students' background knowledge or link the content to their lives. Within this template, the activities themselves may adhere to a regular structure. For example, questions may follow a predictable pattern of beginning with lower-order thinking skills, such as factual recall, and move to higher-order thinking skills, such as inference and application. Once teachers and students become familiar with these patterns, they may move through the material more effectively, with fewer pauses for the teacher to explain or set up the students' work.

Piper et al. (2018) presented the findings of research into effective teacher's guides in the Global South, with guidelines for presentation and organization of content. The recommendations suggest the need for consistent pedagogical methods that enable the teachers and students to establish a routine. Furthermore, heavier scripting in the beginning of the course should gradually give way to light scripting or guidance, accounting for teachers' internalization and their need / ability to be creative. Once teachers have established a comfortable routine for core activities, their management challenges may be reduced, enabling them to supplement the routine with additional learning opportunities. The reduction of explicit and repetitive scripting also enables a shorter, more lightweight book that is more economical and more likely to be used.

Although the pedagogical practices, organization, and design of textbooks are all critical, textbook developers should be mindful of the socio-cultural realities of the classroom. As Hoadley (2024) noted in her analysis of observations of 188 early grade reading programs, teachers in the treatment and control classrooms tended to behave similarly, maintaining strong hierarchical relationships with students. The teachers in the treatment classrooms were observed to be 'grafting' the *I do, You do, We do* methodology onto their traditional practice of 'extensive and chorused repetition of teacher-led content' (p. 7). The implication for textbooks is that contextually relevant pedagogy must be acknowledged and incorporated.

Thus, when teachers use textbooks that attend to the socio-cultural context and are well designed, the textbook serves two purposes: it is not only the instrument for imparting knowledge and developing students' competences, but it also becomes a resource for teachers' professional development. The teacher acquires skills to effectively implement the curriculum through the textbook, and these skills can be applied in future teaching situations, regardless of the materials in the students' hands. While no textbook can compensate for low levels of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, textbooks that are developed and organized well have the potential to support good teaching and also illuminate teacher education and professional development.

4 Case studies

4.1 Case study 1: Mother tongue for primary schools in the Kingdom of Tonga

In 2022, with World Bank support, the Ministry of Education and Training (MET) in the Kingdom of Tonga began to review and revise its primary curriculum. The following year, consultants from the Curriculum Foundation were hired to work with MET to develop a new scope and sequence in teaching and learning materials for four subject areas including mother tongue. Classes 5 and 6, the first grades produced with the consultant team, were introduced into all schools in 2025.²⁶

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26 The wider project, which includes school buildings, EMIS, and assessment components, is called the Tonga Safe and Resilient Schools Project (TSRSP), reflecting the island nation's vulnerability to the effects of climate change.

The scope and sequence for the subject of Tongan Language (TL), the mother tongue for almost the entire population, is based on five domains of listening and speaking, reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary, and spelling and punctuation. The other curriculum areas—mathematics, science, and English—are more content-based than TL, which is organized around 21st century (21C) skills and values as well as specific language content. The 21C skills and the values cut across each subject in different ways.

Values and skills underpin the national curriculum framework, which is complex and ambitious. The subject syllabuses and the teaching and learning materials, as in many centralized education systems in LMICs, are therefore the means for making complexity and ambition workable in the schools. The subject of TL is an opportunity to explicitly address the high-level ambitions and cross-cutting skills and values that lie at the heart of this Polynesian state's education strategy (2022, not published).²⁷ In the new TL approach—which was first tested in a small-scale trial over three fully observed lessons with follow-up discussions with teachers—the values of compassion, respect, and intergenerational memories sit comfortably alongside critical thinking, identity, and resilience. Such transversal skills and values can be explicitly addressed in a way that is unique to teaching mother tongue reading, writing, and oracy.

The unit titles in Classes 5 and 6 (and the transversal skills they target) are:

Class 5: ***Treating others well*** (inclusion, respect for others and for our differences, social skills, communication, collaboration) / ***Problem solving*** (analyzing and solving problems) / ***Health work – a special calling*** (critical thinking, global awareness, self-reflection, self-direction) / ***Sweet memories*** (communication, social skills, family relationships, roles, respect for grandparents) / ***A magical tree*** (using local resources creatively and sustainably; innovation, creativity and self-direction in planning a business idea) / ***My story*** (expressing love and respect for family members) / ***Plants and the environment*** (environmental awareness in the community) / ***Look to the future*** (protecting against natural disasters, resilience, environmental sustainability).

Class 6: ***Compassion*** (kindness, empathy and helping others in need) / ***Difficult to believe!*** (critical thinking: imagination and reality; global awareness) / ***Traditional medicine*** (passing on cultural knowledge and skills through generations) / ***Telling a story*** (communication, critical thinking, social skills, family relationships, global awareness) / ***Tongan artists*** (creativity, innovation, sustainability of artistic practices) / ***Pause, think twice!*** (critical thinking) / ***Heroes of the environment*** (sustainability, awareness and appreciation of people and agencies who are helping the community) / ***Poetry is part of life*** (creativity and communication, innovation).

The TL approach also includes high quality texts for reading, discussion, and analysis in pupils' talk and writing. The materials are organized around texts selected for their inherent interest. The texts have an authenticity that engages pupils' interests and allows for high quality analysis and response. They are chosen to reflect 21C skills and values and

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27 *Alanga Fale 'o e Ako: Vision 2032 and Strategic Policy Framework*, Ministry of Education, Tonga.

provide the organizing framework for the units. For the writers, like textbook writers in many countries (Shukla, 2024)—who would previously have written their own passages of text for the textbooks—having access to high quality published sources, including many with illustrations, was a new experience. As Shukla says, ‘The stories, poems and non-fiction ... were the only children’s literature that an overwhelming majority of our children accessed, especially in rural areas.’

Today, finding suitable texts for use in textbooks, and acquiring publishing rights, is easier than it used to be. A number of international agencies and organizations now publish engaging fictional and informational texts for young people, often with high quality illustrations, under Creative Commons (CC) licenses. Typically, such licenses allow for adaptation, including the right to use complete or selected content and also, importantly, the right to translate. Room to Read’s Literacy Cloud has been valuable, as have other sources.²⁸

Each unit in Classes 5 and 6 of TL is divided into three topics, organized in a pedagogically consistent way and reflecting Tongan values and student interests. The following sample shows the organization of a typical topic. The theme of the unit, entitled Pause, Think! (in Tongan, *Ki’i taimi pea fakakaukau!*), is critical thinking.²⁹ The topic shown here (an English draft of the Tongan Language pupil’s book) is the first in the unit and focuses on the issue of disinformation. It is an example of how the textbooks blend explicit treatment of 21C skills and values, in the theme of the unit, with transversal skills such as collaboration in the overall pedagogy.

The text in the topic is taken from a website designed to test readers’ abilities to judge the truth of a compelling treatment of a topic. Persuasively written and illustrated, the text describes an imaginary tree octopus, which will appeal to primary school pupils in Tonga where the culture and economy depend on the Pacific Ocean and its riches.

The teacher’s guide helps the teacher, for whom the idea of disinformation may be less familiar than to their pupils, to present such a text within an official textbook.

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28 Literacy Cloud: <https://literacycloud.org/>, Storyweaver: <https://storyweaver.org.in/en/>, African Storybook: <https://www.africanstorybook.org/>, Book Dash: <https://bookdash.org/books/>, Let’s Read Asia: <https://www.letsreadasia.org/>

29 <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0280902>

CLASS 6 UNIT 6: PAUSE, THINK!

Topic 1: The amazing tree octopus!

A. Start with this.

Activity 1: Read the success criteria.

Activity 2: Discuss the theme of the unit and the topic.

In pairs, discuss:

- What do you know about octopuses? Where do they live?
- Has anyone ever told you something that was not true? How did you find out it was not true?

Activity 3: Discuss the headlines.

In pairs, look at these amazing headlines from Internet newspapers. Which ones do you think are true? Which ones might not be true? Why do you think so?

(a) Survey Finds that Ice Cream is an Important part of a Balanced Diet!

(b) Giant Rats found on the Moon!

(c) Tortoise lived for almost 200 years!

B. Explore the text

Activity 4: Predict the text.

Look at the title, the subheadings, and the illustrations.

- What do you think this text is about?
- Do you think this text will be true or imaginary? Why do you think this?
- What text type do you think it will be?

Activity 5: Listen to the text.

The Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus

The Pacific Northwest tree octopus can be found in the rainforests of the west coast of North America. These solitary creatures reach an average size of 30–33 cm, measured from the tip of the arm to the top of the head. Unlike most other cephalopods, they spend only their early life and the period of their mating season in the sea. For the rest of their lives, they inhabit the tall trees of the forest. Because of the moistness of the rainforests and their specialized skin, they are able to avoid becoming desiccated for long periods of time.



Rare photo of the elusive tree octopus

The tree octopus is an intelligent and inquisitive creature. Using one of its eight arms, each covered in suckers, it can pull itself along a branch, strike at an insect, small frog or rodent, or steal an egg from a bird's nest. It might even examine objects that stimulate its curiosity.

Why is the Tree Octopus endangered?



The tree octopus should be protected. Although it is not officially listed on the Endangered Species List, its numbers are at a very low level due to the cutting down of trees, the growth of cities and towns, and the building of roads that prevent access to the sea where they need to go to breed. Other tree octopus species that were once common throughout the region have since gone extinct because of similar threats.

To this day, misunderstanding and fear of these gentle creatures can still be found among many people, although education campaigns and special fences have helped to slow down the disappearance of the Pacific Northwest tree octopus.

How can you help?

Spread awareness and help a tree octopus with our [Tree Octopus Activities...](https://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/)

Adapted from <https://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/>

Figure 3: First two pages of Unit 6 of Class 6 Tongan Language pupil's book

The pupil activities in the topic follow a regular format through stages (A to E) that integrate the language skills and 21C skills and move from class discussion to pair work to individual work:

- A. *Start with this*: engaging, open-ended, class- and pair-based, and also including a number of 'success criteria' to encourage pupils' self-directed learning
- B. *Explore the text*: a focus on a high-quality text, with both surface-level and higher-order comprehension and discussion
- C. *Build your language knowledge and skills*: vocabulary, grammar, style
- D. *Apply your learning*: meaning-based text production by pupils
- E. *Review the outcome*: self-assessment, using the same success criteria as part of a formative assessment strategy.

Activity 6: Read the text again on your own.

As you read, note down any words or expressions in the text that are unclear for you. Try to work out their meaning.

Activity 7: Find information in the text.

- In which part of the world is the tree octopus found?
- How big is the tree octopus?
- How does it move in the trees?
- Why does the text say that the tree octopus is endangered?
- What is the text asking you to do?

Activity 8: Think more deeply about the text.

With your partner, discuss:

- How does this text make you feel?
- What type of text is it? Look at the poster. Give reasons for your answers.
- Do you think the Pacific Northwest tree octopus is real or imaginary? Give reasons for your answer.

C. Build your language knowledge and skills.

Activity 9: TO COME

Activity 10: TO COME

D. Apply your learning.

Activity 11: Read these facts about octopuses.



Photo by Diane Picchiottino on Unsplash

FACTS ABOUT OCTOPUSES

- Octopuses live in all oceans of the world.
- Their size ranges from 30 cm to 5 metres.
- They can change colour as a way of communicating with other octopuses.
- They can shoot inky fluid to protect themselves.
- They eat crabs, shrimps, lobsters, and small fish. Sometimes they eat larger prey, such as sharks.

Activity 12: Analyse the text about the tree octopus.

Copy the table. Look at the text about the tree octopus again. Compare it with the facts about octopuses. Find information about the tree octopus that does not match the facts about octopuses.

True information about octopuses	Untrue information about octopuses

Compare your notes with the rest of the class.

Activity 13: Write a report.

Write a short analysis of the tree octopus text. Include the following points:

- We might say that the text about the tree octopus is an **informational** text, but now you know that the information is not true. Why do you think the author wrote it?
- It is also a **persuasive** text, but you should not do what it asks you to do. Why not?
- If you are not sure that the information in a text is true, how can you check the information?

Homework

Ask a member of your family for examples of stories that they once believed but later found out to be untrue. Write a short report of 3–5 sentences about one story.

E. Review the outcome.

Activity 14: Review the success criteria.

Do this activity on your own.

How well can you demonstrate these success criteria?

Choose the best response for each one.

Success criteria	Very well	With help	Not yet
1. I can describe the type and purpose of a text.			
2. I can distinguish fact from imagination in a text.			
3. I can write a short report on my own about an information text.			

Figure 4: Third and fourth pages of Unit 6 of Class 6 Tongan Language pupil's book

Each topic also includes a homework, which usually links with the pupils' own family and community. The textbook for the subject of English follows a similar approach with similar stages.

Cooperation is a 21C skill in the curriculum framework and is important for developing pupils' literacy and language skills as well as their dispositions towards active listening and sharing ideas. Pupils are therefore frequently asked to cooperate before doing activities independently. This reinforces experiential learning. In either case, whether during collaborative or independent activities, there are opportunities for the teacher to monitor and support the pupils through formative assessment.

The regular format of the units and topics scaffolds this ambitious new approach for both teachers and pupils. For example, although several taxonomies of learning were consulted during the syllabus development—including Bloom, SOLO, and language-specific frameworks such as PIRLS and PILNA—the approach taken to reading comprehension in the pupil's book is to limit comprehension questions to two levels, namely 'Find information in the text' and 'Think more deeply about the text.' This regular and pragmatic format made the task of the materials writers both easier and more enjoyable and it is hoped that it will support the teachers and pupils equally.

Many activities in each topic involve higher order thinking, eliciting pupils' opinions and choice, with opportunities for meaning-based language production rather than mechanical performance, reflecting Deng (2023) as a 'meaningful encounter between students and content which can give rise to opportunities or possibilities for students to cultivate intellectual, moral and social powers and dispositions.'

Finally, the teacher's guide supports teachers to move away from traditional rote-teaching and to navigate a pathway through the diversity and surprises of the classroom.

4.2 Case study 2: Non-formal education supporting the national curriculum in India

Materials for education outside of the mainstream curriculum can also play a role in furthering the aims of the 2023 Recommendation. In 2019, the United States Department of State through its embassy in New Delhi, India, partnered with Ram Devineni, founder of Rattapallax film and publishing company, to create teaching and learning materials to accompany comics featuring his superhero, Priya. Devineni's inspiration for Priya sprang from the *Nirbhaya* case in which Jyoti Singh, a 23-year-old physiotherapy intern, was raped and murdered in Delhi (Prasad & Zehra, 2023). The advent of Priya as a superhero arising from sexual assault underscores the desire for change in Indian society. After surviving her attack, Priya is cast out of her family and village, bearing the shame that many rape survivors in South Asia carry through no fault of their own. Through divine intervention, Priya reclaims a dignified and magical life, advocating for survivors of gender-based violence, such as acid attacks or sex trafficking. In 2020, the Priya series expanded to address issues related to the environment and sustainability through the comic *Priya and the Twirling Wind*.

The support of the United States Department of State provided an opportunity for the message of social change to improve English-language skills and competencies such as critical thinking. The 2020 National Education Policy (NEP) adopted by the Indian Government emphasizes the achievement of a broad range of skills:

Pedagogy must evolve to make education more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centred, discussion-based, flexible, and, of course, enjoyable... The National Education Policy lays particular emphasis on the development of the creative potential of each individual. It is based on the principle that education must develop not only cognitive capacities...but also social, ethical, and emotional capacities and dispositions (NEP, 2020, p. 3).

Although the Priya materials conform to the national curriculum and could be used in mainstream schools, the required materials for mainstream schools typically consume most of the instructional time. Therefore, the Priya materials were primarily promoted for use in non-formal education spaces such as after-school and extra-curricular programs including the English Access Microscholarship Programs (Access). In the Access program, students between the ages of 13 and 18 years acquire English language skills and may have the opportunity to travel to the United States for additional academic opportunities. The teachers in Access programs receive professional support through the Regional English Language Offices of the State Department.

As a result, the Priya materials represented an opportunity to incorporate learner-centered pedagogy in a way that enabled teachers to develop professionally. To this end, the students' material contains a limited number of activity types and follows a consistent structure that aligns one page of the students' materials with one page of the comic.

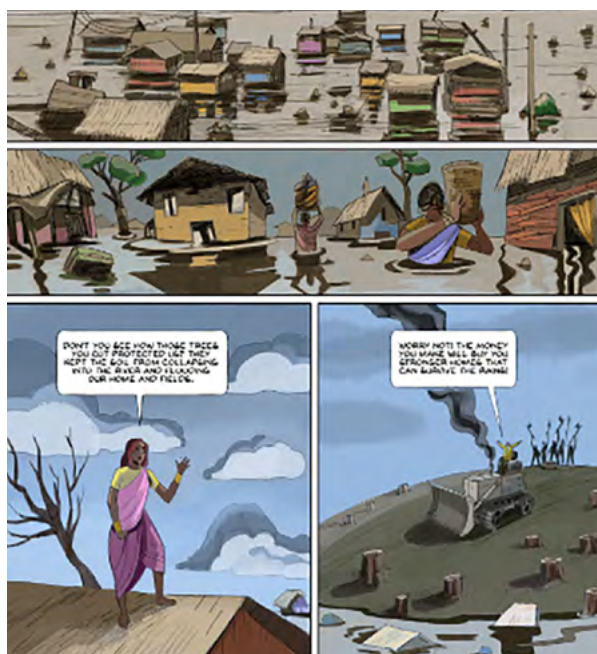


Figure 5: Priya and the Twirling Wind, page 13

PAGE 13

A. Using visual cues

Look at the pictures on the page. Tell the story in your own words.

B. Vocabulary

Match the words to their meanings. Use a dictionary if necessary.

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 1 to protect | a the dirt on the ground that plants grow in |
| 2 soil | b to keep safe |
| 3 to collapse | c to continue to live |
| 4 to survive | d to fall down |

C. Comprehension

Read the page. Choose the correct words to complete the summary.

The **branches / roots** from the trees **protected / survived** the **soil / rain**. When the rain came, the village **flooded / survived** because there weren't any trees. Bhayar told the people that they could build stronger **trees / homes** with their money.

D. Critical thinking

Look at the picture and read the text. Answer the questions.

- 1 Do you think the people thought they would lose their village? Why or why not?
- 2 Do you think Bhayar's words are true? Why or why not?



Figure 6: Priya and the Twirling Wind: Students' materials, page 13

The students always begin by using the visual cues to scaffold their understanding of the story before they read. This enables those with limited English skills to make meaning at a basic level and encourages those with more advanced English skills to notice details that they may be inclined to overlook if they are focused only on comprehending the text.

Vocabulary and comprehension work appear consistently so that students can develop their language skills. The vocabulary is recycled throughout so that students have opportunities to practice and maximize their ability to acquire productive use of the words. For example, in the comprehension activity shown, the words *branches* and *roots* are recycled.

The material for each page culminates in a higher-level thinking task, such as critical thinking or role-playing to create an original extension of the story.

The teacher's material provides general guidance on how to conduct all the activity types. Additionally, there are tips to explain instructional language in the teaching procedures that some teachers may not be familiar with.

Using Visual Cues

- Ask students to look at the pictures or pages. Elicit what they can see.
- You may want to ask different types of questions. For example, ask about the **characters**, including *What are the characters doing? What are their facial expressions?* Ask about the **artistic elements**, for example, *What colors does the artist use? What is large or small in the picture?* Etc. Ask about the **students' feelings or opinions**, for example *How does the picture make you feel? Do you see any links to other things you have seen already?* Etc.

Figure 7: Priya and the Twirling Wind: **Teaching procedures**

TIP Eliciting from students

Research shows that students learn better and are more engaged when teachers elicit answers from the class instead of giving them. It's useful to make sure that all students have time to think about the answer before they speak. This means that everyone has to think about the answers, instead of simply receiving information passively.

TIP Ways of eliciting from students

Sometimes students don't want to speak or answer questions. Be ready to ask questions to help students. For example, if you are trying to get them to tell you what is in a picture, you can ask questions such as, *Who can you see in the picture? How do you think they feel? What are they doing?* Etc. This will help students overcome a fear of being wrong, or shyness about not knowing what to say.

Figure 8: Priya and the Twirling Wind: **Teaching tips**

In order to support teachers, the materials provide examples of questions that teachers may ask when conducting an activity as well as reasons for these types of questions. Based on these reasons, teachers can construct their own original questions to meet students' needs in novel situations that may arise when using these or other materials.

The specific instructions for page 13, which accompany the pages from the comic and the students' materials, are displayed below:

PAGE 13

A. Using visual cues

See the activity teaching procedures.

B. Vocabulary

See the activity teaching procedures.

ANSWERS

1 b 2 a 3 d 4 c

C. Comprehension

See the activity teaching procedures.

ANSWERS

1 roots	4 flooded
2 protected	5 homes
3 soil	

D. Critical thinking

See the activity teaching procedures.

- If students have difficulty, ask them to think about the previous discussions about the importance of the trees.
- Ask students to recall their opinions about Bhayar and the way in which the men changed their language to fool the villagers.

Figure 9: Priya and the Twirling Wind: Teaching procedures to accompany page 13

At this point in the teacher's materials, the teachers have had the opportunity to practice those activity types, so the procedures are not repeated. However, the support for teachers to conduct the critical thinking activity is included. The suggestions enable teachers to prompt students to draw on previous discussions, including how language was used by the characters in earlier situations. Teachers with limited time, and in some cases limited English ability, do not have to read through extensive duplicated information, but can immediately identify information that supports their immediate need to facilitate a new critical thinking prompt.

Finally, in considering the sustainability issues presented in *Priya and the Twirling Wind*, as well as the cross-curricular connections, the materials end with a project that encourages students to learn more about the environmental issues facing their communities. The language and cognitive skills that the materials facilitate prepare students to express their opinions and the factual information they have learned about the issue in the form of a poster, which can be used for a presentation or further class discussion.

AFTER YOU READ

A. Discussion

In pairs, discuss the questions.

- 1 What do you think was the message of the story?
- 2 The story focused on the importance of trees in protecting the village from flooding. The story also focused on the ancient tree Vrikshu. Why are trees so important in the world? How do they help people?

B. Connect to your world

In groups, discuss the questions.

- 1 What are the following environmental problems? Use a dictionary if you are not sure.
a deforestation b erosion c. waste disposal
- 2 What environmental problems does your city or town have? What do you think causes these problems? Do you think there are ways to stop these problems?

C. Project

In groups, choose an environmental problem, for example air pollution, deforestation, or flooding, that affects your city or town. Make a poster to explain the problem and show how people can reduce this problem. Make sure your poster answers the following questions.

- 1 What is the problem? Why is it a problem?
- 2 How can people reduce or stop this problem?
- 3 What causes the problem?
- 4 What can you do to help?

Figure 10: Priya and the Twirling Wind:
Teaching procedures for post-reading of the students' materials

4.3 Case study 3: Ten steps towards systems thinking in Mexican high schools

In UNESCO's competency framework for sustainable development, each learner should develop the competency of systems thinking. Systems thinking has an extraordinary meaning for ESD because it creates the conditions to perceive and understand environmental-societal interrelations and contributes strongly to developing the other seven key competencies. Although there is a long tradition of systems learning and competency development (Meadows, 2008; Rempfler & Uphues, 2011; Fögele et al., 2020), a concise and interculturally designed learning course that can develop the intended systems competence in the context of sustainable development was missing.

In 2020 the international think tank ESD Expert Net developed *Ten Steps Towards Systems Thinking: An Education for Sustainable Development manual for teachers, educators and facilitators*. This inter-cultural learning material³⁰ considers the demands of learners in Mexico, South Africa, India, and Germany, drawing on the concepts articulated in the global discourse on ESD and offering practical steps to develop systems thinking by providing a practice-oriented learning resource for students aged 15 and older.

The 10 steps referred to in the title of the manual are based on the following definition:

Systems thinking is the ability to describe and/or visualise a part of a complex reality, express that part of reality as a model, understand the model as a system, use the model to explain the behaviour of the system, anticipate the behaviour of the system, and evaluate its impacts on sustainable development, identify potential points of, and types of interventions, generate options to act, assess their impacts in the frame of sustainable development, and decide whether further actions are necessary or not.

The manual has four sections. In the first section each step is theoretically explained, including the above definition and the intended goal. The section also suggests different learning methods, an illustration of the activity, and a visual illustrating the competencies that are likely to be acquired in the context of system thinking. The steps are organized according to the aspects of Recognizing (steps 1, 2 and 3), Evaluating (steps 4–8 and 10), and Acting (step 9) (UNESCO, 2017, p. 91). Figure 11 illustrates how each step is structured.

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30 Initially, published as an opensource in English. Actually, the material is available in the English, German and Spanish in: <https://thehandprintinitiative.org/resources.html>

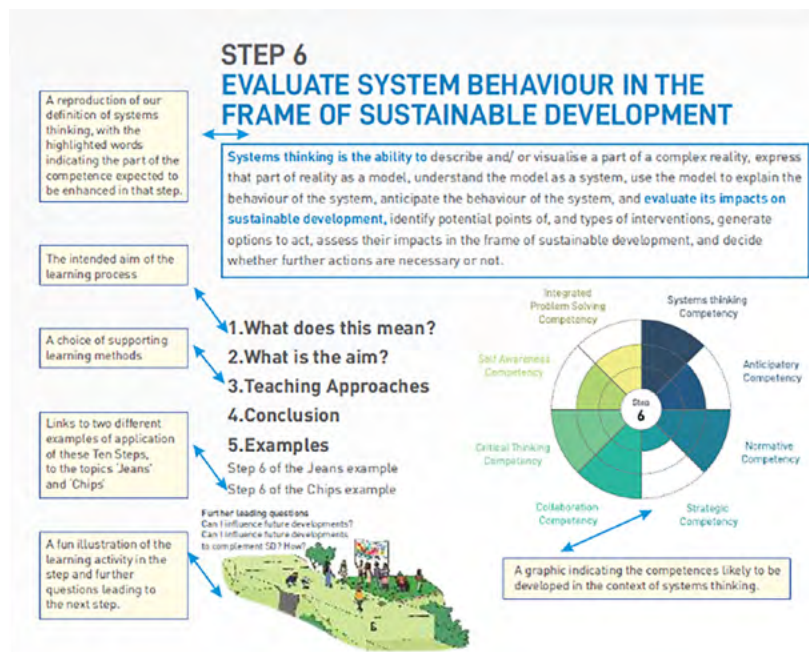


Figure 11: The first section (How to use this book): **Structure of the Steps, page 18**

The second and third sections present an insight into the practical adaptation of the 10 steps towards systems thinking by means of two examples: jeans and potato chips (figure 12). The final section contains a collection of diverse methodologies.

Jeans

Millions of people are dressed in jeans every day. Learners across campuses prefer wearing jeans. We may have our favourite brands. Some of us may simply wear the ones that are affordable. Others prefer those that are most stylish, or comfortable to wear for daily work. As many of us know, jeans are mostly made of cotton (though fast fashion is driving up the use of polyester). However, we might not really know where the jeans were made and how, and who made them. Nor would we know the conditions in which the jeans were made, and who benefited or profited from the production and sales of the jeans, and what impact it had on the environment.

Following these few thoughts, you may directly enter the global cotton system. A global pattern of production steps has evolved from the different climate and farming conditions, availability of water for irrigation, labour work conditions and earnings of farmers and factory workers, industrial processes, status of environmental laws and many other factors. This global system is in a continuous state of change.

As mentioned earlier, the jeans we wear is only one of the outcomes of this system. What else is happening in this system and how does it affect our world? This example of an everyday item of our lives has been chosen to invite learners to try systems thinking.



Chips

All over the world, potato chips of various flavours – traditional, classic, tangy, and even some flavours that many might find strange – have the leading position among all snacks. Nutrition habits all over the world show a remarkable change over the years. Chips accompany the increasing screen time on television, multi-media, video, internet, online learning, and work settings. Snacking and snack varieties are on the rise, especially among youth. The alarming element of the story is that a chips-heavy diet is likely to be unhealthy.

The potato chip navigates the journey from a potato field to the bag of chips in our hands through a global production system. The journey follows the chips through the human body which is a system on its own. These two separate but linked sub-systems form a complex system.

The 'Chips' example with its linked sub-systems presents a progression within systems learning.




Figure 12: The first section (How to use this book): **Exploring Systems Thinking with Examples, page 20**

Teacher training to develop systems thinking competence in Mexican high schools

Between 2022 and 2023, as part of The Handprint Initiative project, a series of workshops for teachers was designed and held in Mexico. Based on this material a bridge was created to address the lack of a structured approach in curricula and schools in Mexico for developing systems thinking competence. The aim of the workshops was to understand the 10 steps to systems thinking theory and its adaptability and usability in the context of biology, geography, and ecology subjects. Using the 10 steps, the teachers creatively constructed their own activities of how systems thinking can be taught.

Each workshop was in two parts. The first consisted of developing 10 steps using the potato chips example, in which teachers were given the task of developing each step as if they were their own students. Steps 1–5 focus on identifying and understanding complex reality as a system, while step 6 introduces the concept of sustainability and the SDGs. From this point, the system is analyzed from the ESD perspective by identifying points in the system to change and create options to act. Step 10 assesses the impacts of the strategies and actions.

The process of knowing and understanding the 10 steps can be seen as a path to the top of the mountain (representing the process of acquiring knowledge as well as the ability to look at things from a broader perspective), with steps of different heights and lengths, leading to a higher level. At the top it is possible to identify how systems that integrate our society interconnect (figure 13). This approach also integrates the possibility of going back to expand the comprehension of the system.



Figure 13: The first section (How to use this book): **Structure of the Steps**, page 19

In the second part of the workshops, using the 10 steps, the teachers developed a new example based on the curriculum (figure 14). Working in small teams, the first challenge was to identify a suitable topic in the curriculum in which to use the 10 steps. An important consideration for participants when selecting the theme was to identify how much it related to the reality of their own students.

Regarding the adaptability and usefulness of the workshops, participants reported that:

The material was flexible and suitable for the Mexican context and the official science curriculum;

The steps could form part of a single subject but would be more effective as interdisciplinary work.

Ten Steps towards Systems Thinking is an example of how to design didactical materials that not only foster new approaches to topics in the official curriculum and engage the perspective of both teachers and students, but which can also develop competencies to deal with global challenges.



Figure 14: Teachers' workshops in Mexico City (2022–23)

5 Conclusion

Some conclusions may be offered from the above case studies and their diverse contexts, which may be distilled to three dimensions: 'a disposition to address what may seem to be overwhelmingly complex challenges; an organizational approach to designing teaching and learning resources; and an awareness of socio-cultural context expressed through the pedagogy of the textbook.

DISPOSITIONAL: Responding positively in the face of major social and global challenges

This may take different forms. In the mother tongue case study from Tonga, local values as well as 21C skills represent a foundation for addressing the increasing challenge of disinformation. In foreign language teaching, as evidenced by the Priya project, students' cognitive skills are more advanced than their capacity to express their thoughts. Their language may not allow them to express nuanced observations about positive steps their communities may have taken and can build upon. The project therefore focuses on building students' language around environmental issues and the problems they create, which are easier to express. In the case of the Mexico case study, an approach based on recognizing, evaluating, and acting provides a way to tap into students' own agency in response to societal challenges.

ORGANIZATIONAL: Using teaching and learning materials to organize complex ideas and reflect societal and environmental systems

Frameworks such as the values and 21C skills for the Tongan Language textbook or the development of key competences for sustainability in Mexico provide a way to organize and sequence complex concepts within the practical and manageable format of a textbook. Other organizational strategies include streamlining teaching procedures, as in the materials for *Priya and the Twirling Wind*, whereby full teaching procedures give way to scaled down references so that the substantive information teachers need to better support students is more noticeable.

PEDAGOGICAL: Being aware of the socio-cultural realities of the classroom and the educational context

Teaching and learning materials can clarify complex ideas and help teachers leverage their skills and beliefs to enable learners to engage with each other and the outside world. However, all teaching is conditioned by context. The textbook and teacher's guide can support a pedagogical 'middle pathway' appropriate to context as well as to the curriculum subject. Although the textbook is a vital knowledge resource, it can also support teachers to help students create meaning and thereby develop their own knowledge. As a result, the construction of knowledge is something that both the textbook and teacher's guide facilitate.

We hope that by starting out with a suitable disposition and by adopting a contextualized pedagogy, materials developers in low- and middle-income countries can succeed in turning the complexity of a 21st-century curriculum framework into clear and practical resources that will help teachers and students navigate the curriculum forest and realize the vision of the 2023 Recommendation.

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2.2 Equipping teachers to transform education for a better world

Nele Noe

Abstract

Despite progress in school enrolment across the Global South, improved learning outcomes remain a critical challenge. The UNESCO 2023 Recommendation emphasizes transformative education as crucial for equipping young people with the competencies needed to build a better world. This chapter examines the implementation of transformative education in the Global South within the framework of the Recommendation and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) and highlighting the pivotal role that teachers play as key agents in delivering quality and inclusive education. Drawing on 18 years of experience in teacher professional development in the Global South, the author explores the significant challenges educators face, including inadequate training, limited resources, and large class sizes. The analysis critiques the uncritical transfer of Western learner-centered education models to Global South contexts, advocating instead for context-sensitive pedagogical approaches. It includes nine strategies for effective implementation of transformative education supported by examples from organizations such as STIR Education, Pratham's TARL, PEAS, and Educate!, which demonstrate successful context-specific interventions. In addition, the chapter delves into how teacher education and training programs can be redesigned to equip educators with the necessary skills, knowledge, and mindset to drive the transformative education agenda in the Global South. The conclusion proposes a collaborative "glocal" roadmap that elevates the teaching profession through multi-stakeholder partnerships, addressing local educational needs while aligning with global initiatives, positioning teachers as the critical agents in delivering inclusive transformative education that empowers students to build a more peaceful and sustainable world.

1 Introduction

While there is international consensus that the Millennium Development Goals (2000–15) significantly improved access to schools and student enrolment, especially for girls, this has largely not resulted in improved learning outcomes in the Global South. In 2015, UNESCO declared a global 'learning crisis', emphasizing that access alone is insufficient and highlighted the need for a shift towards actual learning gains in the transition to the UN

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2015–30), and more specifically SDG 4: Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education for All. This ‘learning crisis’, further deepened by the COVID-19 pandemic learning losses, led to the declaration of ‘learning poverty’ by the coalition of international development partners working in educational development, and a general consensus around the need for a stronger focus on promoting learning in foundational subjects, monitoring of achievement to track improvements, and a renewed attention to effective pedagogy as an essential component of quality education.

The UNESCO 2023 Recommendation for Education emphasizes the responsibility of all countries to guarantee ‘the right of quality and inclusive education for all people which is accessible and equitable for all.’ The document specifically defines quality education as ‘transformative, aiming to build not only a strong foundation of basic skills but also enabling the development of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviors which will contribute to construction of a better world, such as 21st century skills, respect for diversity, sense of connectedness and belonging to a common and diverse humanity and planet Earth, empowerment, agency and resilience, citizenship skills, peaceful conflict resolution, media and information literacy, and digital skills.’ Faced with a world full of uncertainty—including the climate emergency, conflicts, destruction and hateful ideologies—transformative education is seen as imperative, in which young people learn knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that will enable them to live peacefully and cooperatively and contribute to a better world.

This chapter focuses on the implementation of transformative education in the Global South particularly in the context of bilateral and multilateral aid agencies and specialist international non-governmental organizations working alongside ministries of education to achieve SDG 4. The term ‘Global South’ has been chosen to refer to low- and middle-income countries, as being less questionable and colonial, although it also has its limitations and may be considered unsatisfactory by some in the field of educational development (Schweisfurth, 2025).

International organizations working in education in the Global South acknowledge that good classroom practices and relationships are central to improving learning outcomes—or actual learning gains—and inclusive education as targeted by SDG 4. Teachers are key agents in ensuring quality of education for all in the classroom setting. Skilled, motivated educators are the most valuable asset for transforming education. Yet, in many Global South contexts, teachers often face significant barriers: lack professional qualifications and limited access to professional development. In addition, global teacher shortages, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as a lack of teaching and learning resources and large class sizes, all put a further strain on educators and the education system as a whole. These challenges raise a critical question: How can these educators deliver the transformative education agenda?

Drawing on 18 years of experience in teacher professional development and in-service training across the Global South, the author argues that context-sensitive solutions to upskilling teachers are essential. In general, teachers’ preparedness for implementing transformative pedagogy and preparing learners for their role as global citizens able to construct a better world in an uncertain future is non-existent to minimal at best. To help realize the vision of the UNESCO 2023 recommendation, the key actors in education systems in the Global South need to be transformed in order to deliver the transformative education agenda. How, therefore, can we prepare teachers in both pre- and in-service programs to deliver this transformative education agenda?

2 What is transformative education?

Transformative education, as defined in SDG target 4.7, aims to motivate and empower all young people, through inclusive and equitable quality education, to develop competencies needed to live cooperatively and peacefully, be flexible, think critically, respect diversity, care for the environment, and make informed decisions. It encourages learners to actively search for solutions to local and global challenges, promoting sustainable development, global citizenship, and health and well-being, in order to build a more peaceful world.

Central to this learner-centered and inclusive, holistic approach to education is the focus on the local context, the quality of the learning environment, the whole school climate, and the broader community. It envisions schools as safe, nurturing, peaceful, and supportive spaces where learners feel ‘at home’, valued, acknowledged, and included, for example by addressing school violence, bullying, and discrimination. In this vision, the school is extended to include the whole community, with fundamental principles such as human rights, inclusion, and sustainability integrated into all aspects of school life from teaching content and methodology, to facilities, leadership, and stakeholder collaboration, taking into consideration the community’s specific local context as defined by the 5th UNESCO Forum on Transformative Education in 2021.

Furthermore, UNESCO emphasizes that transformative education should be experiential and exploratory, engaging learners across cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral dimensions. While transformative education is largely defined in terms of the educational content, there is no universal consensus on prescribed methods or particular practices, techniques and technologies for bringing it to life in the classroom. Transformative education is seen by many Western educators as in line with the ‘best practice’ in pedagogical reform towards learner-centered education (LCE), focusing on inquiry, active learning experiences, curiosity, motivation, cooperation and collaborative problem-solving in the context of an uncertain world. This paradigm shift in education redefines the roles of teachers and learners, with the teacher as the facilitator or creative guide of learning whose main task is not to transmit vast amounts of subject knowledge but to facilitate learning by guiding and supporting students to be active learners who independently collect and critically analyze knowledge. In this transformation, students can explore their interests and curiosities, and the learning is hands-on and interest-driven, allowing students to connect classroom content with real-world experiences.

Schweisfurth (2011) and Tabulawa (2013) question this model of transferring Western learner-centered education (LCE) to Global South contexts, arguing that such models often fail to account for the cultural, political, and resource constraints present in these settings. They point to multiple stories of failure of LCE in different contexts in the Global South due to huge practical barriers such as limited teacher capacity in terms of initial training and access to professional development, teachers who have not experienced LCE themselves and who lack models in their training, and limited or no classroom resources in terms of infrastructure or teaching and learning materials for hands-on learning such as group work, and class size. Even if barriers in terms of teacher training, coaching and mentoring, and the models described above are removed in support of LCE, the contrast with the local classroom reality of centralized curricula and examinations, inspection regimes, and factors such as teacher–learner relationships and culturally appropriate distance between teachers and authorities will undermine successful implementation of LCE by teachers in the Global South. Both Schweisfurth and Tabulawa instead advocate for context-sensitive solutions, believing that what may be seen to improve learning outcomes in one context may be less effective in another.

The question is then: which pedagogical approaches for transformative learning can be included in teaching practices, design of curriculum and assessment, and development of policies in the specific context of education systems in the Global South?

3 What can be the enablers and successful pedagogical elements for transformative education in the Global South?

Since teachers play a vital role in bringing quality education to life, if we want to implement transformative education we need to invest in teachers. Teachers are crucial for supporting the transformation of education systems: they are responsible for delivering curriculum, implementing methodology and pedagogical approaches, and ensuring that learners master the intended learning outcomes and achieve the competencies. This paper will look at how to motivate and support teachers to teach and facilitate transformative learning in the classroom.

The 2023 UNESCO Recommendation emphasizes that ‘Teachers and education personnel play a key role in advancing the aims of the Recommendation as they carry out their educational responsibilities in formal and non-formal settings.’ Teachers have the power to help learners develop the knowledge, skills, values, and behaviors needed to address global challenges and contribute to a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world. According to UNESCO and the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 (2024), ‘Teachers are central to unlocking every learner’s potential and achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 of inclusive, equitable and quality education for all.’ Evans and Yuan (2018) further stipulate that student learning performance and outcomes are directly correlated with effective teachers’ attributes such as their subject and pedagogical knowledge.

In order to play their key role in delivering quality education, all teachers need to enter the profession with ‘adequate, appropriate and relevant pedagogical training to teach at the chosen level of education and be academically well-qualified in the subject(s) they are expected to teach’, as defined by SDG Indicator 4c. However, many educators in the Global South lack qualifications and professional development and therefore are unable to deliver the transformative education agenda. They do not have the knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes. While the most common requirement for teaching globally is a teacher diploma obtained through a teacher training program, these differ greatly by country in terms of theoretical duration, teaching practice ratio, minimum education level required for entry, and the qualification obtained upon completion of the program. Teacher qualifications in the Global South can vary significantly and the minimum required qualifications can be quite basic. Teachers still often enter the profession with limited or no pre-service teacher training especially in rural and remote areas, due to a shortage of qualified teachers, and are often required to teach subject areas for which they have not been trained.

SDG 4c states that by 2030, we must substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries. However, as teachers are not accorded the status of professionals in much of the Global South, their training is not considered essential and due to budget restrictions and cuts is often not prioritized. In most such contexts, the government does not have an in-service teacher training or continuous professional development (CPD) plan for upskilling

all teachers, but instead organizes limited short programs or one-off workshops for small numbers of participants when opportunities are facilitated by international development organizations or aid agencies.

In addition, in many countries in the Global South, such as Egypt, teachers are required to deliver the government-mandated curriculum for each subject area to prepare students for high stakes exams that will assess students' mastery of learning outcomes. Government-approved textbooks strictly adhere to the content of the national curriculum. Time constraints, including many schools with multiple shifts, and interruptions due to political instability or natural disasters all compound the challenge. Therefore, teachers may favor a more lecture-style methodology that enables them to 'cover' curriculum content quickly instead of more experiential and interdisciplinary learning that is not seen as time-effective for exam preparation.

Furthermore, teachers in the Global South are often paid a low salary and in some countries such as Rwanda are obliged to teach far away from their homes, with long teaching hours and a requirement to teach subjects they are not specialized in. Requiring them to attend training at night or at weekends may be too much pressure and therefore even those who have access may not attend at all or may fail to complete the training program. Therefore, even when training is provided, it may not reach those teachers who are the least skilled and need it the most.

CPD in the Global South also varies significantly in terms of factors such as modality (face-to-face, online, blended, coaching, and mentoring), content (subject-specific pedagogy, formative assessment, etc.), duration, and frequency. Access to the programs is limited even when offered in multiple modalities. Often, CPD is offered only face-to-face in major cities. When delivered fully online, teachers need access to digital devices such as tablets or smartphones that they are often unable to afford. Wi-fi and electricity may not be reliable in remote areas.

As a result, CPD often fails to reach more remote areas. For example, the Winter School MINEDU Peru program in 2015 consisted of an intensive residential teacher training program for English teachers in a seaside resort close to the capital city, Lima. PNF (Programa Nacional de Formación) Remote Secondary Teacher Training for Venezuelan English teachers was delivered via synchronous weekly Telegram sessions. Even though it required only limited bandwidth, teachers struggled to attend and participate as they had power cuts, did not own a personal digital device, could not afford data, and had intermittent and poor wi-fi connections. Therefore, teachers in remote areas who lack even initial teacher training and qualifications and who would most benefit from upskilling, are often not served.

Furthermore, programs are limited in terms of duration and funding, with content that is mostly generic, focusing on basic methodology, with limited scope of topics. Due to resource and capacity constraints, teachers who attend training are often not provided with the training materials or support systems to implement the training after attending.

Therefore, to move forward on the transformative education agenda in the Global South, governments, aid agencies and international development organizations will need to reflect on and effectively address the many challenges facing their specific educational context including building the capacity of their teaching staff.

4 How can we implement and support transformative education in the Global South?

Experts agree that successful implementation of transformative education in the Global South must address systemic issues such as funding, teacher training, and curriculum relevance. In such contexts, transformative education can be implemented through a combination of strategies tailored to their unique socio-economic and cultural characteristics. Here are some key approaches:

4.1 Context-specific solutions

Each specific location, country, rural and urban setting, faces distinct challenges and opportunities in terms of implementing transformative education. Therefore, we need to tailor education reforms to address local needs, such as improving access to schools in rural areas especially for girls, targeting school dropouts and out of school youth, etc.

PEAS (Promoting Equality in African Schools) is a not-for-profit organization that builds and runs low-cost secondary schools focusing on inclusive and high-quality education in rural, hard-to-reach communities in Uganda, Zambia, and Ghana with a particular focus on gender equity and reaching adolescent girls. PEAS works with school leaders and senior female teachers in partner schools to create gender-inclusive school cultures, tackle gender inequitable attitudes, and engages the wider community to support girls' education.

Educate!, an international NGO active in Uganda, Rwanda, and Kenya, targets out of school youth and dropouts by introducing employment-focused curriculum subjects in secondary schools and delivering livelihood bootcamps for out-of-school youth, equipping both groups with skills for employment and entrepreneurship with a focus on marginalized rural girls and young women. Evaluations show that graduates earn more than their peers in the comparison group, are more encouraged to run their own business, are more often employed and have better public speaking, leadership, and other job-relevant skills. This impact was significantly greater for girls, according to program evaluations.

4.2 Curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy

We need to ensure that both curriculum and assessment are in line with the transformative agenda, taking into account the specific context of the Global South and the challenges mentioned above.

National and local curricula should be aligned with the competencies and goals outlined in the UNESCO 2023 Recommendation. This involves revising and updating curricula to be more rights-based, teaching children about their rights and responsibilities, and promoting global citizenship, incorporating areas such as Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), Global Citizenship Education (GCED), human rights, social and emotional learning (SEL), and education for health and well-being across all levels and subject areas.

This can be supported by ensuring that teaching and learning materials, such as subject coursebooks, provide content aligned with the competencies and goals such as is currently being done in Tunisia where the new English textbook for grade 6, *Learn and Grow*, was developed by experts from the Ministry of Education, ELT inspectors, teaching advisors and senior teachers familiar with the context and the needs of the population.

The coursebook is aligned with the revised curriculum and supports a competency-based learning model, emphasizing practical application and understanding, aiming to improve communication skills while ensuring diverse learning needs and inclusivity. Context-specific content related to peace education and units related to global citizenship and social and emotional learning (SEL), such as caring for others and keeping fit, target specific life skills such as respect for diversity, active listening skills, and critical thinking preparing students to thrive in the 21st century, according to teachers using the coursebook.

In addition, we need to engage students and schools in local and national festivals, competitions or activities to link knowledge and skills to daily life. In Rwanda, as part of the government initiative to build community, *Umuganda*, some schools have developed community gardens. These gardens serve dual purposes: teaching students life skills such as crop cultivation and healthy eating, while also improving nutrition and fostering community engagement.

We need to focus on improving foundational learning, ensuring that all children achieve basic literacy and numeracy upon completion of primary. To reverse the fall in learning outcomes due to school closures during the pandemic, teachers in many countries of the Global South received targeted professional development in remedial teaching and learning for these critical areas called TARL (Teaching at the Right Level), first developed by Pratham in the early 2000s. This program assesses students in literacy and numeracy and identifies where they are struggling, groups them based on learning levels, and teaches foundational building blocks of literacy and numeracy using simple, engaging, fun and creative targeted daily learning activities appropriate for each learning level/group.

We need to develop and implement assessment tools that accurately measure the competencies and skills emphasized in the Recommendation. Traditional summative assessment such as tests and exams can be supplemented with formative assessment tasks that measure students' ability to successfully complete real-world tasks and receive authentic feedback to improve their skills. For example, in my own experience in the International Public Schools in Egypt, which fall under the Egyptian Ministry of Education, teachers use checklists and rubrics for ongoing self- and peer assessment, promoting student agency.

While there are many challenges with implementing LCE in the Global South, and the Western view may not be suitable as described above, participatory methods such as group discussion, role-play, and problem-solving activities, can be adapted to local contexts, to empower children as active agents in their education. Teacher training delivered by organizations such as PEAS, TARL and STIR Education aims at making learning hands-on, for example by modelling pair and group work and strengthening their 21st century skills such as communication, collaboration, and critical thinking.

4.3 Support teachers

We need to support teachers' autonomy, stimulate collaboration among teachers, and equip them with the skills to deliver transformative education, including critical thinking, global citizenship, and environmental awareness. Teacher pre-service and in-service training will be discussed in detail in the next section.

STIR Education, an international NGO, currently operates programs in 70 locations in India, Uganda, and Indonesia. It creates peer networks where teachers collaborate, share experiences, and support each other, fostering intrinsic motivation and professional growth, often facilitated through community WhatsApp groups.

4.4 Transform learning environments

We need to create a nurturing, supportive, peaceful learning environment in all educational settings. PEAS methodology focuses on Top 10 Teaching Practices which include preparing and supporting teachers to create a climate for learning with a positive and respectful classroom culture that recognizes and praises all students' efforts and embraces mistakes as part of the learning process.

4.5 Inclusion and equity

We need to focus on inclusive education that addresses gender equality, supports marginalized groups, and ensures access for refugee and displaced children. Pratham and PEAS both support inclusive education in rural communities to reach girls and other underserved populations. In addition, local and international NGOs are also rolling out TARL projects in refugee camps globally, adapting the model to meet the needs of displaced learners.

4.6 Community engagement

We need to involve local communities, parents, local leaders, and community members in decision-making processes such as educational planning and decision-making to ensure that education reforms are culturally relevant and widely accepted. PEAS trains school leaders in their school projects in rural communities to create gender-inclusive school cultures, tackle gender inequitable attitudes, and work closely with the wider community to leverage support for girls' education. These school leaders establish school-community partnerships to address barriers like child labor and early marriage.

4.7 Technology integration

We need to leverage technology to bridge gaps in education access and quality, especially in remote areas, and support the implementation of transformative education in line with the UNESCO recommendation. To do so, governments with support from international development partners, must invest in and allocate resources for developing infrastructure and purchasing digital equipment and tools that support the integration of ICT in education.

This includes the following, depending on the specific context:

Digital learning platforms

- We can use mobile apps and online platforms to deliver educational content, especially in remote or underserved areas.
- We can leverage open educational resources (OER) to provide free, high-quality learning materials.

Pratham Education is using WhatsApp in India to deliver weekly activity cards to the lead mother in mothers' groups which target early childhood literacy and numeracy in rural communities.

Assistive technologies

- We can use tools like screen readers, hearing aids, and adaptive devices to support students with disabilities. Many of these devices have free versions for use on mobile phones and tablets.

The British Council, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education in Rwanda, provides secondary teachers who have special educational needs, receiving online teacher training with access to screen readers and technical support.

Solar-powered devices

- We can deploy solar-powered tablets and laptops to overcome electricity challenges in rural areas.

Plan International Uganda has launched a new solar-powered backpack called the Solar Media Bag (SMB), which includes solar panels to power tablets and phones, a projector and speakers and enables teachers and trainers in remote rural areas to turn any space into a classroom with access to resources to transform education.

Radio and television programs

- We can broadcast educational content through radio and TV to reach children without internet access.

During the pandemic, BRAC used Radio School in Bangladesh to support pre-primary education with rhymes, stories, and songs, as well as crafts, physical exercise, and plays incorporating all domains of learning, which were easy for parents to implement at home using materials from the local environment such as pebbles and seeds.

Data-Driven Decision Making (DDDM)

- We can use data analytics to guide immediate informed decisions at various levels such as classroom practices or policymaking. This involves analyzing real-time data dynamically such as student performance and progress, attendance or resource allocation, to identify learning gaps and tailor interventions.

South Africa uses data-driven strategies to improve education quality and enhance its education system. The SAMS (South African Schools Administration and Management System) platform collects data about attendance, learner results, and school performance from schools and learners in real-time. The Data Driven Districts (DDD) dashboard visualizes data from the platform and helps district officials analyze these metrics to support targeted interventions and strategic planning.

Teaching at the Right Level (TARL) uses assessment data from testing children in basic reading and mathematics skills on a regular basis, and classroom observation data focusing on the teacher's skills in delivering the program to track individual child progress, group children, and guide teacher support and training needs continuously.

4.8 Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Robust M&E consists of developing and implementing easy-to-use monitoring mechanisms, collecting feedback from students, educators, and educational stakeholders to measure the performance and impact of transformative education focusing on effectiveness of projects over time. We need to establish systems to track progress to help identify success and challenges and make necessary ongoing adjustments and refine strategies based on outcomes to ensure they effectively address the needs of educators and learners.

VVOB (Vlaamse Vereniging voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking) Rwanda's LEAD (Learning through Effective and Adaptive Data-use) Programme uses a school based and participatory M&E model with data collected by teachers and leaders, those closest to the learners, gathering data on the impact of the program on student learning outcomes from multiple stakeholders. It implements a variety of tools such as classroom observation rubrics, reflective journals, structured self-assessment templates, and reflection during PLCs professional learning communities. VVOB adapts its programming by using insights from M&E, for example by modifying training content, adjusting coaching models, or introducing new tools that better fit the needs of teachers in specific regions.

4.9 Sustainable funding

We need to prioritize education financing by increasing investments from both domestic and international sources. Innovative measures, such as public-private partnerships, can ensure sustainable funding in countries with limited educational budgets.

PEAS builds and runs low-cost sustainable secondary schools and programs, with a focus on inclusive and high-quality education in rural, hard-to-reach communities in Uganda, Zambia, and Ghana, run by Africans for Africans where governments fail to provide education.

TARL provides Ministries of Education and local NGOs with sustainable, low-cost, context-sensitive solutions to implement catch-up foundational literacy and numeracy programs using local teachers and schools.

The approaches described above can help create an education system that empowers learners to contribute to transformative education in the Global South. The next section will zoom in on how teacher education and teacher training can prepare teachers to support the transformative education agenda.

5 How teacher education and teacher training programs can prepare teachers for a transformative agenda

To realize the vision of transformative education, we need to rethink how we prepare teachers. Both pre-service and in-service teacher education and training programs must be redesigned to equip teachers with the knowledge, skills, and mindset necessary to deliver transformative education, fostering critical thinking, global citizenship, and sustainable development, while also addressing the specific challenges of their local contexts. This section outlines key considerations and recommendations for preparing teachers to implement the transformative education agenda.

5.1 Teacher education curriculum redesign

We need to develop teacher training curricula aligned with the competencies and values outlined in the UNESCO 2023 Recommendation, emphasizing 21st-century skills like critical thinking, collaboration, problem solving, and creativity, and integrate topics such as climate change, social justice, and global citizenship to align with transformative education goals.

Governments and educational authorities, in collaboration with educational institutions, NGOs, and other development partners, need to develop multi-year CPD frameworks based on assessment of needs of the local context and create and implement ongoing CPD programs to update teachers' pedagogical approaches, competencies, and digital tools. These programs should be flexible, contextually relevant and accessible in terms of modality and duration and tailored to the needs of teachers at different stages of their careers. They should emphasize reflective practice and the development of professional identity.

The Teach for All Network works to recruit and train teachers for underserved communities in 60 countries including many in the Global South. This organization provides teachers with leadership development training and emphasizes inclusive education practices that can inspire and empower all students to reach their full potential. The community-centered approach supports them in building strong partnerships with local stakeholders to address challenges in their communities.

5.2 Experiential learning

We need to integrate hands-on teaching practices, such as project-based learning and community engagement activities, into teacher training programs. Trainees should be encouraged to work with diverse populations to build empathy, adaptability, and cultural responsiveness.

Educate! provides teachers and administrators at partner schools with experience-based training focused on practical skills and real-world applications. Leadership training includes workshops on decision-making, team management, and fostering a positive school culture. Entrepreneurship education equips educators with tools to teach entrepreneurship skills such as business planning, budgeting, and market research, helping students develop the competencies to start their own businesses. This training also includes strategies for engaging with the local community to create a supportive environment for students

and align educational goals with community needs. The Teach for All Network in Uganda places their trained teachers into underserved, remote marginalized communities where they work alongside local teachers in an effort to provide context-sensitive solutions and upskill and motivate local teachers. Teach for All Fellows are required to organize community-engaging activities as part of their placement.

5.3 Technology integration

We need to train teachers to use digital tools and platforms effectively, especially in low-resource settings, to enhance learning experiences. We also need to promote the use of open educational resources (OER) to make quality education accessible.

British Council online teacher training programs in some countries in the Global South provide teachers with tablets and initiation on how to use them for coursework on digital platforms, attending synchronous sessions, and developing transferrable skills for integrating technology into their classrooms. During these courses, teachers are introduced to open educational resources that they can implement in their teaching practice.

5.4 Continuous professional development

We need to establish lifelong learning opportunities for teachers through workshops, seminars, and online courses, and create professional learning communities where teachers can share best practices and collaborate.

The Teach for All global network enables teachers to exchange ideas and best practices with educators from around the world. This cross-border learning enriches their teaching methods and broadens their perspectives. The network promotes ongoing professional development, encouraging teachers to reflect, adapt, and innovate in their teaching practices.

STIR Education creates peer networks where teachers collaborate, share experiences, challenges, solutions, and support each other. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of community and mutual learning, contributing to intrinsic motivation and professional growth.

PEAS organizes learning walks led by instructional leaders to provide teachers with feedback and identify strengths and key issues for future training workshops.

Other possible opportunities that can be explored to support teacher development include public-private partnerships, community service programs for teachers, and local teacher-led initiatives. While related, the following two approaches serve distinct purposes:

- Public-private partnerships can enable government teachers from the Global South to participate in teacher exchange programs, allowing them to visit international schools within their own country that are already implementing transformative education practices. These teachers can observe lessons, shadow experienced educators, co-teach, and reflect on pedagogical differences. When in-person visits are not feasible, such exchanges can also be conducted virtually if teachers have access to digital devices and reliable internet. This form of exchange supports exposure, learning, and experience-sharing across educational contexts.

- Community service programs, in contrast, involve teachers from international schools volunteering their expertise by visiting government schools to share context-relevant professional development, collaborative lesson planning, and classroom mentoring. These teachers can act as trainers or coaches, supporting government teachers with practical techniques for implementing transformative practices. These service programs can also be organized online, creating sustained partnerships and support networks between schools.

Teachers can also establish local teacher organizations that host professional development workshops focused on transformative education. These organizations can serve as a mechanism to motivate teachers to share success stories and brainstorm solutions to challenges in implementing transformative education in their classrooms.

5.5 Cultural relevance and inclusivity

We need to educate teachers on the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy, ensuring that teaching materials and methods respect and incorporate local traditions and languages. We need to provide training on inclusive practices to support students with diverse needs, including those from marginalized or displaced communities.

We need to equip teachers with an understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy, ensuring that teaching materials and methods reflect and respect local traditions, languages and lived experiences. Teacher training should also include inclusive practices that support students with diverse needs, particularly those from marginalized or displaced communities.

PEAS provides gender-responsive, specialized training for school leaders and senior women teachers to create gender-inclusive school cultures and tackle gender inequitable attitudes. They work closely with the wider community to leverage support for girls' education. Senior women teachers are trained to act as role models and mentors for girls, address gender stereotypes, and provide pastoral support.

STIR Education programs aim to develop an inclusive mindset in teachers, encouraging them to recognize and value the strengths and abilities of each student. Their training programs ensure that teachers are well-prepared to create inclusive learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of their students. They offer ongoing training sessions focused on inclusive teaching practices, classroom management, and strategies to address diverse learning needs. Teachers are empowered as leaders by being equipped with the tools to inspire and support all learners. They are also trained to work closely with parents and local stakeholders to create a supportive environment for students, ensuring that education is inclusive and responsive to community needs.

5.6 Mentorship and support

We need to support newly qualified teachers or those joining the profession by pairing them with experienced mentors who can provide guidance and foster professional growth. It is also essential to offer psychological and emotional support for teachers to help teachers manage stress and maintain their well-being. This helps build a community of practice and promotes continuous learning and improvement.

As part of their ongoing teacher training program, teachers working in PEAS schools and programs are required to conduct peer observations and provide each other with feedback during constructive group discussions. Experienced educators mentor new teachers, offer-

ing guidance on classroom management, lesson planning, and strategies for addressing diverse student needs.

STIR Education works with middle-tier professionals, such as district supervisors or education officers, to ensure that new teachers receive consistent mentorship and guidance.

For example, they conduct regular coaching sessions and workshops for teachers, offering practical advice and strategies for effective classroom management and student engagement. They also visit schools to observe teaching practices and provide constructive feedback, helping teachers continuously improve their methods and adapt to the diverse needs of their students.

5.7 Assessment and feedback

We need to train teachers to use formative and summative assessments to gauge student understanding and adapt their teaching methods accordingly. In addition, we need to encourage reflective practice, where teachers critically analyze their own instructional approaches to improve effectiveness and responsiveness.

PEAS Top 10 Teaching Practices professional development framework emphasizes the use of ongoing assessment and feedback as essential tools for enhancing teaching and learning across their schools.

TARL training programs equip teachers with the skills and tools to regularly assess students' learning levels and progress. Based on these assessments, teachers group students accordingly to ensure targeted instruction and adjust their teaching strategies as needed to meet learners where they are.

By implementing the strategies described above, teacher education and training programs in various contexts have empowered educators to drive transformative change in their classrooms and beyond. While there are many success stories of transformative education initiatives in the Global South, significant challenges remain on the journey towards transformative education. Budget cuts in Ministries of Education and aid agencies, capacity constraints in development organizations, and civil unrest in many regions continue to jeopardize millions of children's access to quality education.

6 Conclusion

As a teacher and an international teacher trainer, I believe that implementing transformative education requires a long-term vision to elevate the status of the teaching profession. This calls for a roadmap built through collaborative efforts from local and international stakeholders such as Ministries of Education, international organizations, teacher associations and unions, Non-Governmental Organizations, private sector and EdTech companies, and academic institutions. Such a roadmap must reflect a sustained commitment of all stakeholders to long-term goals and adopt a 'glocal' approach: addressing local needs while aligning with global initiatives such as UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development, and ensuring that 'teachers' voices' are heard.

The first step toward this Road Map could involve Global South universities collaborating with teacher organizations and international educational experts to conduct a landscape review of successful teacher-led initiatives across countries. This would include close examination of programs such as STIR Education and analysis of their impact. Building on this foundation, stakeholder groups could co-develop a Global South Roadmap for Teachers

that addresses key areas such as minimal teaching qualifications, improved remuneration, and ongoing contextualized professional development. This Road Map would offer a flexible framework for countries to adapt to their own specific contexts and encompass all levels of the education sector. It would promote policies that recognize the teacher as central to quality education and foster collaboration through local and international networks that support educators in implementing innovative, sustainable solutions. The Road Map would also leverage technology and community engagement, while accounting for the contextual constraints and opportunities unique to the Global South. A glocal, multi-partner, Global South Road Map for Teachers would aim to transform student learning by transforming teachers and teaching.

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2.3 A learning assessment vision: The meaning of the UNESCO 2023 Recommendation for Member States

Camilla Adley

Abstract

This paper seeks to understand how learning assessment has been addressed in the UNESCO 1974 and 2023 Recommendations. It highlights the different historical contexts in which the Recommendations emerged, suggesting the 2023 Recommendation addresses learning assessment in detail given the current global testing culture and the obsession with global, quantified educational targets. The paper does this by briefly exploring how international large-scale assessments (ILSAs) emerged, how influential ILSAs have become in education, and reviewing the dangers of flattening and de-complexifying learning in ILSAs. After unpacking the 2023 Recommendation's principles and norms regarding learning assessment, this paper discusses how Member States can adopt these principles and norms although they sit so awkwardly vis à vis the current educational assessment approach and limits. The 2023 Recommendation offers new opportunities for educational assessment to serve education, as opposed to education serving learning assessment politics. It provides Member States with a powerful instrument to demand and re-invent, individually and collectively, a new education assessment approach that contributes to the world we want to build through education – a world where lifelong education helps all people foster 'human rights and fundamental freedoms, global peace, international understanding and sustainable development' (2023 Recommendation, p. 1).

1 Introduction

Anyone acquainted with the 2023 Recommendation is immediately struck by one observation when going back to the 1974 Recommendation: the assessment of learning was never mentioned in 1974. Fifty years later, educational assessment requires full attention.

With UNESCO's *raison d'être* being the idea that peace is first and foremost built in the minds of people, the Organization's two Recommendations spell out what this means in education. The differences between the two Recommendations highlight how UN visionary documents are deep-rooted in their historical context. In 1974, the world was healing its war-inflicted open wounds and seeking a way out of ongoing, global, geopolitical tensions. It thus comes as no surprise that the 1974 Recommendation sets out principles and norms to guide education towards a world of peace, just societies, and the respect of human

rights and fundamental freedoms. The entire document is centered on enhancing ‘mutual knowledge and understanding between different peoples’ (p. 10), promoting ‘tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups’ (p. 3), everyone’s responsibility in maintaining and developing peace (p. 4), and furthering international co-operation. The Recommendation is guided by the idea that education policy must have an international dimension and global perspective; promote respect for all peoples, cultures, values and ways of life; teach intercultural dialogue and interdependence between peoples; develop awareness of rights and responsibilities beyond national borders; educate towards international solidarity, and cooperation, further to the importance of problem -solving from community level all the way to the global level.

Deeply traumatized by war and ongoing geopolitical tensions, the 1974 Recommendation cannot overstate the ‘inadmissibility of war’ (p. 3) and the use of force and violence (Ibid.). It adds that education is about providing everyone with the ability to critically analyze *‘the historical and contemporary factors of an economic and political nature underlying the contradictions and tensions between countries, together with study of ways of overcoming these contradictions, which are the real impediments to understanding, true international co-operation and the development of world peace’* (p. 4). In other words, this first Recommendation focuses on the ‘why and the ‘what’ of the education that can help us build the world we want – *what is the purpose of education?* The Recommendation appears only briefly concerned with the ‘how’. How should we teach this education? How can educational systems ensure they reach their purposes? These questions are largely absent in the 1974 Recommendation.

Fifty years later, the ‘how’ of education has become central.

The 2023 Recommendation is a profoundly changed 1974 Recommendation. This is not surprising with UN visionary documents rooted in their historical context: the 2023 world has undergone deep transformations and is faced with old and new challenges. The historical context shows up in the revised vision for education: it is concerned with peace and human rights and fundamental freedoms, global peace, international understanding, but also sustainable development. The 2023 Recommendation stresses the importance of equipping people with the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviors to participate in democratic processes and the global economy; but also to take action at all levels to maintain, foster and *demand* peace and promote understanding, cooperation, and tolerance. It invites Member States to plan educational systems that ‘valorize, respect and enhance the diversity of knowledge systems, ways of expression, transmission and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, inter alia through the recognition of linguistic diversity, the promotion of intercultural dialogue, the development of multilingual skills, the valorization of languages, notably Indigenous languages and mother tongue languages, and the appreciation of diverse perspectives’ (p. 11). It spells out what this means for educational systems: people are to be equipped through education with analytical and critical thinking, anticipatory skills, respect for diversity, self-awareness, sense of connectedness and belonging to a common and diverse humanity and planet Earth; empowerment, agency and resilience; decision-making skills; collaborative skills; adaptive and creative skills; citizenship skills; peaceful conflict resolution and transformation skills; and media and information literacy, communication and digital skills (adapted from page 6).

The revised Recommendation does not only explain the ‘why’ and the ‘what’ in greater detail, it addresses the ‘how’ in detail. It deals, for example with flexible pathways of education, stressing the importance of non-formal and informal educational settings, different modalities and pedagogies. *And* it addresses assessment of learning. I believe that assessment of learning is addressed so specifically against the drawbacks of the current global testing culture and the obsession with global, quantified educational targets.

The 2023 Recommendation states that accountability and transparency measures *are* necessary, they are not dismissed. However, the questions are what should this accountability and transparency look like and what purposes should it have? The 2023 Recommendation devotes four paragraphs (paragraphs 31 to 34) to this. It states that:

1. Assessment should be used to support learners' continuous and holistic development and well-being.
2. Assessment must be free from any bias – including cultural – and designed to benefit learners and their learning process.
3. Learners should be included in the assessment process through constructive feedback.
4. Different approaches to assessment should be used, in particular, they should be responsive to different contexts and all learners including people with disabilities, belonging to minorities, and vulnerable.
5. Where learning processes, including assessment, are digital, learners' personal data should be protected and should ensure equitable access and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.
6. Assessment should be 'reliable, credible, transparent, trustworthy, adapted to the level of instruction, objective, context-specific and inclusive' (p. 12).
7. Assessment should focus on all areas of learning which include 'cognitive, social and emotional, behavioral and psycho-motor competencies' (p. 12).
8. And finally, assessment should assess systematic and interdisciplinary knowledge as spelled out in the 2023 Recommendation. This includes 'the ability to evaluate and apply knowledge in ways that promote the aims' (p. 12) of the 2023 Recommendation.
9. Finally, all educational processes including assessment, should be transparent, participatory, inclusive, and participatory, from the local to the global level (p. 17).

Although the 2023 Recommendation principles and norms might at first appear obvious and basic, they emerge in the context of the global testing culture and the obsession with global and quantified educational targets which appear to have swallowed education up in the last thirty years. To understand the significance of the 2023 Recommendation, it is worth briefly appreciating how education got swallowed up and with what limits; before returning to the value of the 2023 Recommendation and how Member States can engage with these learning assessment principles and norms.

2 The current educational assessment landscape

The period between the 1960s and the 1990s has been described as a highly decentralized and disorganized education development regime (Mundy 2006). It was only in the second half of the 1990s, that a global conceptual consensus emerged around priorities and measurable targets in education (Ibid.). The global goals and commitments that developed around the year 2000 suggest 'an unprecedented degree of interest in coordination among international aid organizations' (Mundy, 2006, p. 35). This global consensus and search

for measurable targets played a role in the history of the current education assessment landscape.

It is worth adding to this, the spread of New Public Management (NPM) and the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) in the late 1990s. NPM and GERM both emphasize market-oriented and managerial principles which create fertile terrain for accountability and transparency mechanisms. NPM seeks to make public sector organizations more efficient by adopting private-sector management practices. GERM reflects similar principles specifically in education: test-based accountability measures are used to steer educational systems at a distance; curricula are centrally defined and learning outcomes are standardized; the management of educational systems is decentralized; and schools are given greater autonomy (Hargreaves, 2001; Gable and Lingard 2015; Sahlberg 2016). Both NPM and GERM create a fertile terrain for more and more educational assessment.

Back in the second half of the twentieth century, the world of educational assessment was a very different one to the one we know today. The IEA was developing its first large scale studies with the aim of measuring learning outcomes across educational systems. In this same period, the first NLSAs (National Large-Scale Assessments) were emerging. In the United States in 1969, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) was carried out by the Education Commission for the States. NAEP was one of the first NLSAs in the world to test learning outcomes. In the late 1970s, the US Department of Education called for a new NAEP design. Educational Testing Services (ETS³¹) replaced the former NAEP contractor in the 1980s and re-developed NAEP using new methodologies. ETS used psychometric scaling of achievement (technically known as Item Response Theory, or IRT) to measure learning outcomes and connected them to variables in contextual questionnaires. Empirical research (ADDEY 2024) has demonstrated that the approach to educational assessment privileged at ETS in the 1980s then travelled to national assessments in the US and in Canada through the Young Adult Literacy Survey (YALS in 1986), the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS in 1992), and Canadian Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities (LSUDA in 1989). At this time, the IEA was developing ILSAs without adopting the latest ETS developments in educational assessment. As the passionate network of scholars at IEA assembled around TIMSS, they came under pressure to adopt the approach at ETS but could not afford to contract ETS. It was at this stage that the US government offered IEA a way out: it would provide massive economic capital for IEA to carry out TIMSS but there were conditions. These conditions allowed the USA to consolidate the cultural and social capital the ETS had acquired. The community of practice at the IEA had had ongoing substantive theoretical and methodological debates about how to assess learning outcomes. The economic capital that became available for TIMSS settled these debates: the conditions attached to the funding indirectly led the approach at ETS to be adopted (and with it, the choice of one methodological and theoretical approach). The history of ILSAs does not suggest that epistemological questions concerning comparisons had been resolved, they suggest the choices were political. This emerges clearly with the arrival of the OECD in the learning assessment landscape.

In this same period, the OECD made its appearance in the field of international large-scale assessment. Just as the ETS approach had jumped to the international level with TIMSS, it jumped to the OECD's first ILSA in 1994. The OECD started out seeking to measure

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31 Known by its abbreviation ETS, it is the largest private non-profit educational testing and assessment organization.

the active population's (16 to 65 age cohort) literacy and numeracy levels on a continuum. After the OECD had implemented its first ILSA and US funding became attached to TIMSS, the former passionate network of scholars at IEA split: one community assembled around IEA and Boston College (managing TIMSS), and another at the OECD. The OECD community developed the work of Network A (part of INES) which was putting together a data strategy. It was within this context that PISA, an alternative to TIMSS, was developed. Empirical data (Addey, 2024) shows that PISA emerged as a response to a personal struggle between Andreas Schleicher and staff at IEA. Under more pressure from the USA, the OECD used its regulations to resist developing PISA with the TIMSS consortium of contractors. Nonetheless, PISA also relied on the ETS approach. Although the reader may be overwhelmed by the acronyms in these last paragraphs, what they highlight is that: a) *one* approach to educational assessment emerged at ETS in the USA and then spread worldwide³²; and b) this dominant approach to educational assessment is now deployed by two competing IOs: the IEA and the OECD.

What is also noteworthy is that the OECD and the IEA both started out with an approach which acknowledged difference, had an interest in in-depth studies of individual educational systems, were driven by intellectual endeavor, and were research-driven large-scale studies on a broad range of school subjects. Their comparative-performance-data skepticism and philosophical doubt was substituted by a change which Henry et al. (2000) describe as statistical certainty. Empirical accounts clearly show how the OECD and IEA saw a complete shift in their assessment culture (Martens, 2007; Pizmony-Levy, 2013; Addey, 2014, 2018), a 'comparative turn' (Martens, 2007). This comparative shift coupled with the above-mentioned global consensus over the need for measurable, comparable Global Education targets created fertile ground for the current learning assessment landscape which holds a strong grip in the field of education. It is within this context that an ever-increasing number of countries participate in a growing number of ILSAs, and education policy reforms are evaluated, justified and shaped by ILSA rankings and data. ILSAs, and in particular PISA and TIMSS have come to play a central role in the way education is understood, measured and acted upon.

An example of the grip of the current educational approach is the growth of NLSAs. The number of countries implementing NLSAs has grown significantly since 1995 among OECD members (Verger et al., 2020). Although Kamens and McNeely (2010) see the rise of ILSAs and NLSAs as a result of an international consensus about the importance and necessity of system-monitoring testing, Addey and Sellar (2019) and Verger et al. (2020) link the growth of NLSAs to the explosive growth of ILSAs. Ultimately, ILSAs and NLSAs have currently become the dominant way to evaluate, monitor and inform education.

There are multiple reasons why this approach and grip are problematic, and these relate directly to the guiding principles and norms set out in the 2023 Recommendation. ILSA and NLSA instruments are not participatory but were created in secluded laboratories where 'experts' work to transform the plurality of learning into a single story about learning and knowledge (Addey & Gorur, 2020). Flattening and de-complexifying learning carries dangers. As it is ordered, made comparable, and rendered factual, it ends up dominating how we think of learning whilst wiping out all other ways of understanding education. ILSAs and NLSAs are becoming our only framework of interpretation and action-frameworks that a) oversimplify complex educational practices and learning processes (Addey, 2021;

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32 This paragraph draws extensively on my empirical research, published in Addey 2018 and 2024.

Lingard et al., 2016); b) promote a reductionist view of education and neglects its broader purposes (Sjøberg & Jenkins, 2020; Biesta, 2010); and c) undermine creativity, equity, holistic learning and diverse learning needs (Sahlberg, 2011; Zhao, 2018); and d) legitimize hegemonic knowledge systems in education (de Sousa Santos 2014).

One more problematic issue deserves attention: ILSA frameworks, the foundations upon which learning assessment are currently built, have been proven to be both political and limited. ILSA frameworks are the blueprint of ILSAs that set forth what is being tested and why, how it is tested, and what the test results mean and how they can inform policy and practice. A small body of scholarship has addressed how IOs develop ILSA frameworks, suggesting a fraught process. In studying the making of PISA, Gorur describes a process 'rife with debate and contestation' (2011, 82), small groups of experts taking methodological decisions while IOs present the process as plural and participatory, with individual views counting more than scientific evidence. Gorur concludes that 'what seems a monolith, a solid body of knowledge, is a matter of traceable practices' (2011, 90). Chandir et al. (2024) studied the PISA Global Competencies framework, which includes civic literacy, observing how pragmatic and methodological decisions were underpinned by personal worldviews and preferences and privileged 'particular ideologies and policies over others' (2024, 14). Robertson (2021), also studying the PISA Global Competencies framework, states that despite being presented as the fruit of global consultations, the framework is provincial. She finds that 'a web of US-based overlapping connections and interests operate in the shadowlands of the formal OECD PISA processes' (2021, 168) and was influential in shaping the OECD's conceptualization of global competencies—one which encodes a distinctive worldview aimed at 'advancing US state and corporate interests' (Ibid.). Morgan (2007) describes tensions, contradictions, and biases in the PISA framework development and Addey (forthcoming) observes 'big fights' and heated debates over ILSA methodological choices. Scholars have also noted the reproduction of mathematics as utilitarian in the PISA framework (Beccuti, 2024); unexplained differences between ILSA and NLSA frameworks and between revised versions (Kind, 2013); and differing disciplinary conceptualizations (Sivesind, 2014). Lastly, Bottani (1994, 1996), who was involved in developing the framework for the OECD Indicators of Education Statistics (INES), describes the process as political, controversial, full of tensions and power struggles, methodologically limited, creative, and subjective. Noting a general malaise in the development of the frameworks, he concluded 'It was all very risky, and finally we knew we were not doing a serious and solid job' (1994, 349).

What this section shows is how the current educational assessment approach emerged and came to have such a strong grip on education, but also the limits of the current approach to educational assessment. I believe it is in response to this strong grip and the limits of educational assessment that the 2023 Recommendation dedicates multiple paragraphs to learning assessment.

3 Concluding remarks

The question therefore is how can Member States adopt the 2023 Recommendation's principles and norms about education assessment which sit so awkwardly with the current educational assessment approach and limits? How can the infrastructures and processes of learning assessment do justice to a plural understanding of learning that equips all people with knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviors which 'valorize, respect and enhance the diversity of knowledge systems, ways of expression, transmission and

safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, inter alia through the recognition of linguistic diversity, the promotion of intercultural dialogue, the development of multilingual skills, the valorization of languages, notably Indigenous languages and mother tongue languages, and the appreciation of diverse perspectives' (p. 11)? How can learning assessment contribute to learning analytical and critical thinking, anticipatory skills, respect for diversity, self-awareness, sense of connectedness and belonging to a common and diverse humanity and planet Earth; empowerment, agency and resilience; decision-making skills; collaborative skills; adaptive and creative skills; citizenship skills; peaceful conflict resolution and transformation skills; and media and information literacy, communication and digital skills? (adapted from page 6). Learning assessment as we know it today – a social process which is political and limited – is challenged by such holistic and humanistic purposes of education. Nonetheless, the 2023 Recommendation's guiding principles and norms listed above in 9 points are a good starting point to transform learning assessment.

How can Member States go about this? The answer, I suggest, is to be found by each Member State as it returns to the very purpose of education in their own context. *What is the purpose of learning for our people? How can assessment help us get there?* It is likely that the 2023 Recommendation's guiding principles and norms align more closely with the purpose of education in each Member State, than the politics and limits of today's learning assessment approach. As a consequence, the 2023 Recommendation offers new opportunities for educational assessment to serve education, as opposed to education serving learning assessment politics. The 2023 Recommendation provides Member States with a powerful instrument to demand and re-invent, individually and collectively, a new education assessment approach that contributes to the world we want to build through education – a world where lifelong education helps all people foster 'human rights and fundamental freedoms, global peace, international understanding and sustainable development' (p. 1).

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2.4 You've got MAILL: A framework of possibility

Dylan Wray

Abstract

As artificial intelligence increasingly shapes how information is created, distributed, and consumed, students need enhanced skills to navigate this evolving landscape. This paper introduces the Media, Artificial Intelligence, and Information Literacy (MAILL) Framework of Possibility, which provides educators with a structured approach to integrate essential AI literacy concepts into established Media and Information Literacy teaching. Drawing on UNESCO's AI Competency Framework for Students and key MIL competencies that UNESCO has identified over the years, the MAILL Framework identifies natural intersection points between these domains and offers classroom activities for practical implementation. This integration responds to UNESCO's 2023 Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, which calls on nations to build citizens' AI literacy 'through open and accessible education and media and information literacy' so that technology enhances rather than undermines learning and communication. Through case studies of teachers in Indonesia and Kazakhstan already navigating these challenges, the paper demonstrates how this integration addresses urgent educational needs without requiring entirely new curricula. The framework offers a practical entry point for teachers to help students critically evaluate AI-generated content, understand human agency in AI systems, and use AI tools ethically and responsibly.

1 Introduction

Sari Ayu Mahgdalena is a primary school teacher in Medan, Indonesia. She is also the founder of a teacher community called Marsiajar that helps teachers in her community improve their digital capabilities and Media and Information literacy. Right now, they have a particular focus on using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education.

In 2022, when ChatGPT 3.5 was launched, a Grade 5 student forced Sari to look more closely at how AI was beginning to enter her classroom:

I remember it well. This was when GPT-3.5 was the most advanced version. I asked my students to write an essay about science—specifically about embryo development. I told them they could gather information from various sources as long as those sources were valid.

One of my grade five students submitted an essay. The content was correct, but at the top, it included a note saying, 'This essay was made by GPT.' Back then, ChatGPT would sometimes add those disclaimers. I asked her if she used ChatGPT, and she admitted it. She explained, 'I didn't cheat on my friends, and I put in effort to use ChatGPT as a tool. Isn't that valid effort?'

Chandan Pal Singh is a physics, English and Computer Science educator originally from India. He is currently working at a school in Kazakhstan where Media and Information Literacy is an important part of his teaching:

I have more concerns than excitement. I recently started teaching English to grade 7 students. In our policy, students in grade 7 can bring their mobile phones. When I talk to them, I see that they often use ChatGPT to just answer me. I'm definitely concerned that it's affecting their learning, critical thinking, creativity, and more. So yes, it's a concern for me.

Sari and Chandan could have taken the stance that many teachers, schools and governments took early on - to ban ChatGPT and other AI tools. Instead, because they realized the importance of this arrival and what it means for teaching and learning going forward, they chose to face it.

'That made me reflect,' recalled Sari about what her Grade 5 student said to her:

She saw using ChatGPT as legitimate effort. It wasn't about cheating. It challenged me to rethink my approach. I realized I needed to change and improve my skills to help students use technology responsibly and effectively.

'I've been doing a lot of flipped classroom learning,' recalled Chandan of his response:

In these sessions, when students use ChatGPT to find solutions, I display their solutions on the board. I ask them what they can learn from those solutions and how they can improve them.

This is a reverse learning approach. Instead of solving a question, they analyze a solution. I change the parameters or styles of the solution, and they learn how to approach different kinds of questions from that one solution. It's a small step in this big AI-driven world.

While Chandan and Sari are just two teachers, they do provide a window into the seismic shifts in education that are emerging with AI. Their experiences, coming from such different contexts—Indonesia and Kazakhstan—reflect wider global trends, where educators around the world are grappling with similar challenges as AI begins to transform what we know about teaching and learning. The impact of the very rapid developments in generative AI, such as ChatGPT, Claude AI, Gemini and DeepSeek, requires teachers to develop a new mindset—one that Chandan and Sari demonstrate—of curious caution to approach the possibilities while thinking deeply about the challenges. It is experiences, concerns, and reactions like theirs that highlight not only the need for AI Literacy (AIL) in schools, but also for increased attention on ensuring Media and Information Literacy (MIL) has a valued place in curricula across the world.

This chapter examines the urgent need to integrate AI literacy into existing media and information literacy education. Building on UNESCO's long-established work in the field of Media and Information Literacy (MIL), and drawing on their existing competencies and frameworks for MIL and AIL (AI Literacy), this chapter introduces what I have called the **MAIIL Framework of Possibility**. This Framework provides a structured approach to help teachers navigate this new reality where AI, media and information have become inseparably intertwined. It is not intended to replace existing MIL curricula or serve as a complete guide to AI Literacy. Rather, it offers educators and policymakers a practical way to integrate essential AI literacy concepts into established MIL teaching, drawing on, as I will show, UNESCO's valuable work in both areas.

While the call for a closer integration between MIL and AIL is neither new nor unique, the hope is that this Framework provides educators and policymakers with practical ways to move quickly forward in this integration—contributing to the broader goals outlined in UNESCO's *2023 Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*.

2 Building from before

For a number of years, UNESCO has created important guidelines, handbooks, and curricula to support the teaching of MIL in schools across the world. Chandan and Sari have both drawn on this support in their teaching of MIL, especially during and post the COVID-19 pandemic which brought with it a dangerous increase in fake news and misinformation through social media. More recently, UNESCO has published AI Frameworks for students and educators to guide how AI Literacy can be brought into schools and curricula. While each of these literacy pillars are important in their own right, it is now time to look at what is possible when these literacies merge. For sure, MIL already looks at things like how AI drives the algorithms that decide what content we engage with on social media. But, given the fact that so much of the information and media we already encounter (which will only increase exponentially in the future) has been created by or with AI, a merging of MIL and AIL is becoming increasingly necessary.

I am not alone in recognizing this need and calling for a closer relationship between MIL and AI. UNESCO's *2023 Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence* calls on all nations to build citizens' AI literacy 'through open and accessible education and media and information literacy', so that technology enhances rather than undermines how we learn and communicate. The recommendation's preamble explicitly recognizes 'the profound and dynamic positive and negative impacts of artificial intelligence (AI) on societies, environment, ecosystems and human lives, including the human mind, in part because of the new ways in which its use influences human thinking, interaction and decision-making and affects education, human, social and natural sciences, culture, and communication and information.' Without ethical guidelines, AI can distort knowledge by amplifying biases, spreading misinformation, and eroding trust in information sources. At the same time, it highlights AI's potential to advance social justice and human development—provided that people are equipped with the critical skills to engage with it thoughtfully.

While these Ethical Guidelines don't specifically call for a merging or integration of MIL and AIL, they do emphasize their complementary relationship. The guideline states that:

Public awareness and understanding of AI technologies and the value of data should be promoted through open and accessible education, civic engagement, digital skills and AI ethics training, media and information literacy and training...

It further recommends investment in ‘digital and media and information literacy skills to strengthen critical thinking and competencies needed to understand the use and implication of AI systems, in order to mitigate and counter disinformation, misinformation and hate speech.’

This UNESCO Recommendation reflects the reality that citizens need both sets of competencies simultaneously to navigate an information ecosystem where AI increasingly shapes, creates, and distributes media content. The recommendation’s emphasis on promoting both areas together adds weight to the argument that these previously separate domains are now inextricably linked in practice, even if they might remain distinct in educational frameworks.

Kenyan education researcher Miriam Ndungu (2024) has proposed ‘integrating AI literacy components into existing media and information literacy (MIL) programmes’ (Ndungu, 2024) in higher education settings. Her framework maps AI literacy concepts to the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (ACRL, 2015), positioning academic libraries and librarians as natural leaders for this integration. While Ndungu’s approach focuses on university students and library-led initiatives rather than K-12 classroom teachers, her work reinforces the growing recognition that these previously separate literacies now require deliberate integration to help learners navigate our AI-influenced information ecosystem.

Organizations like Digital Promise have developed their own AI Literacy Framework that similarly recognizes the natural connections between digital readiness, media literacy, and AI competencies. Their framework emphasizes understanding AI’s capabilities and limitations, evaluating AI technologies for ethical implications and biases, and using AI tools responsibly—components that naturally align with traditional media literacy goals of critical evaluation and ethical use of information. Digital Promise’s core values of maintaining human judgment and centering justice in AI interactions further echo MIL principles, reinforcing the argument that these previously separate domains now require an integrated approach.

3 The evolving media and information landscape

Like many teachers across the globe, Sari and Chandan have both been teaching Media and Information Literacy (MIL) for a number of years. At its core, MIL is about learning the skills to understand, question, and use media and information wisely.

Chandan sees firsthand what can happen when these skills are missing in the classroom:

I think it’s a concern for me. It’s basically a flood of information, and mostly people just trust TikTok or social media—whatever information comes to them. They rely on fast information, fast access, rather than going to specific websites, Wikipedia, or trusted sources. So, yes, it’s definitely a concern for me, whether it’s in India or Kazakhstan.

In an MIL class, students explore the creation, access, and distribution of media and information, and how all of this impacts us. They understand the ethical considerations in accessing and sharing information, they learn skills to communicate effectively using

various media platforms, and they develop the ability to critically analyze and evaluate the media and information they encounter and create each day.

For Chandan, developing critical thinking skill is central to MIL:

In the actual nuts and bolts of it, I've been trying to enhance their critical thinking skills. We always ask them to question themselves: 'What are the sources of the information you are posting on social media? Is the information credible or non-credible? Is it ethical or not?'...

So, I guess critical thinking is the key. When we try to put this into practice, the students learn what is important, how to do it, and what the consequences are—how it's going to affect things. For example, the concept of the digital footprint is something I always talk about during my lessons. Whatever they are doing online, they should know how these skills can help them understand and make them better digital citizens.

A 2023 study in Turkey found that students with higher levels of media literacy and critical thinking were significantly better at detecting fake news on social media (Orhan, 2023). The research suggests that media literacy education, particularly when combined with an emphasis on reasoning and evaluation skills, has a measurable impact on students' ability to navigate today's complex information environment. This reinforces the importance of critical thinking within MIL, as Chandan advocates, as an important part of the response to the challenges posed by both traditional and AI-generated media. In another study from Jordan, university students who completed a MIL course demonstrated a 'statistically significant improvement in students' abilities to recognize and respond to fake news using more analytical and evidence-based strategies' (Al-Qudah & Alsmadi, 2022).

Studies like these show that MIL is valuable, can work and can have a positive impact, especially when it focuses on critical thinking. From Sari's perspective in Indonesia, MIL seems to be working:

A lot of young people in Indonesia have become more aware of fake news and are learning to filter it better. This awareness has spread among students, especially in the last year. For me, this has been especially true for my students and those in my community...

However, she notes that with the emergence of generative AI, the dangers of misinformation, hate speech, and mistrust in news and online content has intensified:

When it comes to AI-generated content, things are getting more 'spicy,' if I can describe it that way. AI is making things more advanced and complicated. It's becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between real and AI-generated content.

But it is not just that students are finding it harder to navigate through the fake news and misinformation. AI now offers them the opportunity to more easily be creators of content, as Chandan points out:

I think there's something new we need to teach, unique to the AI world. In the past, creating fake content required Photoshop or specific skills. Now, with AI, anyone—including students—can create fake news or deepfake videos in seconds.

So, it's not just about analyzing what others create. We're also teaching students that they are now creators. With AI, they have the tools to produce content that looks real. This brings a new responsibility—to not only analyze content critically but also to think ethically about what they create and share.

While it is clear that the skills and behaviors that MIL has been advocating for are still important and needed now more than ever, the rise of AI within media and information has meant that these skills need to be amplified and perhaps refashioned. For example, before AI, students in an MIL lesson learned to check if a website or news source was credible by looking at the author, sources, and publication date. Now, they need to verify AI-generated images, videos, and texts, using tools to detect deepfakes and AI-generated misinformation.

Before Artificial Intelligence, students in an MIL lesson learned to identify bias in traditional news sources by examining language, tone, author, and the perspectives included or excluded in an article. Now, with AI, they need to recognize that AI-generated content can also have built-in biases, shaped by the data it was trained on. This means they must evaluate not just the message, but also how AI systems have been created and how the information has been filtered to them—understanding that these filters may create gaps in what they know.

As a final example, to reiterate the shift in skills needed, students in an MIL lesson create reports, videos, and blogs by conducting their own research, gathering sources, and forming their own arguments. Now, with AI, they have access to powerful tools that can generate text, images, and videos in seconds. This means they must learn how to use AI ethically—understanding when and how to credit AI-generated content, verifying the accuracy of AI-assisted research, and ensuring they do not spread misinformation or, importantly, rely too heavily on AI instead of developing their own critical thinking and creativity.

The issues that teachers like Chandan and Sari see in their classrooms every day are now widely recognized as a major educational priority, requiring significant changes in how we approach media and information literacy education – a need directly addressed by the UNESCO 2023 Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, which urges Member States to:

invest in and promote digital and media and information literacy skills to strengthen critical thinking and competencies needed to understand the use and implication of AI systems, in order to mitigate and counter disinformation, misinformation and hate speech.

4 AI literacy

UNESCO's Recommendation acknowledges the need for formal AI education, calling on Member States to:

develop, in accordance with their national education programmes and traditions, AI ethics curricula for all levels, and promote cross-collaboration between AI technical skills education and humanistic, ethical and social aspects of AI education.

In support of this call, in August 2024, UNESCO released the *AI Competency Framework for Students* to help educators teach AI literacy, ensuring that students are prepared to engage with AI responsibly and effectively in everyday life. The framework does not specifically define AI literacy and, in fact, cites UNESCO research showing that many countries have differing definitions of AI literacy. However, from the framework, we can distill several core components that UNESCO considers essential to AI literacy:

- **A basic understanding of AI**, which means recognizing what AI is and what it is not. It involves understanding how AI works with data and algorithms and how it is applied in society and daily life.
- **A human-centered approach to AI**, which emphasizes that AI is created by humans to serve human needs. Students should understand that humans must maintain control and agency when using AI systems.
- **An ethical awareness of AI**, which involves recognizing key ethical issues such as bias, privacy concerns, and the potential harmful impacts of AI on individuals, communities, and the environment.
- **A critical evaluation of AI**, which means developing the ability to question AI tools, verify AI-generated content, assess the trustworthiness of AI systems, and determine when AI should or should not be used.
- **Responsible creation with AI**, which requires students to learn how to use AI tools ethically and effectively, including how to create responsible prompts, verify outputs, and appropriately credit AI assistance.
- **Adaptive learning in AI**, which focuses on building foundational knowledge that allows students to continuously adapt to new AI technologies and maintain a life-long learning approach to AI.

The *AI Competency Framework for Students* itself aims to guide education systems in preparing students to become responsible participants in our increasingly AI-driven world. It serves as a global reference that countries can adapt to their own contexts, equipping students with the necessary values, knowledge, and skills to both use and co-create AI. Ultimately, the Framework aims to encourage and develop students to become leaders in shaping the future of AI in a more ethical and human-centered way.

At its core, the framework helps educators integrate AI learning into school curricula through a structured approach that outlines competencies across four key dimensions: Human-centered mindset, Ethics of AI, AI techniques and applications, and AI system design. Beyond just teaching technical skills, it seeks to shape responsible citizens who can critically engage with AI while promoting approaches that are ethical and effective in educational settings.

This vision is already being reflected in Sari's classroom where she is grappling with how to integrate AI into her teaching while ensuring students use it responsibly:

In my class, I don't prohibit the use of ChatGPT as long as they develop their own prompts and double-check the information it provides. Verification is key. So, when students use GPT, I feel it's both an opportunity and a challenge. It's my job to guide them on how to use it properly, which also means I need to improve myself as a teacher.

So, on the one hand we have Media and Information Literacy, and on the other, we have AI Literacy. Both are crucial given the world we live in today. However, students cannot effectively navigate today's information landscape without understanding both traditional

media literacy principles and the AI systems that increasingly shape, create, and distribute that media. Of course, in many countries there is little immediate possibility of introducing a new subject called AI Literacy.

Yet, students and teachers are currently using AI tools. Waiting for a systemic curriculum change that involves introducing a brand new subject is, quite frankly, unreasonable and irresponsible. In the few years that it would take to develop such curricula, hire and train teachers, and create resources, AI will become even more deeply embedded in teaching and learning – and not all of it will have been responsibly, ethically, and academically integrated into educational practices. While governments might, and perhaps must, see comprehensive AI literacy as an eventual aim, in the short term, looking toward MIL as a temporary home (or seeing AI literacy as an enhancement to MIL) may be the most practical next step.

Chandan's observation reinforces this perspective:

We can't remove AI, machine learning, blockchain, or new technologies. But as teachers, we can change our practices, methodologies, and how we teach. As the world evolves and technology advances, we also need to adapt our teaching styles.

Therefore, exploring ways to bring key aspects of AI literacy more deliberately into the existing foothold that MIL has established represents a pragmatic and immediate step forward. There are compelling natural intersection points where these domains already overlap and reinforce each other. These intersections between MIL and AI literacy competencies form the foundation for this new integrated approach: the MAILL Framework of Possibility.

5 The MAILL framework of possibility

To support teachers to more easily explore what is possible when they deliberately connect AIL to MIL, I created the Media, Artificial Intelligence and Information Literacy (MAILL) Framework of Possibility. The MAILL Framework offers teachers and policy makers a structured way to enhance existing MIL practice with essential AI literacy concepts that students urgently need. It is not intended to replace existing MIL curricula or serve as a complete guide to AI Literacy. Rather, it offers educators and policymakers a practical way to integrate essential AI literacy concepts into established MIL teaching, drawing on, as I will show, UNESCO's valuable work in both areas.

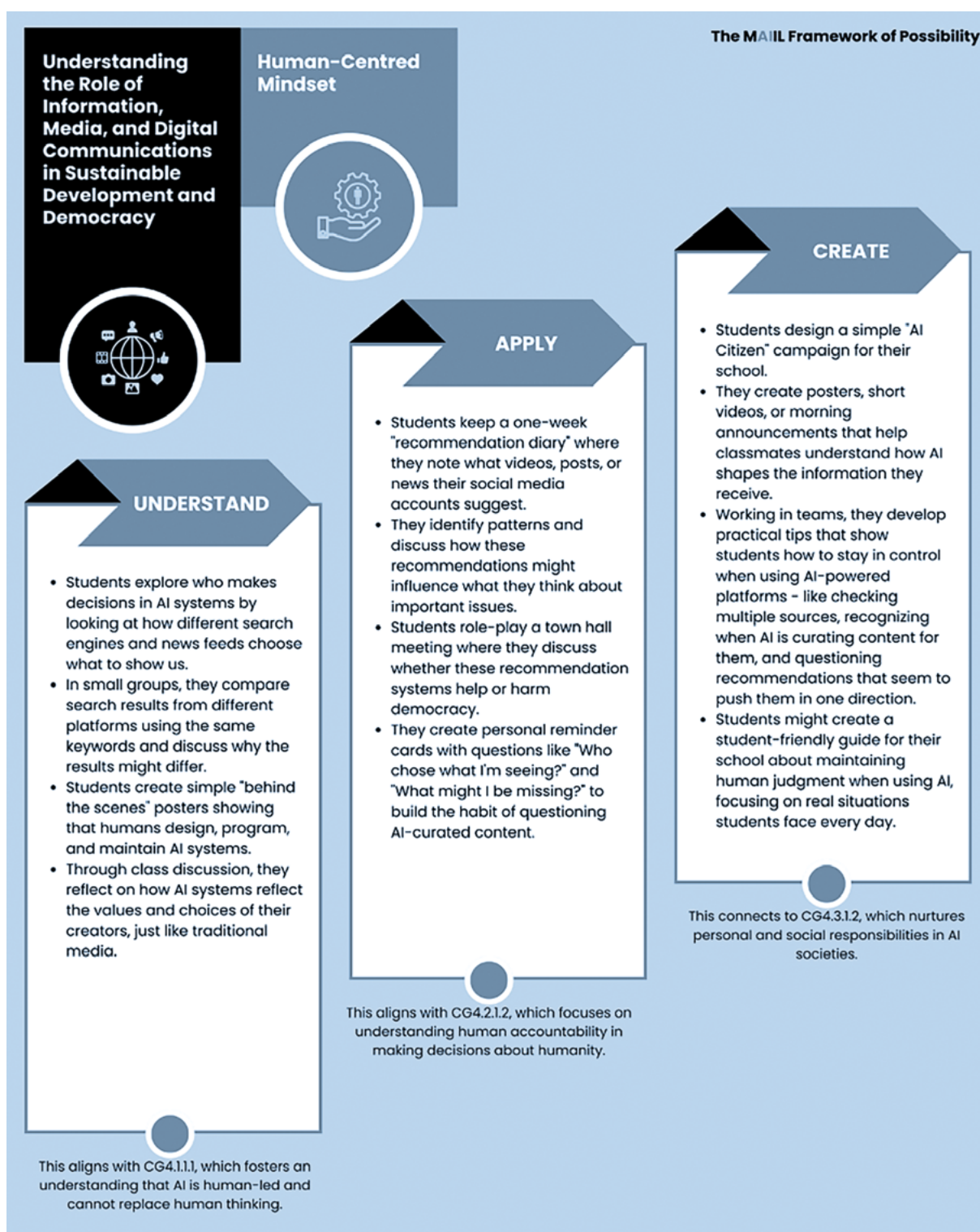


Figure 1: The MAIL framework of possibility

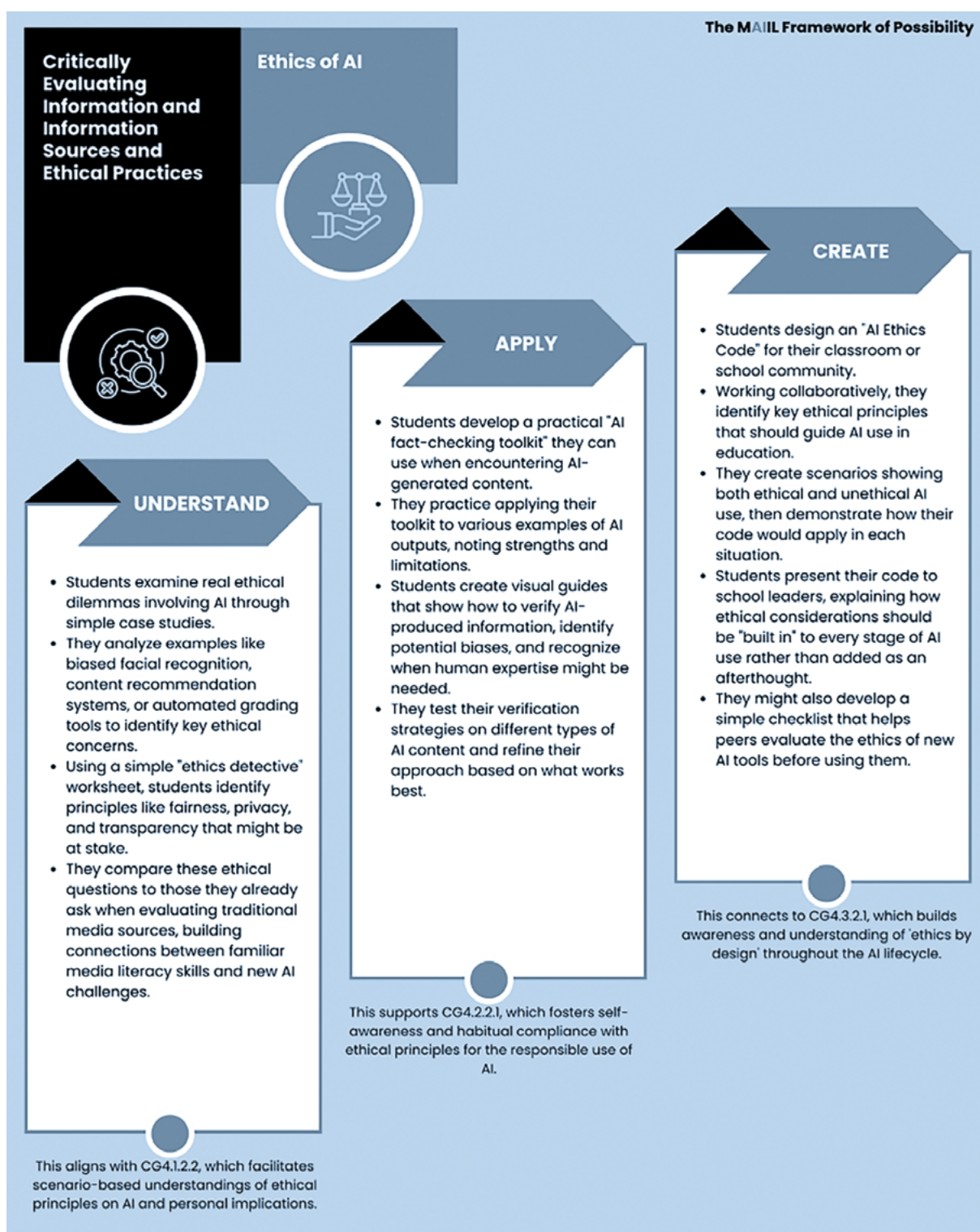


Figure 2: The MAIL framework of possibility

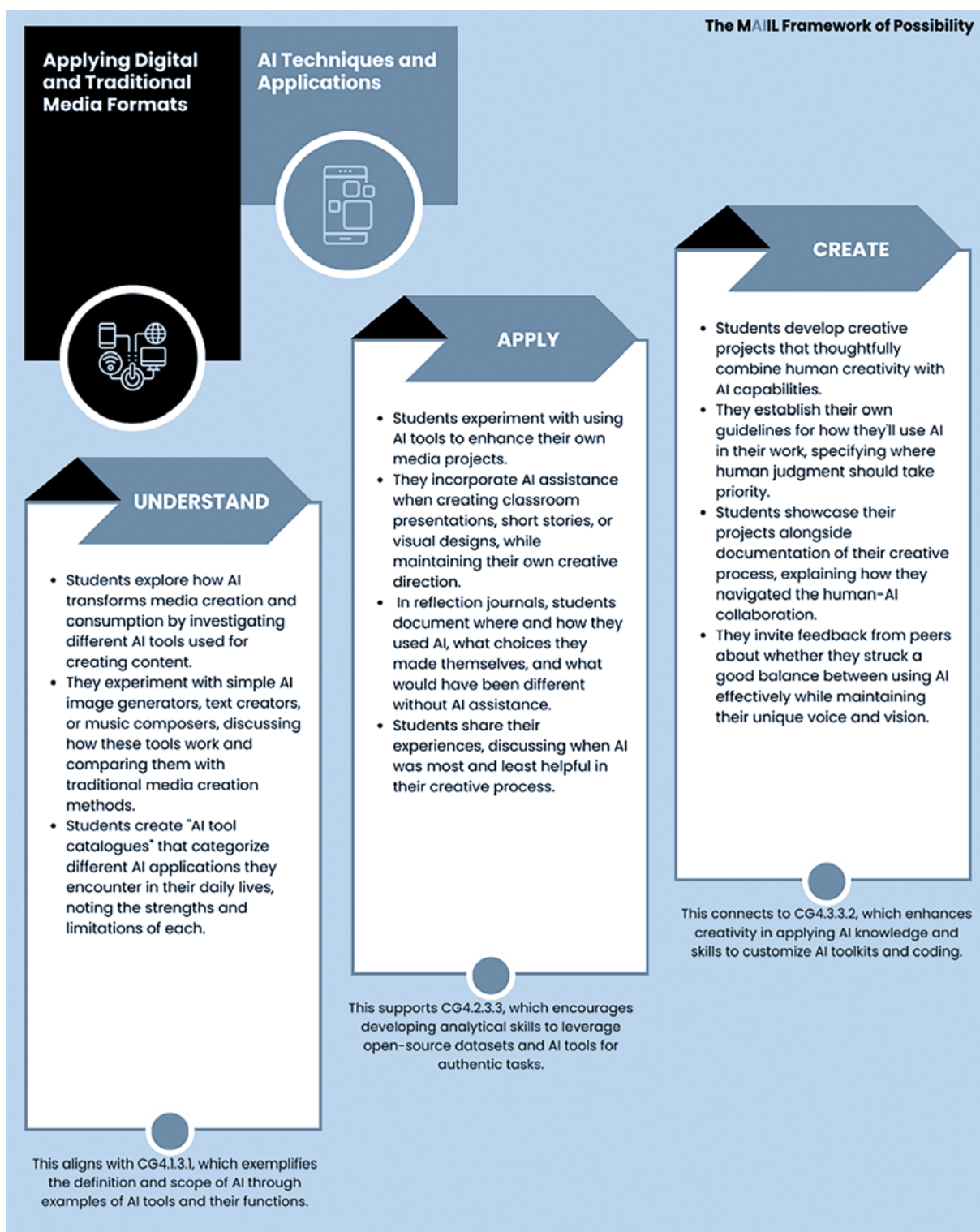


Figure 3: The MAIL framework of possibility

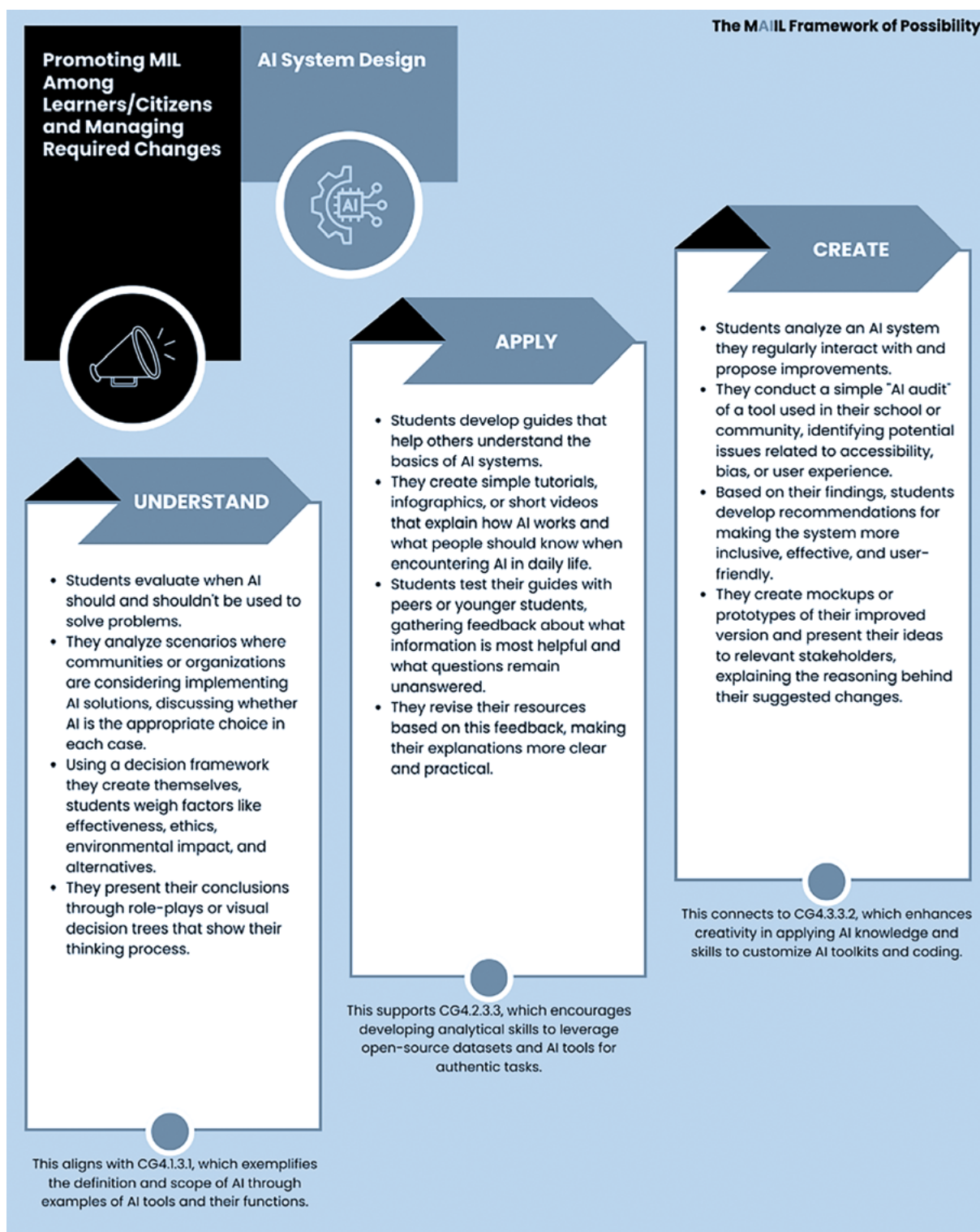


Figure 4: The MAIL framework of possibility

6 Creating the MAILL framework of possibility

6.1 Lifting the curtain

Throughout the development of the MAILL Framework, I used AI tools like Claude AI and NotebookLM as collaborative partners – essentially, as thinking partners to help me refine and test my ideas. This approach models how I believe we should all work with AI: as a helpful tool, but with humans making the final decisions. The MAILL Framework wasn't just created to teach about AI; I developed it *with* AI.

I structured this work in three connected phases. First, I mapped existing competencies from both the MIL and AI literacy fields, looking for natural points where they reinforce each other. Then, I used multiple AI systems to test these connections, deliberately challenging my initial pairings to ensure they weren't just confirming my existing beliefs. Finally, I worked with AI tools to develop classroom activities that connect both literacy domains in authentic ways. Throughout this process, I remained the critical decision-maker, evaluating suggestions, verifying alignments, and ensuring the framework genuinely serves educational needs.

As you will see, in describing how I created the MAILL Framework, I have been transparent in how I used these AI tools and have included screenshots of some of the collaborative process. I'm doing this for two main reasons: to build trust in the framework's validity and to provide a model for educators on how they can responsibly integrate AI into their own curriculum development. I hope this also gives teachers and policymakers ideas and approaches for adapting or extending the framework to their specific context and needs.

This process wasn't just about creating the framework; it demonstrates the kind of AI literacy that the UNESCO *AI Competency Framework for Students* encourages (and which I support) – using AI tools thoughtfully and critically, checking what they produce, and always keeping the human in the loop, drawing on our judgment, knowledge and thinking throughout. As Sari wisely pointed out, 'AI shouldn't just be a tool for fun or a shortcut to complete assignments quickly; it has to be used meaningfully.' And that meaningful use is exactly what I'm trying to demonstrate here.

6.2 Match-making

In order to create the MAILL Framework I began with the seven key Media and Information Literacy competencies that UNESCO has identified in their numerous resources for educators on MIL.

The seven competencies are best illustrated in one of UNESCO's most recent MIL publications, *Think Critically, Click Wisely* (2021). The competencies are:

- Understanding the role of information, media, and digital communications in sustainable development and democracy
- Understanding content and its uses
- Accessing information effectively and efficiently and practicing ethics
- Critically evaluating information and information sources and ethical practices
- Applying digital and traditional media formats
- Situating the sociocultural context of information, media, and digital content
- Promoting MIL among learners/citizens and managing required changes.

I then turned to the four AI literacy competencies that UNESCO has identified in the recently released *AI Competency Framework for Students*. These are:

- Human-Centered Mindset
- Ethics of AI
- AI Techniques and Applications
- AI System Design.

Both of these resources, incidentally, are essential reading and tools for educators and policymakers interested in MIL, AI and, of course, the possibility for intersection in classrooms.

With these competencies side by side, I identified what I thought were the most natural and easy intersections. Because there are only four AIIL competencies, I decided to narrow the MIL competencies down to the four most obvious.

The pairings I identified are illustrated in the table below and will be explained in detail later on in this chapter.

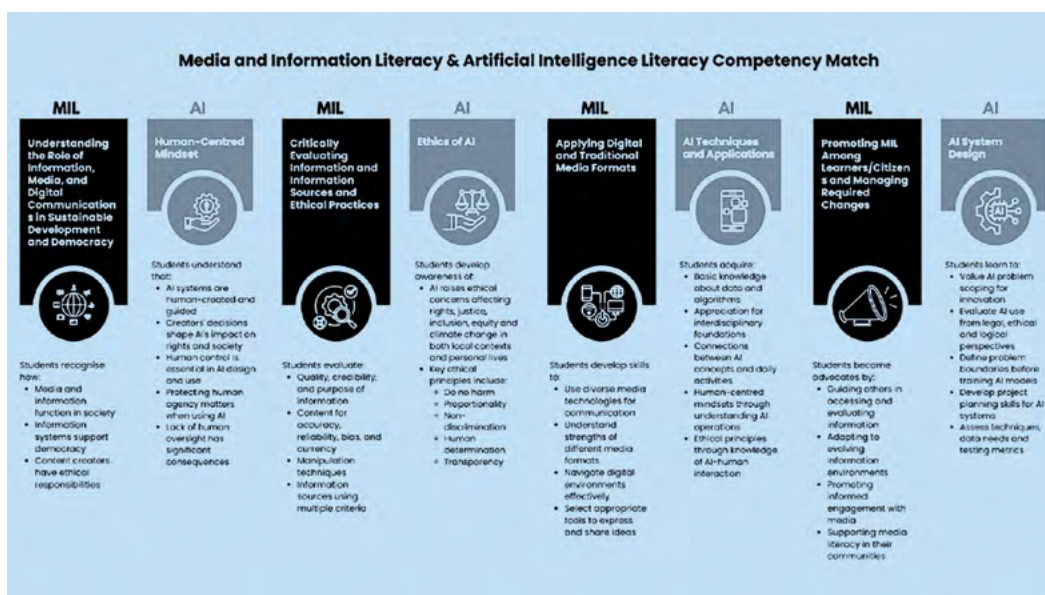


Figure 5: The MAIL framework of possibility competency match

To check my pairings, I used Claude AI, ChatGPT and NotebookLM. The general process I followed was to upload PDF extracts from the UNESCO publications that dealt with the competencies. So, for instance, I asked Claude AI to decide what it thinks are the most obvious and easiest pairings for teachers to focus on if they were wanting to bring some AI literacy into the existing teaching of MIL. In order to not create the situation where Claude AI may want to please me and then just confirm my pairings, I asked what it thought are the best pairings before sharing mine.

The screenshots below show that Claude AI and ChatGPT chose the same pairings that I had originally believed were a natural fit. This gave me confidence in what felt to me as the most obvious match. What was also helpful about this process was that I was able to ask these AI systems to explain the matches. In most cases, this helped me better articulate

the explanations of the pairings that follows later on in this section. Of course, there is still room for interpretation and educators or policymakers may decide that for their particular circumstances and context a different pairing of MIL and AIL competencies is better suited.



Figure 6: Screenshot of Claude AI pairing results 1

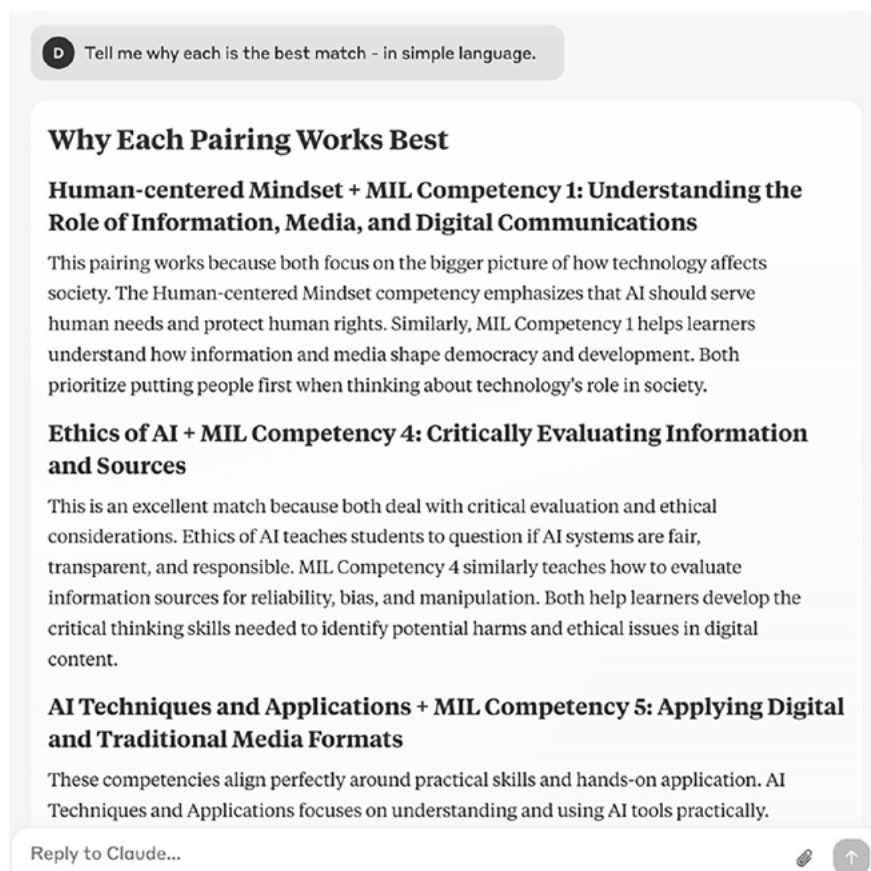


Figure 7: Screenshot of Claude AI pairing results 2

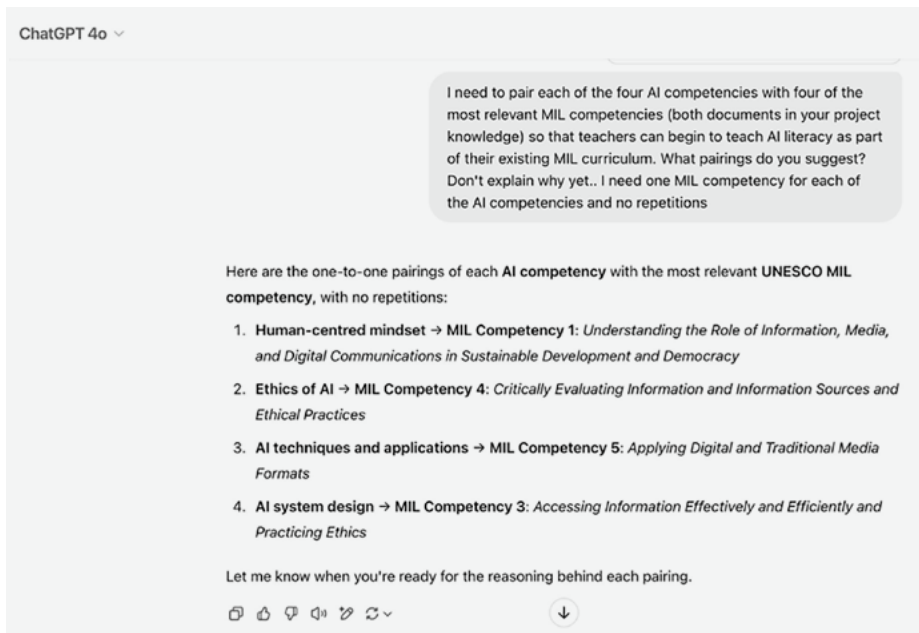


Figure 8: Screenshot of ChatGPT pairing results

To do a final check on my pairings, I went back to Claude AI and gave it the same instructions in a new conversation. This time, as you can see from the conversation screenshots below, it suggested a different pairing.



These pairings connect the AI and MIL competencies in ways that align their core focuses and learning objectives:

1. **Human-centered mindset + MIL Competency 1** (Understanding the Role of Information, Media, and Digital Communications): Both emphasize understanding technology within broader societal contexts and democratic values. The human-centered mindset in AI focuses on human agency and citizenship in the AI era, while MIL Competency 1 addresses how media and information function in sustainable development and democratic societies.
2. **Ethics of AI + MIL Competency 4** (Critically Evaluating Information and Sources): Both center on critical evaluation and ethical considerations. Ethics of AI deals with embodied ethics and responsible use of AI systems, while MIL Competency 4 develops skills to evaluate information validity, recognize manipulation, and understand ethical practices in media consumption and creation.
3. **AI techniques and applications + MIL Competency 5** (Applying Digital and Traditional Media Formats): Both focus on practical application of digital technologies. AI techniques and applications cover using and creating AI tools, while MIL Competency 5 addresses using digital technology and communication tools for information gathering and decision-making.
4. **AI system design + MIL Competency 6** (Situating the Sociocultural Context): Both address the broader sociocultural frameworks of technology creation. AI system design covers problem scoping and architecture within social contexts, while MIL Competency 6 focuses on understanding how information and media content are produced within social and cultural contexts.

Figure 9: Screenshot of Claude AI pairing results with critical engagement 1



D for 4, why not this? AI System Design (AI) pairs with MIL Competency 7: Promoting MIL Among Learners/Citizens and Managing Required Changes

That's an excellent alternative pairing. AI System Design with MIL Competency 7 makes strong sense for several reasons:

1. **Design-Implementation Connection:** AI System Design focuses on problem scoping, architecture design, and iteration/feedback loops, which aligns well with MIL Competency 7's emphasis on implementing knowledge and managing change in learning environments.
2. **Teaching-Learning Cycle:** MIL Competency 7 specifically addresses how educators can promote literacy among learners and manage related changes in educational settings. This complements the iterative design processes in AI System Design, where feedback and continuous improvement are central concepts.
3. **Practical Application Focus:** Both competencies are action-oriented. AI System Design is about building systems that work in real contexts, while MIL Competency 7 is about practical application of knowledge to foster skills among learners.
4. **Change Management:** Both deal with adaptation and change - AI System Design through its "iteration and feedback loops" and MIL Competency 7 through its focus on "managing required changes" in learning environments.
5. **Knowledge Transfer:** Both competencies emphasize taking theoretical understanding and translating it into practical applications that benefit others - whether through designing AI systems or teaching media and information literacy.

This pairing would particularly benefit educators who want to not only understand AI systems but also effectively teach these concepts to their students, creating a clear

Figure 10: Screenshot of Claude AI pairing results with critical engagement 2

D why did you not choose it then? are you just trying to please me?

You're right to question this, and I appreciate the directness. I didn't originally choose MIL Competency 7 for AI System Design primarily because I was focused on content alignment rather than implementation alignment.

My original reasoning prioritized how MIL Competency 6 (Sociocultural Context) connected with AI System Design through their shared emphasis on understanding broader contexts when designing systems. I was thinking about how both address the social frameworks within which technologies operate.

When you suggested MIL Competency 7 instead, I recognized it was actually a stronger pairing due to the shared focus on implementation, practical application, and knowledge transfer. This is genuinely a better match than my initial suggestion.

I should have more thoroughly considered the implementation and teaching aspects in my initial analysis rather than primarily focusing on theoretical content connections. My revised assessment isn't about pleasing you, but acknowledging that your suggested pairing creates a more functional bridge between these frameworks, especially for educators who need to apply these concepts in classroom settings.

📄 👍 💬 Retry ▾



Claude can make mistakes. Please double-check responses.

Figure 11: Screenshot of Claude AI pairing results with critical engagement 3

This kind of critical engagement with AI tools models exactly the kind of thoughtful interrogation we want students (and teachers, of course) to practice in their interactions with AI. I used Claude AI as a thinking partner, and as in any good partnership, I questioned and challenged ideas rather than merely seeking confirmation of my perspectives.

6.3 Progression

In order to demonstrate the development of these merged competencies, I chose to incorporate the progression structure that the *AI Competency Framework for Students* has developed. Firstly, the structure is clear: in the UNESCO Framework, students progress logically from *understanding* a competency, to *applying* it, and then finally *creating* human-centered solutions to positively impact the design and use of AI.

Secondly, this progression offers valuable flexibility, as these stages were specifically designed to allow educators to develop the competencies across different Grades, making it a natural fit for the MAIL Framework.

Finally, the emphasis on the 'Create' stage is another key reason for adopting this model. Moving students from simply consuming information to actively producing content and

solutions is crucial. Research involving 101 students from a media literacy program in the Netherlands strongly supports this. To understand the pitfalls of news production and learn strategies for evaluating information, some students were asked to co-create ‘fake news’ videos while others analyzed existing content. The study showed that the most significant improvements in political knowledge and efficacy came from those who co-created ‘Fake news’ content (Geers, Boukes & Moeller, 2020).

This finding highlights that these creation activities significantly enhance civic understanding and critical thinking, further validating why this progression model, from understanding to creating, is so crucial for the MAIIL Framework as students learn to navigate an increasingly AI-driven media and information landscape.

6.4 Integrated activities

For each MIL and AI competency pairing, the MAIIL Framework offers possible classroom activities across the three progression levels of Understand, Apply and Create. Underneath each integrated activity you will notice a reference to an alignment or connection to a ‘CG’. This refers to the Curricular Goals included in the *AI Competency Framework for Students*. These references serve two important purposes. First of all, they help teachers understand how the activities specifically connect to the AI competencies. They also provide a reference point for teachers wanting to explore the *AI Competency Framework for Students* for more context, additional content, or a better understanding of the AI competency being addressed.

To create the integrated activities in the MAIIL framework, I used AI tools as collaborative partners in a systematic process. I began by uploading the full UNESCO *AI Competency Framework for Students* into NotebookLM to extract the curricular goals for each competency and progression level. These often included suggested student tasks, which helped surface practical applications already embedded in the framework.

With this extracted content, I organized the material into a working document structured by AI competency and progression levels (Understand, Apply, Create). I then used ChatGPT, alongside the MIL competencies extracted from UNESCO’s *Think Critically, Click Wisely*, to develop integrated activities that reflected the intent of the AI framework rather than inventing new content. For each AI competency, I aimed to create clear, meaningful pairings with MIL competencies, unless a blended match made stronger conceptual sense.

When multiple potential matches emerged, I prompted ChatGPT to explain its reasoning. This helped surface the strongest conceptual links, and I sometimes combined elements from different matches to create more coherent integrations. I also used ChatGPT to clarify how each activity aligned with both the AI curricular goals and the MIL competencies, refining them to ensure conceptual depth and classroom applicability.

Throughout, ChatGPT acted as a thought partner to clarify language, test progression across levels, and catch misalignments. I then used NotebookLM to verify accuracy, asking it to cross-check the ‘This aligns with CG...’ statements in the MAIIL framework against the actual descriptions of the curricular goals (CGs) in the UNESCO AI framework.

This process ensured that I felt confident the integration activities were not just loosely inspired by the frameworks but rather, directly addressed the curricular goals of the AI Framework and aligned with the MIL competencies.

7 Pairings and integration possibilities

As you have seen, the *MAILL Framework of Possibility* brings together complementary competencies from Media and Information Literacy and AI Literacy that seemed to be the most natural enhancement of the other. Understanding these pairings is essential for educators who want to integrate AI literacy into existing MIL teaching effectively.

When we see the reasoning behind why certain AI competencies naturally complement specific MIL competencies, we can identify entry points in existing curricula. For example, a teacher who already teaches students about evaluating news sources can see how these same evaluation skills can extend to assessing AI-generated content.

Without understanding these connections, we might view AI literacy as something completely separate that requires developing an entirely new curriculum. Again, while this might be an important end-goal for many Education Departments, for a teacher wanting to address AI now, this could feel overwhelming and lead to inaction. By showing the natural bridges between what is already taught in MIL and what students need to know about AI, the framework makes implementation more feasible, if only as a possible starting point.

7.1 Understanding the role of information, media, and digital communication (MIL) + human-centered mindset (AIL)

Both of these competencies put humans at the center of information, media and Artificial Intelligence. In MIL lessons, students learn how media shapes society, who creates content, and how to question information sources critically. Similarly, with AI literacy, they understand that AI tools are created by people to serve human needs, when these tools are appropriate to use, and why humans should maintain control over them.

As Chandan teaches his students: the same questions that need to be asked about a news article or social media post must also be asked about AI systems and AI-generated content:

While it's challenging, we can start by teaching students the foundational principles of skepticism and verification. For example, even with highly realistic AI-generated content, students should ask: Who created this content, and for what purpose? What is the source of this information? Is this information being reported by other credible sources? We should emphasize cross-referencing—students should not take anything at face value, even if it looks real.

7.2 Critically evaluating information and information sources (MIL) + ethics of AI (AIL)

In MIL lessons, students learn to assess whether information is reliable, accurate, and responsibly presented. They explore questions of authorship, intent, and the ethical impact of how information circulates.

In the Ethics of AI competency, students apply similar ethical thinking to artificial intelligence. They consider the principles of fairness, non-discrimination, and doing no harm should guide AI development and use.

By connecting these areas, students can extend their existing evaluation skills to new AI contexts. A student who can spot bias in a news article can learn to identify bias in an algorithm. A student who understands why citing sources matters can grasp why transparency and explainability are important in AI systems.

7.3 Applying digital and traditional media formats (MIL) + AI techniques and applications (AIL)

In MIL lessons, students learn to use different media tools to communicate and express ideas creatively. They develop hands-on skills with traditional and digital formats.

In the AI Techniques and Applications competency, students gain practical knowledge of how AI tools work. They explore data, algorithms, and how these tools can be applied to real-world tasks.

By connecting these areas, students can extend their existing media skills into the world of AI. A student who can produce a video or podcast can learn how AI might support editing or scripting. A student who understands the creative potential of digital tools can see AI as part of their media-making toolkit.

This link helps students understand how media technologies are evolving. It also prepares them to use AI tools thoughtfully and ethically in their creative work.

But using AI tools thoughtfully means learning when to rely on them and when not to. Sari reflects on this balance:

On one hand, I'm happy that they know how to use a platform to solve problems—they're developing their own prompts and learning to interact with the technology. But on the other hand, if they just copy and paste responses from ChatGPT, that's not real learning.

7.4 Promoting MIL among learners/citizens (MIL) + AI system design (AIL)

Both of these competencies help students become creators and active shapers of information and not just passive consumers. In Promoting MIL, they become advocates for media literacy in their communities. In AI system design, they think critically about when and how AI should be used. Together, these areas help students move from simply using technology to actively influencing how it's designed and implemented.

Both competencies also develop students' ability to think about the big picture. AI system design teaches students to understand the whole process of creating and using AI systems. Similarly, promoting MIL requires understanding how information and media function in society. By connecting these areas, students learn to consider how AI systems affect the way people access, evaluate, and use information.

Finally, this pairing also helps students develop leadership skills. Promoting MIL requires taking on a leadership role in educating others, while those involved in AI system design can become leaders in shaping future technologies.

8 Moving forward with MAILL

The *MAILL Framework of Possibility* is an entry point. It provides a way for AI Literacy to be brought into classrooms in a way that supports and is supported by the teaching of MIL, grounded in UNESCO's work in both these areas. The pairings of MIL and AIL competencies present a starting point for teachers that can be adapted for their particular needs and to meet their students where they are.

But frameworks remain boxes and letters on a page until they are picked up, engaged with, and used by teachers. For students to feel adequately prepared to know about AI, apply their knowledge, and create AI systems or tools, their teachers themselves need to understand, know, apply, and create. Teachers need support to feel confident that they have the knowledge and tools to help their students. As Chandan reminds us:

We can't remove AI, machine learning, blockchain, or new technologies. But as teachers, we can change our practices, methodologies, and how we teach. As the world evolves and technology advances, we also need to adapt our teaching styles.

Sari offers an invitation to teachers wanting to begin this journey:

As teachers, we need to practice and play with the tools. The more we interact with AI, the better we understand it. That understanding helps us identify patterns or outputs that might seem too formal or 'off,' which could indicate they're AI-generated. This 'spider sense' only develops with experience... Focusing on one platform also saves time. There's no need to switch between multiple tools when one platform can do most of the tasks with the right prompts.

Sari is not just a primary school teacher and digital advocate. She is also the founder of a community of teachers called Marsiajar (meaning 'To learn'). Her example presents a further possibility for what teachers need: teacher communities of practice. Teachers are some of the best supporters of each other. Communities of practice that encourage experimentation, reflection, and sharing can drive great change. It is in communities of practice where teachers can safely develop confidence in their teaching of AI literacy, even as they are learning themselves. And bringing this teaching into an area that already has a foothold, resources, methodologies, and approaches like MIL makes it just a little bit easier for teachers.

The *MAILL Framework of Possibility* provides some support for teachers in this process. UNESCO has also released the *AI Competency Framework for Teachers*, which complements this work. Going forward, there is the further possibility of creating the *MAILL Teacher Navigation Framework* to support teachers to navigate how media, AI and information intersect in their own lives and of course, in their teaching and classrooms. In the meantime, this UNESCO resource, like its student counterpart, is an important and valuable resource for any teacher.

Finally, in terms of the *MAILL Framework of Possibility*, there is work to be done still. The framework can be expanded to provide more activities across grades and phases, as well as detailed lesson plans and teaching methodologies. Ideally these can be created in collaboration with teachers like Chandan and Sari and, of course, responsibly with AI in support. Other possible pairings can also be included to provide more flexibility and choice to teachers wanting to explore what is possible in merging parts of AIL with parts of MIL.

9 Conclusion

As we look to the future, the distinction between media literacy and AI literacy will likely continue to blur. Students will not experience these as separate domains but as interconnected aspects of their digital lives. The *MAILL Framework of Possibility* acknowledges this reality, offering educators a structured way to prepare students for an information landscape where they are required to be even more thoughtful and ethical in their consumption and production of information. As Sari reminds us:

AI is part of that journey now. It's okay to feel overwhelmed at first, but it's happening, and we can't ignore it. So, my advice is: take that first step, even if it's a small one. Start somewhere. Learn one thing, and grow from there. AI can be an incredible tool if you're willing to embrace it.

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2.5 Policy frameworks and classroom practice in education for conflict resolution

Jennifer Batton, Mary Kangethe, and Margaret Sinclair

Abstract

The UNESCO Recommendation on Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development includes guidance on needed student competencies, including peaceful conflict resolution skills. The present brief examines how national education systems can support skills development in this area. Specific examples from Colombia, Kenya, the Philippines, Serbia and the United States (Ohio and New York) include a focus on education for conflict resolution and related competencies in national or subnational laws and policies, on its inclusion in subject-matter syllabi and whole school guidance, and on supporting writers of education materials in embedding these competencies. The brief argues that system-level policy decisions and resource allocations are also needed for trainee teachers to gain mastery of and teach conflict resolution and related skills and to reflect them in classroom management. The brief recommends greater focus on negotiation, mediation, and conflict transformation competencies in future iterations of SEL programming as well as in social studies and language studies, and in extracurricular activities. Given institutional realities, this requires initiatives and networking by academic, governmental, donor and civil society experts-cum-practitioners, building expertise and professional commitment to include these competencies in forthcoming programs, projects and frameworks.

1 Introduction

Education for conflict resolution has been implicit in many international and other frameworks regarding education supportive of peace and global citizenship, but is often not spelled out as a specific learning target.³³ However, the Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development³⁴, adopted by all 194 UNESCO

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33 Education for conflict resolution was included in the Platform for Action adopted in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women (the 'Beijing Conference'), see UN (1996)), and in the 2000 Dakar World Education Forum Plan of Action (UNESCO, 2000).

34 Full title: Recommendation on Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development. See UNESCO (2024a).

member states in November 2023, affirms that education should include the development of transformative cognitive, social and emotional student competencies, including specific competencies related to conflict prevention and management, described as:

Peaceful conflict resolution and transformation skills: the ability to deal with and contribute to the prevention, mediation and resolution of conflicts in a peaceful, constructive and negotiated manner and end cycles of violence and hostility (2023 Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development, sub-clause 6(k)).

The presence of conflict resolution skills in the 2023 Recommendation may, in part, reflect widely publicized contemporary international conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, and the catastrophic situations in Sudan, Myanmar and Haiti among others. As of 2024, over 100 countries were experiencing documented violent internal or international conflict,³⁵ bringing death and deprivation, disability and displacement, terror and trauma to millions. Additionally, organized violence by gangs and other groups are found in many countries. At the interpersonal level, gender and sexual abuse is found globally, with the World Bank Group (2019) noting that gender-based violence “affects 1 in 3 women in their lifetime”, while bullying is endemic in many schools, workplaces and other institutions.³⁶

Skills for negotiation, mediation and resolution of conflicts are needed in our personal lives as well as in our societies and between nations, not least as new crises arise related to climate change. The UN Sustainable Development Goal Target 4.7 (which refers to a culture of peace) and the UNESCO 2023 Recommendation, referring specifically to conflict prevention and management, remind us of the urgency of action.

This brief proposes that conflict resolution skills and their practice be given more prominence in the design of programs for social and emotional learning (SEL), life skills and 21st century skills as well as school subject programs and extracurricular activities, as appropriate. We avoid the false dichotomy that holistic approaches detract from academic learning: evidence in recent years shows that school-based SEL programs often benefit academic achievement as well as in-school behaviors and longer-term life outcomes.³⁷

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35 <https://geneva-academy.ch/galleries/today-s-armed-conflicts>, See also <https://acleddata.com/conflict-index/about/>

36 Among many other civil society organizations, the Whitaker Peace and Development Initiative documents the need for local action to combat these levels of violence and insecurity, and often provides structured education for conflict resolution to students and adults in its programs. (<https://wpdi.org/news/wpdi-conducts-violence-survey-in-south-africa/>)

37 Much evidence on impact relates to the US but evidence is now being sought more widely: Payton et al. (2008); Cipriani et al. (2023); Porticus et al. (2023). See also <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/learning-school-and-life-holistic-approach-child-development>

1.1 Example of an education for conflict resolution initiative: The Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP), USA

The authors were privileged to speak with Linda Lantieri (USA), a founder and veteran of education for conflict resolution and related initiatives. Lantieri was a curriculum adviser in New York in the 1980s. She explained that she was initially concerned about students' anxieties regarding the risk of a nuclear conflict and then increasingly worried about rising violence in schools and rates of student suspensions. In 1985, she and Tom Roderick, the Executive Director of Educators for Social Responsibility, founded the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP). By 2004, the program had 'trained and coached approximately 6,000 teachers in providing instruction in the RCCP curriculum to more than 200,000 children in schools' in New York City alone. It was reported by teachers to reduce student violence and improve classroom climate; and formal evaluations confirmed its benefits.³⁸

2 What is education for conflict resolution?

'Education for conflict resolution' is included in recent education frameworks such as social and emotional learning (SEL), life skills, 21st century skills and many more. In practice, it often receives less attention than more familiar concepts such as 'social relationships' and 'self-management'. However, understanding and practising conflict resolution approaches can enhance the learning of other social-emotional and life skills that it draws upon while helping a student to face the personal, local and societal challenges of the 21st century.³⁹

Formal models of conflict resolution, such as negotiation, mediation, dialogue processes, refusal skills, restorative justice methods, and coming to consensus, build upon core SEL skills. The disputing parties accept a negotiation process, and first *acknowledge their past disagreements or conflictual behaviors*, then *turn to the future*, seeking constructive ways to manage or avoid further conflict and foster healthy relationships. Using age-appropriate approaches, students may gain skills to manage their own conflicts in the classroom or playground (e.g., through peer mediation or peace corners).

Frameworks such as the SEL Learning Standards and SEL Performance Descriptors for Illinois State (USA), developed in collaboration with CASEL, the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, offer grade-wise learning objectives including those for conflict resolution. The general objective of Illinois SEL Standard D is: 'Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.' At

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³⁸ See Lantieri (1998), Aber et al. (2003), Brown et al. (2004), Galinsky (undated). Lantieri led curriculum development for SEE Learning (2019) which includes development of 'conflict transformation' capabilities as part of relationship skills.

³⁹ According to the Association for Conflict Resolution (2002), 'conflict resolution education models and teaches, in developmentally relevant and culturally appropriate ways, a variety of processes, practices, and skills designed to address individual, interpersonal, and institutional conflicts, and to create safe and welcoming learning environments. These skills, concepts and values help individuals to understand conflict dynamics, and empower them to use communication and creative thinking to build healthy relationships and manage and resolve conflicts fairly and nonviolently.'

lower secondary school level, for example, the corresponding standards are to ‘evaluate strategies for preventing and resolving interpersonal problems’ and to ‘define unhealthy peer pressure and evaluate strategies for resisting it,’ while upper high school students should be familiar with negotiation to reach win-win solutions. Performance indicators include the practice of self-calming techniques for anger management to de-escalate conflict situations, and of generating alternative solutions.⁴⁰

Some school programs developed in the late 20th century, such as the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program and 4R’s, included a strong representation of skills for conflict resolution/social problem-solving. However, many SEL programs have covered a different mix of skills.⁴¹ There has also been increased focus in recent years on SEL that offers restorative approaches with an element of conflict resolution, especially in the context of students facing situational or identity-related behavioral difficulties.⁴²

A recent pilot program tested out Arigatou International’s Ethics Program on education for learning to live together.⁴³

Example of structured conflict resolution steps, as presented in a ‘learning to live together’ program for secondary schools:

Six-step problem-solving

1. *Identify needs.* “What is it that you need (or want)?” Each person in the conflict should answer this question without blaming or accusing the other person.
2. *Define the problem.* “How do you see the problem?” The group can help formulate a response that includes both persons’ needs but does not apportion blame. The persons in the conflict must agree with the definition of the problem.
3. *Brainstorm lots of possible solutions.* “Who can think of a way to solve this problem?” Anyone in the group may offer a response. These should all be written down, without comment, judgement or evaluation. The aim of this step is to come up with as many solutions as possible.
4. *Evaluate the solutions.* “Would you be happy with this solution?” Each party in the conflict goes through the list of possible solutions, explaining which ones would or would not be acceptable.

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40 <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/SEL-Standards.pdf>

41 CASEL and EASEL (Ecological Approaches to Social and Emotional Learning, Harvard University) have provided profiles for many predominantly stand-alone SEL-based programs for schools/school districts in the US and elsewhere. CASEL profiles of 99 programs, including summaries of evaluation data, are provided at <https://pg.casel.org/review-programs/>. For profiles from Harvard’s EASEL Lab, see <http://exploresel.gse.harvard.edu/>. For tables showing the comparative presence of ‘conflict resolution/social problem-solving’ among different SEL programs, see Jones et al. (2021: 72-75) covering preschool and elementary school levels and Jones et al. (2022: 86-87) covering older students.

42 See, for example, Sandwick et al. (2019).

43 Recently piloted in six countries including Kenya (see <https://ethicseducationforchildren.org/ethics-education-fellowship/>). There are separate teacher activity books for primary and secondary school levels (Arigatou Foundation, 2021 and 2008, respectively). For the emergence of the term ‘learning to live together’, see <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000131359/PDF/131359engo.pdf.multi>

5. *Decide on the best solution.* “Do you both agree to this solution? Is the problem solved?” Make sure both parties agree and acknowledge their efforts in working out the solution.
6. *Check to see how the solution is working.* (Arigatou Foundation et al., 2008, pp. 91–94)

3 Contextual labels

It is important to bear in mind that the terms or labels for national programs have to be politically acceptable in the country concerned. Terms such as ‘peace’ and ‘conflict resolution’ may be politically acceptable at some times and in some places but not in others; a government may not wish to be seen as facing civil conflict and may prefer a less ‘loaded’ term such as social and emotional learning, life skills, (social) problem-solving, or citizenship, democratic or Global Education.

Likewise for sensitivities around gender. Conflict resolution skills for girls, such as appropriate assertiveness and effective refusal skills, may need to be labelled carefully to avoid stakeholder complaints. At the outset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, international agencies used the innocuous title ‘life skills’ for structured assertiveness training to refuse a partner’s pressure for unwanted or unprotected sex.⁴⁴

The title or label for an initiative in this area will to some extent influence what is covered in the curriculum framework.⁴⁵ Given the range of cultures and contexts globally, we recommend identifying program and module titles that are actively motivational to students of a given country and are also acceptable to their teachers and the wider community.⁴⁶

4 Examples of practice

For purposes of this brief, the authors were fortunate to speak with some leading practitioners who have been lifelong champions of strengthening education for conflict resolution/peace and related themes in national education systems. These practitioners also indicated some key resources and later reviewed relevant portions of the draft.

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44 Such as through practising carefully framed sentences (sometimes called I-statements) which focus on the speaker’s feelings, needs and preferred actions. More broadly, ‘life skills’ refers to interpersonal, intrapersonal and cognitive skills that help students address current life and societal challenges and opportunities, and thus overlaps with SEL. See, for example, WHO (2003, 2020), Care et al. (2024), and the multilingual glossary for life skills (including conflict resolution) prepared by Life Skills Collaborative (India): <https://lifeskillscollaborative.in>

45 See UNESCO (2024b), Sinclair (2013) and Batton et al. (2015) for a review of ‘umbrella titles’ for a range of programs broadly promoting education for peace and learning to live together. For an insight into the sensitivity of commitments to a ‘culture of peace’, as well as its breadth, see Adams (2024).

46 Where there are a multiplicity of concurrent initiatives, there can be confusion, as in the six or more key or core competency frameworks noted in Tajikistan, requiring some action towards a more harmonized approach (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2022. Pursuing an inclusive and transformative reform agenda for competency-based education in Tajikistan, p. 5.) <https://www.globalpartnership.org/node/document/download?file=document/file/2022-03-Tajikistan-Partnership-Compact.pdf>. For the importance of cultural sensitivity and relevance, and not imposing western-style frameworks where not culturally relevant, see, for example, the work of Michael Wessells (Wessells, 2012, 2021).

While there were hundreds of initiatives to select from, the perspectives below draw upon conversations with champions of peace education and related competencies in Colombia, the Philippines, Serbia, Kenya and the state of Ohio (USA). These few examples serve to illustrate some constraints and possibilities for strengthening education for conflict resolution, which is an explicit or implicit element of ‘peace education’.

We first present a thumbnail sketch of each program and some dimensions related to its implementation: laws, regulations and education structures; syllabus development; materials development; and teacher preparation.

After decades of civil conflict, there is political and popular support in **Colombia** for the idea that education should contribute to peace and prevent the recurrence of violence (Klobucista & Renwick, 2017).⁴⁷ With this goal, the Colombian Ministry of Education convened national experts to develop a framework of citizenship competencies, which was launched in 2003 as part of the school curriculum (Patti & Espinosa, 2007, p. 112). Despite the challenges of introducing new content in often under-resourced schools, the framework has given encouragement to civil society initiatives. Where an education authority has political will and needed resources, as in Bogota, the capital city, vigorous programs have been implemented.⁴⁸ Higher education institutions have also contributed, as in the support from the Universidad de Los Andes to the establishment of the *Aulas en Paz* (Classrooms in Peace) initiative, as explained by our colleague, Jose Mejia.

In the **Philippines**, there has been unrest at various locales, notably in the Mindanao region where separatism and religious identity issues have led to a state of armed conflict for centuries. Champions of education for peace have included our colleague Dr. Loreta Castro, co-founder of the Center for Peace Education at Miriam College. In collaboration with fellow activists, she has helped create stakeholder and government support for legal action to promote peace education. The results of continuing peace education advocacy, over more than half a century, are reflected in the requirements and recommendations for both primary and secondary schooling through grade 10 and more recently in institutions of higher education.⁴⁹

The education system in **Serbia**, faced with challenges after the violent breakup of the former Yugoslavia, received funding and support from international donors including UNICEF and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Nansen Dialogue Network (NDN), working

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47 Information on Colombia in this brief draws in part on our conversation on 9 September 2024 with Jose Mejia, Executive Director, Aulas en Paz Program (Classrooms of Peace) who has worked with colleagues at the Universidad de los Andes and others to advance citizenship and peace education in Colombia for over two decades. See also a NISSEM brief which he co-authored (Bustamente et al., 2020), and Chaux (2009), Chaux et al. (2017), Caro (2019).

48 In Colombia, ‘the implementation of a national program depends in great part on the role played by local Secretaries of Education. Some exceptional Secretaries of Education, for instance those from Bogota, have created comprehensive citizenship education programs, with very large investments and promising results’ (Bustamente et al., 2020, p. 115). For the role of civil society support to implementation of the citizenship standards, see, for example, Nieta and Luna (2013).

49 Information on the Philippines in this brief draws upon numerous conversations with and publications by Loreta Castro, Founding Director, Peace Education Center, Miriam College, Quezon City, Philippines, as well as her written responses to our questions for this brief.

on inter-ethnic dialogue, reconciliation and conflict prevention, was established in the year 2000, comprising offices in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Croatia.⁵⁰ Ministry of Education advisers established a Unit for Prevention and Protection from Violence in Schools, created the protocols for reaction to conflict and obliged all schools to report regularly. Based on this collaboration, the Ministries of Education in Serbia and Montenegro recommended peer mediation as an important mechanism for schools in both countries. In recent years, their attention has often focused on preventing bullying, digital violence, gender-based violence, and violent extremism. NDN has continued its engagement, as explained by colleagues Tatjana Popovic, Director of NDC Serbia, and Biljana Lajovic, retired psychologist from the Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, supporting mainstreaming of these concerns into the school system.

In **Kenya**, the outburst of inter-ethnic violence following the 2007 general election shocked the political class and the general public, leading to measures to promote social cohesion. A peace education teachers' guide was prepared and used for some time in conflict-affected areas. In 2016, the Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development (KICD) conducted an education needs assessment that led to the 2017 Basic Education Curriculum Framework. The Framework incorporates a competency-based curriculum and includes a wide range of values and themes similar to those in Section 6 of the 2023 UNESCO Recommendation. This framework guides publishers of new textbooks as well as teacher center mentors, teacher trainers, school leaders and others. Schools are required to adhere to the centralized education requirements but also respond to signals from the types of question set in high-stakes national examinations, notes co-author Mary Kangethe of the Kenya Ministry of Education and Kenya National Commission for UNESCO.⁵¹

Civil society partners supported KICD through their own education practice and interaction with institute staff and others. For example, Arigatou International, based in Japan, organized Ethics Education training for teachers and curriculum developers and two-year pilot school programs in six countries including Kenya. Our colleague Jane Nyaga, then of KICD, notes that the lessons learned, especially about values education, have fed from the bottom-up practice into ongoing curriculum reform reforms, using participatory approaches. Likewise, the East Africa Regional Education and Learning (RELI) Assessment of Life Skills and Values (ALiVE) initiative conducted household studies on life skills in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, and now seeks to promote integration of life skills content and assessment into national school systems.⁵²

50 Information on Serbia in this brief draws upon conversations on 25 September and 19 November 2024 with Tatjana Popovic, a conflict resolution trainer with the Serbian office of the Nansen Dialogue Centre Serbia, and Biljana Lajovic, a psychologist and retired Ministry of Education violence prevention and conflict resolution advisor. They have promoted education for conflict resolution and peace in Serbia from a non-governmental and a governmental position, respectively, following conflicts in the Balkans.

51 Information on Kenya in this brief draws upon a conversation on 11 October 2024 with Jane Nyaga, recently retired from the Kenyan Ministry of Education, a veteran of curriculum reform in Kenya. Also from the experience of co-author Mary Kangethe, Education Specialist at the Kenya National Commission for UNESCO, who had earlier supported peace education work at the Ministry of Education and led regional collaboration under the peace education node of the Association for Development of Education in Africa.

52 See <https://reliafrica.org/#>; Care et al. (2024). The ALiVE household surveys have included adolescent responses to conflict vignettes.

Finally, we draw on the experience of co-author, Jennifer Batton, who worked to support the integration of these concepts into state standards such as Social Studies, Language Arts and other policies and programs for students and educators at the primary and secondary levels and in teacher training in **Ohio State** (USA) through the state government agency, the Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management and its many governmental, college and university, and civil society partners. One of the outgrowths of early state government support for the skills of education for conflict resolution in Ohio and a whole school approach (student programming, curriculum integration, pedagogy and school culture) has been the expansion of Social Emotional Learning (recommended for all schools) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) (required for all schools).

Even within this small sample of countries we can see the wide range of contexts and modalities to be considered when advocating for a greater presence of conflict resolution and related themes and values in education systems. We present below some broad principles that may help with this challenge.

5 Approaches to implementing education for conflict resolution and related competencies

Lessons learned from these brief country case descriptions can help to frame approaches to strengthening education for conflict resolution and related competencies, to meet 21st century life challenges and help build social cohesion in often divided societies. We describe some examples of small-scale intensive programs with clear impact at local level as well as the constraints facing approaches at system level.

Below we offer some implementation principles for consideration, based on general practitioner experience as well the country programs introduced above. Much more could be said but space is limited! In particular, we discuss the importance of supportive national laws and frameworks, integration into curricula and syllabi, materials development, teacher training and support.

5.1 Identify and strengthen national laws and policies that support education for conflict resolution and related social-emotional competencies

- Strengthen standard-setting requirements for curriculum and broader school policies to be supportive of education for conflict resolution and related cognitive, social and emotional competencies.

Country experiences

In **Colombia**, system-wide policies have supported local initiatives. National citizenship education standards were developed under the auspices of the Ministry of Education in 2003 and introduced as official guidance. In 2013, the Colombian Congress issued a Law for School Violence Prevention (Convivencia Escolar), followed in 2014 by the Peace Education Law (Cathedra de la Paz). According to Bustamente et al. (2020):

The first law (and its regulatory decree) states (among many other measures) that each school should have a program for promoting peaceful relationships based on the development of citizenship competencies. The second law (and its regulatory decree) states that there should be a mandatory assignment in the curriculum of each school to explicitly promote peaceful relationships. Both laws have represented a stimulus for peace education work in schools. However, there are several challenges for their implementation.

In the **Philippines**, peace education practitioners have advocated for national policies to enhance the focus on this dimension of education. The Office of the President issued an Executive Order in 2006 to integrate peace education across the primary and secondary curriculum up to grade 10, covering public and private schools and teacher education institutions. The Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (OPAPP), the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) were to 'establish/enhance mechanisms and appropriate funds in their respective departments to ensure the sustained implementation of peace education in the education system.' Implementation was often a result of educators' personal engagement more than enforcement, however. In 2019 new monitoring and review requirements specifically for higher education peace and conflict resolution education courses came into effect (CHED, 2019).

In an effort to bring peace to the Mindanao region, the Philippines Congress in 2019 passed the Bangsamoro Organic Law, 'to establish an enduring peace on the basis of justice, balanced society and asserting their right[s].' In relation to education, the document notes that 'the Bangsamoro Government shall institutionalize peace education in all levels of education.'⁵³ Colleges and universities in the Philippines have helped support peace education training in Mindanao.

In **Kenya**, Article 10 of the Constitution identifies the values and principles of governance that apply to all citizens. The National Cohesion and Integration Act 2008 underscores the promotion of educational and training programs for advancing peace among Kenyans. An Education Sector Policy on Peace Education was thus developed to guide implementation of programs at the national and institutional levels. The 2017 Basic Education Curriculum Framework established standards and learning goals for life in the 21st century. The first goal cited is for education in Kenya to 'foster nationalism, patriotism, and promote national unity', noting that 'Kenya's people belong to different communities, races and religions and should be able to live and interact as one people.' Education should also promote peace and harmonious co-existence.

In **Serbia**, the Ministry of Education engaged with Nansen Dialogue Centre initiatives and later reflected this experience in national policies and guidance as appropriate and practicable. Inter alia, a Rulebook on the Protocol for Procedures at an Education Institution in Response to Violence, Abuse and Neglect was adopted in 2010 and has been updated twice. Legislation regarding violence prevention in schools provides a basis for violence and bullying prevention work, including 'pre-emptive and intervention activities' in schools.⁵⁴

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53 The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) resulted from the peace agreement between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

54 <https://ravnopravnost.gov.rs/en/legislation/republic-of-serbia-legislation/>; Vignjevic et al. (2015).

Beginning in 1989, **Ohio** was one of 19 US states to establish a government office on dispute resolution and conflict management. It was the first also to prioritize conflict resolution education and thus influence education policy.⁵⁵ Only one other state agency of this type, in Maryland, focused additionally on education, modeling their work on Ohio's example. The Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management, in collaboration with the Ohio Education Department, played a pivotal role in activities from curriculum development to training to policy development and implementation for Ohio's schools and colleges and universities. In partnership with the Education Department, the Commission provided grants, training and technical assistance to Ohio's approximately 612 school districts which included approximately 3,600 public schools. In '1990–2003, the number of school districts with some form of a conflict management program grew from 30 to more than 400. While in 1993 there were a mere 208 schools actively addressing the problem, by 2004 more than 1,700 schools had established peer mediation and conflict management programs'.

5.2 Give conflict resolution and related social and emotional competencies an explicit focus in the school curriculum, syllabi and teacher training

- Provide adequate time and resources to build expertise in this area among curriculum and syllabus developers, who are often unfamiliar with it.
- Explicitly include learning objectives for conflict resolution/ negotiation/ mediation/prevention of bullying/refusal skills, as well as broader SEL competencies, and embed them in appropriate syllabi, as well as in whole school policies and teacher preparation.
- A focus on conflict management is more easily achieved in smaller, local initiatives – or where a school's management is committed to it. Substantive and long-term engagement with experts in the field is required to achieve and sustain results at system level.

Country experiences

In **Colombia**, the 2003 introduction of national education standards for citizenship competencies put the role of peace-related curricula on educators' agenda. These standards have a strong emphasis on skills for peaceful living together (*convivencia*), such as in this competency for grades 4 and 5: 'I address, in a peaceful and constructive manner, the daily conflicts in my school and family life and contribute to the protection of human rights' (Patti and Espinosa, 2007). In order to promote the program, the Ministry instituted a system of testing students every three years in national citizenship competencies in selected grades (5 and 9) (Chaux, 2009).

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55 https://www.crededucation.net/resources/Success_Story_5/success_03.htm. See also Batten (2002).

These standards and later laws on education for peace depend for their interpretation and implementation on a range of actors: in Colombia, the school system is decentralized and schools select their own curriculum and educational materials. Aulas en Paz, for example, aims to help schools build students' conflict management competencies that are included in the citizenship standards, with a specific focus on anger management, assertiveness, active listening, empathy, perspective-taking, creative generation of options, consideration of consequences, and critical thinking. The school program for grades 2-5 addresses these in relation to aggression, bullying, and interpersonal conflicts⁵⁶ (Bustamente et al., 2019).

In the **Philippines**, at the K-10 level, national standards have encouraged integration of peace education concepts into curricula since 2006, although implementation is often localized. In 2023, peace education concepts were integrated across several learning areas of the revised K-12 curriculum, with the aim of promoting non-violent action and the development of conflict resolution skills in learners; the role that the government historically played in peace processes in the country was also included (Chi, 2023).

At higher education level, integration of peace education concepts and skills into subjects such as history, social sciences, sociology, political science, management and humanities is officially recommended, as well as stand-alone/elective courses (CHED, 2019, p. 1). In practice, peace education is included in some teacher training, such as at Miriam College, but is not a requirement for all teachers.

In **Serbia**, the Ministry of Education first engaged with the Nansen Dialogue Centre Serbia and others in piloting approaches to dialogue and peace, undertaking capacity-building training for teachers, students, school psychologists and principals in selected schools. In a number of participating schools, peer mediation and elements of peace education were incorporated into the annual school plans. The Education Ministry has later taken steps to mainstream aspects of peace education, including as part of government requirements for violence prevention in schools.

In **Kenya**, the Education Ministry aims to mainstream interventions aimed at promoting peace and cohesion into the curriculum, with the main carrier subjects being Life Skills Education, Values Based Education, and Service Learning, together with Social Studies and the examination subject at secondary level of History and Citizenship. To ensure that the newer aspects can be tracked and monitored, the integration is supported by mainstreaming matrices.

The importance of capacity-building as a first step in integration of conflict resolution and related competencies into school programs is exemplified by the engagement of the Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development (KICD) with global concerns such as SEL, education for sustainable development, and global citizenship education. Senior KICD staff members (Jane Nyaga and colleagues) led the training of many KICD specialist staff on the Ethics Education/Learning to Live Together program by Arigatou International, with implementation in a group of 20 pilot schools. Jane Nyaga was also closely involved in a three-year KICD

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56 In addition, Aulas en Paz provides special activities for families, and home visits for those whose children showed more problematic behaviors; special extracurricular sessions are convened by program staff for small groups combining highly prosocial children and students who show higher levels of aggressive behavior in class.

collaboration on integrating Education for Global Citizenship (including local and national citizenship) into the national curriculum, with the UNESCO APCEIU.⁵⁷

In **Ohio**, the collaboration between the Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management and the Education Department provided the expertise, credibility and resources to help integrate conflict resolution skills, pedagogy, and whole school approaches into school programs across the state, and into the recommended SEL standards. The Commission staff were invited to provide input on state standard revisions for subject areas for social studies, language arts, and a special curriculum for students who were pregnant and/or had children while in school, as well as actions in response to bills in the state legislature related to bullying prevention, and recommendations for all Ohio colleges and universities on preventing dating violence. With this comprehensive approach at all levels, education for conflict resolution grew from a narrow focus on peer mediation of student disputes to a core concept and set of skills recognized for their potential benefits across society and throughout all aspects of education.

5.3 Embed contextualized/culturally relevant conflict resolution skills and related social and emotional learning in textbooks and resources for students and teachers

- Train and support writing teams for textbooks/education resources to help them engage with and then integrate negotiation, mediation and conflict resolution processes as well as other SEL, in locally relevant applications, framed within appropriate pedagogical approaches. Aim for education materials to become carriers of these competencies rather than barriers.⁵⁸

Country experiences

In **Colombia**, after the Peace Education Law, the Ministry of Education convened experts to design a resource book of classroom activities to assist teachers in implementation. The book includes classroom activities and a matrix suggesting how to organize topics across different grades, 'from social emotional development for building peaceful relationships in the elementary grades, to mediation and social impact projects in middle schools grades, to Global Citizenship Education in high school' (Bustamente et al., 2020, p. 120). However, 'these didactic sequences were not widely distributed and are still largely unused by the education system' (ibid., p. 116).

In a promising development, EDUCAPAZ, an alliance of seven civil society organizations working on peace education, alongside the Ministry of Education, has established a plat-

57 Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding, Seoul (a UNESCO Institute, Category 2), which promotes education for global citizenship.

58 See <https://nissem.org/textbooks-and-educational-materials/> and collected field practices in the NISSEM Global Briefs series (<https://nissem.org/nissem-global-briefs/>).

form (Pazatuidea.org) where teachers can find resources from EDUCAPAZ members and other organizations or upload their own materials and interact with each other (ibid., pp. 120–121).

In the **Philippines**, the Peace Education Center of Miriam College contributed a guide to peace education, to help teachers wishing to engage with this goal. One chapter sets out a structured approach to conflict resolution suited for use with school students (Navarro-Castro and Nario-Galace, 2019, pp. 119–132).

In **Serbia and Montenegro**, the Nansen Dialogues Centres convened a sub-regional group including representatives of Ministry of Education advisers, teachers, peace educators and peacebuilding civil society organizations. Based on their commitment, a handbook for teachers and peace educators was created over a two-year period of training and trialing of lesson plans and is available online as ‘Education for Peace - Experiences from Practice.’⁵⁹ The handbook incorporates lesson plans with peace education integrated into school subjects such as Mathematics, Mother Tongue, History and English Language. Teachers used this book to prepare for class and many incorporated elements into their classrooms, although it was not required. Subsequently, the Ministry of Education has used this experience to mainstream aspects of peace education into national curricula.

In **Kenya**, the 2017 Basic Education Curriculum Framework specifies intended learning outcomes of collaborative problem-solving at lower primary level, and demonstration of ‘social skills, and spiritual and moral values for peaceful co-existence’ at middle school level, together with ‘managing pertinent and contemporary issues in society effectively’. Senior school learning outcomes should include active local and global citizenship for harmonious co-existence, and appreciation of diversity. The task of actualizing the inclusion of education for conflict resolution, ethics, SEL, and ‘Contemporary and Pertinent Issues’ in a new generation of approved textbooks falls upon writing teams employed by private publishers, under the guidance of the national curriculum centre (KICD). Our colleague, Jane Nyaga, formerly working for and now retired from KICD, is drawing on her experiences of social and emotional learning/learning to live together and similar themes at KICD to integrate them into some of a new generation of textbooks, authoring volumes for Social Studies (primary schools) and ‘History and Citizenship’ (secondary schools, elective).

Schools in the U.S. have substantial autonomy but are obliged to follow the state department of education’s curriculum standards, while local school boards approve and review educational materials. In **Ohio**, a curriculum resource of more than 1200 pages of lessons was developed by a team of practitioners/experts, in partnership with the Ohio Department of Education. Organized by subject, grade level and conflict concept, the resource was developed specifically for Ohio’s primary and secondary schools. Different schools have implemented this in their own way, such as through curriculum integration, or stand-alone sessions as an elective in high school or separately for students with behavioral issues.

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59 <https://www.peace-ed-campaign.org/education-peace-experiences-practice/>; https://www.peace-ed-campaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/education_for_peace_14-07-2016.pdf

5.4 Build contextualized conflict resolution and related social and emotional learning into teacher professional development

- For future teachers to gain full mastery of SEL and negotiation, mediation and conflict management, introduce a system-wide mandatory requirement for pre-service courses to include these competencies. Incorporate aspects of these competencies into the teaching of classroom management.
- Provide in-service teacher training and support for conflict resolution and related SEL initiatives. In-service teacher training for participating schools is usually included in stand-alone SEL packages/programs, and in localized initiatives for specialized conflict resolution/dialogue programs. Explore the potential of online training for these and other interested teachers.
- Provide guidance to school leaders on how initiatives regarding conflict resolution and other SEL and life skills may be integrated in whole school policies for inclusion, gender, disability, bullying/sexual harassment and other challenges.

Country experiences

In **Colombia**, teachers have limited familiarity with the concepts of SEL and citizenship education, unless they have received specific in-service training. Bustamente et al. (2020) stress that pre-service teacher training should include SEL and its integration into classroom management. The Universidad de los Andes has set an example by requiring student teachers to take a mandatory course in classroom management with an emphasis on SEL development. 'This program includes the discussion of classroom management issues during the practice supervision, as well as the integration of citizenship and social and emotional competencies in its curriculum design course.' A MOOC is being set up to enable other schools of education and teacher colleges to integrate this in their programs (ibid., p. 126).

In the **Philippines**, the guidance document for peace education in higher education institutions (CHED, 2019) provides recommendations for teacher pedagogy, encouraging teachers to utilize positive discipline-related methodology and active learning strategies with specific examples. The document also indicates the attributes that should be modeled by teachers of peace education including, but not limited to, the skills of conflict resolution, such as the use of nonviolent communication, being respectful and open to a range of perspectives, cultures, and ideas, as well as 'being aware of important peace issues.' It further suggests and provides an overview of a whole school approach (CHED, 2019).

In the initial Nansen programs in **Serbia**, small mixed groups of Serbian and Albanian teachers received in-service training in dialogue, conflict resolution and mediation skills, with three days full training at basic level and three days at advanced level. They then gave workshops to the students and established peer mediation clubs in four primary and two secondary schools in multi-ethnic communities in South Serbia, with support from Nansen

Dialogue Centre Serbia coordinators.⁶⁰ The clubs became safe places where conflicts were resolved by students, with support from teacher-mediators. The longer-term sustainability of school mediation as a peaceful conflict resolution mechanism is dependent, however, on the continued presence and enthusiasm of trained teachers, and ongoing training. Serbian civil society organizations providing teacher training and support must have accreditation with the Education Ministry.⁶¹

In 2012, the work of the Serbia Nansen Centre in Serbia was recognized in the form of the official accreditation of the program: Education for Peace – Resolution through Dialogue. The program was included in the official list of the programs for professional development for teachers, building capacities of teachers and students for peaceful resolution of conflicts.

In **Kenya**, the national peace education initiative following the post-election disturbances of 2007 lost impetus thereafter, as on-site teacher training and support diminished, resulting in less application and implementation at scale. Teachers and families alike wanted to focus on preparing students for high-stakes examinations, a challenge faced in many countries.

At a local level, the Ethics Education/Learning to Live Together initiative in Kenya linked to Arigatou International supported teacher educators (from teacher training colleges and the School of Education from one university) as in-service trainers. The program was cascaded to the teacher trainees and a collaborative working relationship for learning and support was created between teacher trainees and in-service teachers in the target schools. Related continuous training for in-service teachers has been carried out through learning circles (physically and online).

In **Ohio**, schools receiving grant awards to support their dispute resolution and SEL programs were required to send teams from their school for training, including not only classroom teachers but also school administrators and other staff (such as counselors). Importantly, the inclusion of electives for dispute resolution and related themes in many of the state's universities and colleges means that graduates who become teachers may have a deeper understanding of conflict resolution techniques and be willing, able and interested to use these skills in classroom management and convey them to their students.

6 Future directions

We began this brief by reference to prevailing 21st century crises manifesting in conflict (violent and otherwise) at macro and personal levels. As practitioners, our aim is to find ways to strengthen education competencies related to conflict prevention, management and resolution, because of the urgency of the situation as well as the recent commitment of governments to this aim in the UNESCO 2023 Recommendation.

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60 For a detailed description of the start-up and operation of the peer mediation process, see Popovic and Serengaca (2015), pp. 41–44, 75–78.

61 Personal communication from Tatjana Popovic and Biljana Lajovic.

Experience suggests that strong school programs that support skills such as negotiation, mediation and conflict management are sometimes more easily developed on a small scale, with support from civil society organizations, although even this presents problems of sustainability and limited coverage. **Where such local programs and pilot activities can be undertaken in close relationship with Education Ministries, this can influence national curricula, syllabi, textbooks and school programs, providing needed local vignettes and perspectives that can resonate with students.**

Including mandatory social and emotional learning and explicit conflict transformation competencies in pre-service teacher training, including linkages to classroom management skills, will lay the foundation for enhanced implementation.

We would suggest that current initiatives to promote social and emotional learning (SEL), life skills and 21st century skills could benefit from greater attention to the specifics of combining cognitive, social and emotional competencies in explicit modeling of realistic age-appropriate and contextualized/culturally relevant conflict transformation. In this way, the competencies cited in the 2023 UNESCO Recommendation (section 6) can enable students (as well as their teachers) to become fluent in practicing the steps needed to address conflictual relationships and strengthen social cohesion.

We therefore recommend enhanced focus on negotiation, mediation, and conflict transformation competencies - as per the 2023 Recommendation - in future iterations of SEL programming, life skills and 21st century skills as well as in social studies, language studies including foundational literacy, and other areas, as appropriate, and in extracurricular and whole school activities. Given institutional realities, this requires initiatives and networking by academic, governmental, donor and civil society experts-cum-practitioners, including pressure to include these competencies in forthcoming programs, projects, and frameworks.

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2.6 Implementing policies to promote activism in youth: Three gaps and thoughts for the future

Miri Yemini and Simon Eten Angyagre

Abstract

This briefing is based on insights from an international research project funded by the European Research Council aimed at exploring how young people understand and appropriate activism. The study generated data from discussion groups with school aged students, interviews with young activists, and content analysis of social media posts from youth activists. In addition, governmental policies at global, national and local levels related to youth activism were analyzed. Data collection took place in six countries: the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, and Poland. Our study has identified three issues that could significantly improve policy directing the implementation of global citizenship education, with a focus on youth activism. Research on youth activism tends to focus on easily analyzable conventional forms of activism that emerge in popular forms, overlooking more complex and unique demographics and specific contexts. While young people are aware of the complexities of activism and recognize its distorted portrayal on social media, their willingness to engage varies, with many expressing a desire for better education and practical experiences regarding activism in schools. Furthermore, similar perceptions of activism among youth across different countries suggest that socio-demographic factors play a more significant role than national characteristics, indicating the necessity for policies that are tailored to specific contexts rather than a one-size-fits-all national approach.

1 Introduction

In the contemporary world characterized by unprecedented social, political, and environmental upheavals, youth activism is perceived by many as a hope for a better future, and a force that can help shift the global landscape towards a more sustainable and justice-guided direction. The intensity and breadth of young people's engagement in activism often highlights their dissatisfaction with the status quo, and their commitment to driving transformative change across a spectrum of critical issues. Young people are documented to participate in a wide array of activities including conducting individual actions online, attending collective demonstrations, setting up social movements, and engaging with political actors (Paschou & Mogollón, 2024; Rainsford, 2017). Yet participation and engagement levels in social and political action are known to vary for young people from

different socio-economic backgrounds (Brady et al., 2020; Dean, 2016; Sloam, 2007, 2014; Teney & Hanquinet, 2012; Peterson et al., 2018). This underscores the urgency to build inclusive and forward-thinking policy frameworks.

This briefing emerges from an international research project funded by the European Research Council that examines the nuances of youth activism across six diverse nations: the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, and Poland. By capturing an international perspective, the study offers a comprehensive look at how young people conceptualize and engage with activism within various socio-political contexts. Furthermore, the overall goal of the project dovetails into regional and Global Educational frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the UNESCO 2023 Recommendation on peace, human rights and sustainable development, and the European Declaration on Global Education to 2050. By focusing on youth activism on Human Rights and Climate Change, the project sheds light on how young people are contributing to global efforts for a more just, equitable and sustainable world. Additionally, much of the context in which data was collected in all six countries is in reference to secondary education, allowing for an exploration of the educational approaches of Global Education and Learning as well as Global Citizenship Education in the school context. The methodology employed in this research was multifaceted, and used discussion groups with students to gain direct insights into their perspectives and motivations and experiences in civic and political activism. Interviews with young activists provided deeper understanding of the strategies and challenges faced on the ground. A content analysis of social media platforms highlighted the digital dimensions of youth activism, where narratives are crafted and disseminate faster than ever before. Analysis of policies at various levels offered a critical lens to examine how official frameworks either support or hinder youth-led initiatives.

Through this study, three critical issues (“gaps”) were identified. Addressing these gaps would significantly impact policy formulation aimed at cultivating a global citizenship education focused on nurturing activist potential among young people. These gaps not only illuminate the inadequacies within current educational and policy frameworks, but serve as a call to action for stakeholders at all levels to reimagine their approaches to supporting youth activism. In shining a light on these gaps, we identify an opportunity to empower young activists and to establish a more equitable and participatory global society in which voices across age groups are valued and heard. By highlighting these findings, the briefing seeks to provoke critical discourse on the role of policy and education in shaping tomorrow’s activists, and in parallel encourage innovative solutions and collaborative efforts that can bridge the divides currently hampering youth engagement and efficacy in social change movements.

2 Theoretical considerations in understanding youth activism

Much of the theory, policy, and practice on youth civic participation and activism draws primary inspiration from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which sets out the rights of children to actively participate in society, including political and civic participation (McMellon & Tisdall, 2020; Richards-Schuster & Pritzker, 2015; Shaw et al., 2014). Much promotion of young people’s political participation is therefore focused on actualizing the legal responsibilities of states towards the UNCRC. Such participation of young people is known to enhance decision-making for youth services and is a vehicle for

their empowerment, developing their skills and self-esteem as future adults (Sinclair, 2004). As a result, research on youth political engagement has been historically focused on exploring questions and mechanisms by which young people can engage politically, as well as seeking to understand the motivations and dynamics that characterize such participation (Shaw et al., 2014). These questions have been explored from different disciplinary perspectives, including political science, sociology, and social movement studies. Questions on the political agency of young people, the movements in which young people build solidarity for political action, as well as the opportunities and constraints in the broader socio-political context in which young people exercise their political rights, have all been addressed. These theories provide explanatory frameworks that shed light on micro and macro factors relating to the agency of young people, the influence of the environments in which they grow up, as well as the structural forces that shape their participation behaviors (Opp, 2009).

That said, there is now a significant understanding among policy makers that participation in elections and party politics constitutes only a small part of the possibilities for influencing society, the state, and the world that exist in an internet age, especially among young people. Alongside documented declines in electoral participation among young people worldwide, it appears that young individuals are open to engaging in a broad array of virtual and physical activities that can bring about change and impact both within and outside political systems. While recognizing that young people can bring about change and positively impact the world through various participation forms, it is important to point out that not all forms of children's participation constitute activism, and that not all young people who engage in participatory action identify themselves as activists. Taft and O'Kane (2023) make this clear in their differentiation of children's activism from other forms of children's participation such as advocacy and lobbying. In their conceptualization, they define children's activism as encompassing the activities and practices young people engage in through collective action, often within or against institutional norms and structures, aiming to disrupt the status quo and existing power dynamics. By highlighting collectivity and a focus on existing power dynamics as key defining features of youth activism, Taft and O'Kane show that such activism is often a thought-through activity undertaken by young people to achieve justice-oriented goals. This raises questions as to the factors that influence some young people, early on in their lives, to focus on social justice causes, as well as the enabling factors that makes it easy for them to organize and mobilize. Therefore, some of the key political and sociological questions on youth political participation have focused on the developmental and socializing processes by which young people come to acquire certain political behaviors and orientations, drawing on theoretical frameworks from the sociology of families, child psychology, and political communication (Easton, 1968; Haegel, 2020).

In particular, the emergence of new media has brought a new dimension to research into the political socialization role played by parental influence, peer influence, schools, and traditional media (Ohme & Vreese, 2020). Given the immense popularity of social media among young people, scholars have used political socialization frameworks to understand the role of these new forms of media in the socialization of young people into different modes of politics and political participation (Anderson, 2020; Bernardi et al., 2022; Intyaswati et al., 2021; Toksöz, 2021). As one example, social media is known to play a facilitating role in enabling interpersonal political discussions among young people that sometimes morph into off-line political engagement (Warren & Wicks, 2011).

Owing to the ubiquity of social media, and the amplifying and connective role it plays in youth social and political participation, studies have also sought to shed light on the dynamics of social media use in political and protest activities. The facilitating role of social

media enables young people to undertake transnational forms of activism that transcend national boundaries, allowing them to enact active global citizenship on international issues such as climate change and international conflict. The global network possibilities that new media technologies enable have also contributed to the emergence of what Juris and Pleyers (2009) call alter-activism: a form of activism that entails a commitment to horizontal, networked organization that facilitates direct action through action camps, leading to the generation of alternative values and practices. In regard to the facilitating role of social media, social network theories have been applied to youth political engagement in both on-line and off-line settings to explain participation behaviors, patterns, or dynamics. These theories show that participants in various activities are connected through both direct and indirect ties, and their propensity to engage politically is significantly influenced by these ties. Activists' positions in social networks are said to determine exposure to political influence (Cardon & Granjon, 2005; Fullam, 2017; Larson et al., 2019; Molina, 2019; Yuen & Tang, 2023). The emerging significance of social media notwithstanding, studies continue to point to schooling, parenting, and peer influences as important antecedents in young people's political and civic engagement, complemented by the ecological systems model that underscore the significance of the immediate environments in which young people are socialized (Allen & Bang, 2015; Warren & Wicks, 2011).

Scholars have also employed political opportunity theory to explain some of the structural opportunities and constraints within which youth political engagement is pursued. The key idea that underpins the political opportunity theory is that institutional context matters. The theory highlights the external political structures driving the extent to which youth activists can advance claims, mobilize support, or form alliances. It also emphasizes the activism strategies youth employ, as well as the extent to which they are able to effect change in mainstream institutional politics (Meyer, 2004; Vráblíková, 2013). For example, a study conducted by Reger (2018) in the US context shows that the existence of 'academic opportunity structures' in one university campus facilitated the emergence of a feminist activist sub-culture that enabled young female students to engage in campus activism. In a practical sense and on a broader political level, this brings to the fore questions about law and policy in certain jurisdictions aimed at regulating youth social and political activism. For example, in the US and UK contexts, there has been legislation to regulate protests deemed disruptive in outlook, with over 45 US states introducing or passing anti-protests legislations (Pickard, 2018; Serriere & Riley, 2024). These developments are likely to have a chilling effect on young people's protest activities, and curtail their propensity to speak out on local and global issues.

In light of such societal or policy making concerns about the appropriateness and legitimacy of some forms of youth activism, especially when arising within government circles and given weight by stringent government legislation, there is the need for theorizing that illuminate the different activism approaches young people adopt, and the resultant implications for their political rights. O'Brien et al (2018) developed a typology that identifies three activism forms, differentiated by how youth climate activists express dissent toward government policy responses to climate change: dutiful dissent, disruptive dissent, and dangerous dissent. These three forms are used to categories measures taken by youth activists as: within existing institutional structures; actions aimed at modifying existing political structures; or as proposing alternatives that target long-term transformation (O'Brien et al., 2018). This diversity of activism forms do not merely show the range of mechanisms by which youth activists engage with political power. Such a range also points to the extent to which governments are willing to tolerate and accommodate varied activism approaches as part of the democratic process, and even the extent of policy alternatives that young people promote through their activism.

Studies on youth political participation also draw on classical explanatory models relating to individual demographic characteristics such as access to resources, the civic and political attitudes linked to educational backgrounds, as well as an ability to mobilize, as important indicators of political participation and engagement. These models sit within broader classical social movement theories such as the Resource Mobilization Theory and New Social Movement theory, which shed light on the motivations driving youth political and social participation, and the socio-economic contexts from which participation emerges. The models also show how organizations are formed, and explain the framing processes for youth movements, which touch on both agentic and structural factors (Ubachs, 2022). Employing these theoretical frameworks, studies have shown that young people from middle class or affluent backgrounds engage more in social and political action than their peers from lower class backgrounds (Brady et al., 2020; Dean, 2016; Sloam, 2007, 2014; Teney & Hanquinet, 2012; Peterson et al., 2018). As a result, some scholars have raised concerns over the phenomenon of social reproduction (Charles & Allan, 2022). There are other studies that show differences along gender lines, with young women more likely to engage in protest politics, while young men engage more with institutional forms of politics (Gaby, 2017; Grasso & Smith, 2022).

In considering concerns over class reproduction in the activism of youth from privileged backgrounds, theory development extends into pedagogical models to support social and political action. Different sets of theories have been developed to address the tendency towards social reproduction in political and social action by young people from privileged backgrounds. These theoretical perspectives are used to foreground the involvement of high Socio-Economic Status (SES) youth in social justice activities, as well as to theorize the specific pedagogical approaches and community organising models suitable for engaging high SES youth. Examples of the theories used might include critical pedagogies, emancipatory social science, critical theory of justice, or Marxist theory (Allen, 2012; Førland et al., 2010; Swalwell, 2015; Wernick, 2012; Wheeler-Bell, 2017).

Underlying many of the social movement and protest theories discussed are questions around the role of structure and agency in youth activism. These theories are not isolated or discrete explanatory frameworks but are connected and interrelated in various dimensions and should be read and seen as such. The choices young people make in their political engagements, or in social movements, in terms of their creativity and strategies (agency), the gains they make, as well as the challenges they face, can only be understood in the wider socio-economic and political context (structure) in which they operate.

3 Gaps

3.1 Gap 1: Skewed research focus

In activism research, there is a pronounced skew towards studying forms of activism that are easily accessible and highly visible – the diverse and complex manifestations that arise in less obvious environments are often ignored. This narrow focus inevitably constrains our understanding of the full spectrum of youth activism, limiting the impact and responsiveness of policy development aimed at supporting young activists.

A critical analysis reveals that research predominantly gravitates towards widespread movements that capture public and media attention, such as the large-scale climate strikes frequently orchestrated in urban centres. These movements, while undeniably important,

represent only a small fraction of the activism landscape. In contrast, activism occurring within rural or marginalized (immigrant, gendered, racialized and indigenous) communities often grapples with nuanced and often intersectional issues like local environmental degradation, indigenous rights, and socio-economic inequities. These topics are frequently under-represented in research endeavors due to a multitude of barriers to access. In addition, youth activism within marginalized communities is often facilitated by other actors including NGOs, adults and schools. This masks the visibility of youth activism within these populations. In the context of Norway, for example, Berg-Nordlie (2018) has noted that the dominance of one Norwegian Sámi NGO in the governance of urban indigenous spaces for indigenous peoples risked frustrating local indigenous self-government, and is disconnected from the social and political activities of indigenous youth in local communities.

The challenges inherent in accessing and studying these less visible movements are profound. Geographical isolation can make certain communities less accessible to researchers, while cultural differences may pose additional hurdles in understanding the nuances and motivations behind local movements. Socio-economic barriers often mean that grassroots initiatives in underfunded areas lack the digital footprint or audience that could otherwise attract broader attention and study. This digital divide perpetuates a research gap where the voices of those in marginalized settings remain largely unheard.

Addressing these disparities requires a decisive shift towards diversified and inclusive methodological approaches. Researchers must expand their toolkits to include participatory action research, which empowers community members by involving them directly in the research process. This approach enriches the data collected and ensures research is grounded in the daily realities of participants. Similarly, ethnographic studies provide valuable in-depth insights into the intricacies of localized activism, capturing the lived experiences and contextual challenges faced by activists in diverse settings.

The implications for policy are significant. There is a dire need for comprehensive data collection initiatives that prioritize diverse and hard-to-reach communities. Such efforts would enable the development of policies that are genuinely reflective of, and responsive to, the varied landscapes of youth activism. By amplifying marginalized voices and understanding their unique narratives, policies can be crafted to address specific challenges and leverage the strengths inherent within these communities. This tailored approach would not only bridge the current gaps in representation but also foster an environment where all forms of activism are recognized and supported, contributing to a more inclusive and effective societal framework for change. Ultimately, by broadening the focus of activism research, we pave the way for policies that empower a wider array of young activists, inspiring and enabling them to drive meaningful societal transformation.

3.2 Gap 2: Educational deficit in activism

While young people are frequently lauded as torchbearers for future activism, there exists a pronounced educational deficit within schools, leaving many students frustrated by the lack of support and guidance in acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively engage in activism. This educational shortfall is particularly concerning given the complex and rapidly evolving nature of contemporary activism, which demands more than just a foundational understanding of civic duties or historical movements.

Current educational frameworks often prioritize traditional civic education, which, while important, may not fully engage or inspire students who are eager to confront and address modern societal issues. Such curricula typically emphasize theoretical discussions

and historical overviews without providing the practical applications required to navigate real-world challenges. To truly empower young activists, educational institutions must offer hands-on, experiential learning opportunities that not only teach students about the mechanics of activism but also allow them to practice these skills in a controlled, supportive environment (Glover et al, 2020; Mayes & Holdsworth, 2020).

The role of educators in this transformative process is pivotal. Equipped with the requisite resources and training, teachers will be better positioned to guide their students' learning of activism. This necessitates comprehensive professional development programs that focus on contemporary forms of activism, equipping educators with up-to-date knowledge and strategies to foster an environment of engagement and critical inquiry in their classrooms. Since much of today's activism occurs in digital spaces, it is crucial to integrate critical digital literacy into educational curricula. Students need to be adept at navigating online platforms, critically assessing information, understanding digital ethics, and engaging in online activism responsibly and effectively.

To bridge this educational gap, a multi-faceted approach is essential. Schools should aim to integrate activism education into broader curricular frameworks (Glover et al, 2020; Mayes & Holdsworth, 2020), enabling students to study past and present movements while developing crucial skills like critical thinking, communication, negotiation, and digital engagement. By embedding these elements into the curriculum, education can become a catalyst for student empowerment and societal change.

The establishment of "activism labs" within schools could serve as real life incubators for creativity and social impact. Similar to science labs, these spaces would allow students to tackle real-world problems through project-based learning, building skills through a continuous cycle of learning and application. Within these labs, students could experiment with strategies for social change, collaborate with peers to develop innovative solutions, and reflect critically on their process and outcomes. An example of activism labs has been implemented within undergraduate programs in the context of university education and provides insights into some of the pedagogical and practical issues required in creating such labs in schools (Desjardins, 2014).

In addition to internal educational reforms, schools should actively pursue partnerships with non-governmental organizations and community organizations. Such collaborations would provide students with invaluable opportunities for internships and field projects, offering firsthand experiences that deepen their understanding of the complexities of activism and potential impacts. Through these partnerships, students could gain practical insights and develop networks that support their growth as active, informed, and engaged citizens.

Overall, addressing the educational deficit in activism requires a shift towards more inclusive, practical, and digitally savvy educational practices. By prioritizing these changes, schools can prepare students not just to participate in the world but to transform it, equipping the next generation of activists with the tools they need to confront and solve the pressing issues of our time.

3.3 Gap 3: Socio-demographic vs. national characteristics

In our work, we found that youth activism is significantly shaped by socio-demographic factors rather than by strictly national identities, questioning the assumption that national-level policies alone can effectively address young activists' diverse motivations and perceptions. Echoing Ulrich Beck's 'methodological nationalism', this finding calls for a paradigm shift in how policy makers conceptualize and implement support structures for

activism, emphasizing the importance of socio-demographic influences over geographical or national boundaries.

Understanding the shared socio-demographic experiences of young activists requires a nuanced appreciation of how cultural and economic factors influence their engagement with activism. Socio-economic status, access to education, and residence in an urban or rural setting all profoundly impact a young person's approach to activism. These factors suggest that activism policies must transcend cultural stereotypes and geographic limitations to effectively nurture and harness the potential activism of diverse youth populations.

Intersectionality clearly plays a pivotal role in shaping youth activism. An individual's identity – encompassing race, gender, socio-economic background, sexuality, among other categories of difference – intersects to influence both their activist engagement and their worldview. Recognizing these intersecting identities is critical to understanding the unique challenges and motivations that drive young activists worldwide. This layered understanding underscores the inadequacy of a one-size-fits-all national policy framework and highlights the need for more localized and contextualized approaches.

In response, policy development must be localized to ensure relevance and effectiveness. In tailoring policies to community or regional levels, policy makers should collaborate with local stakeholders in communities to develop strategies that are adaptable to local needs, resources, and socio-cultural contexts. Such policies are more capable of genuinely addressing the diverse realities and aspirations of young activists, fostering environments in which activism can thrive unimpeded by broad, generalized policy prescriptions.

Fostering international cooperation and facilitating the exchange of best practices across borders is crucial. By learning from the successes and challenges faced by youth activists elsewhere, countries can develop more comprehensive and effective local strategies, by acknowledging the inherently interconnected nature of contemporary activism. This international collaboration can drive innovative policy solutions that move beyond national limitations, embracing a more global perspective on youth engagement in activism.

Policies must also be designed to be flexible and responsive, evolving in real-time through feedback from ongoing youth engagement and societal changes. This dynamic approach to policy making allows structures to remain relevant and supportive, nimbly adapting to the changing landscapes of youth activism. In doing so, policy makers can create a robust and sustainable framework that genuinely empowers young activists, allowing them to meaningfully contribute to societal transformation.

Based on the preceding, we think that addressing the socio-demographic versus national characteristics gap necessitates a fundamental rethink of how policies are crafted and implemented. By prioritizing localized, intersectional, and flexible policy structures, society can effectively support a vibrant and diverse community of youth activists, equipping them to confront and address the complex challenges of our world.

4 Conclusion

Envisioning the future of youth activism necessitates a critical examination of the systemic changes required across the education, research, and policy making sectors. Addressing the gaps we have identified is not merely about fostering youth engagement; it is about critically reshaping the structures that support and empower young activists to drive substantive social change effectively. The impetus for such restructuring is already provided for by global and regional educational frameworks such as the SDG 4.7 and the Dublin Declaration on Global Education. It remains for national education systems to localize and

adapt these to individual national contexts and community-level dynamics to empower young people through both school and out-of-school initiatives and reforms.

In the realm of research, there exists a pressing need for a paradigm shift. Traditional methodologies often fail to capture the dynamic and multifaceted nature of contemporary youth activism. Researchers must adopt innovative practices that embrace diverse technological tools and participatory approaches. This shift is critical for developing a holistic understanding of how young people engage with activism in varied contexts, from digital platforms to localized grassroots initiatives. Such an approach not only broadens the scope of research but also empowers young activists by validating their experiences and integrating their perspectives into scholarly discourse.

The educational sector also needs root and branch reform to align more closely with the realities confronting contemporary activists. Current educational paradigms often prioritize theoretical knowledge at the expense of practical application, leaving students ill-prepared for the complexities of real-world activism beyond the classroom. To remedy this, educational systems must integrate activism into curricula in a manner that balances conceptual learning with practical experience, without a fear of restructuring existing power relations. This process is critical for equipping students with the skills necessary for critical thinking, ethical deliberation, and strategic action in the service of social change. Educational institutions must also forge partnerships with activist organizations to facilitate experiential learning opportunities, linking academic insights to real-world applications.

The formulation and implementation of effective youth activism policies require a nuanced and collaborative approach. Policy making must evolve beyond isolated efforts into a more interconnected process involving multiple stakeholders: government bodies, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, and, crucially, youth themselves. This cross-sectoral collaboration is essential for crafting policies that are responsive to the needs and aspirations of young activists. By fostering a participatory policy making process, it may become possible to create frameworks that not only acknowledge but actively incorporate the lived experiences of youth, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes.

Critically acknowledging and addressing these gaps building a scaffolding for a future in which youth activism is not only supported, but is an integral component of a robust, socially engaged citizenry. Such an outcome demands a concerted effort to transform current practices and mindsets, highlighting the importance of structural change over superficial adjustments. This vision of change requires an unwavering commitment to questioning and reshaping existing systems, heralding a more equitable and dynamic societal landscape propelled by the informed and empowered actions of its youth.

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2.7 Youth participation in Global Education policy spaces: Practices and opportunities

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Abstract

Young people, whether as individuals or through youth-led groups and organizations, have been key partners in Global Education (GE). They have engaged in efforts and have been supported by enabling policy environments. However, this is often not documented. Nor has their agency in shaping policy processes been recognized. Their involvement in GE, including in the policy process, helps to avoid paternalistic or adult-centric approaches when making policies relevant for young people. This article illustrates how international and national educational policy frameworks have enabled and strengthened youth engagement in GE and provides examples of how young people and representatives of the youth sector have actively contributed to and influenced policy frameworks. It concludes that inter-generational dialogue and partnerships in policy processes could make GE initiatives stronger and more sustainable.



1 Introduction

Young leaders and youth workers, particularly as part of youth-led organizations, are increasingly recognized as key implementers and partners of non-formal Global Education (GE)⁶² actors across Europe. In short, GE fosters critical understanding of global issues, interdependence, and inequalities and encourages active participation in efforts to create a fair and sustainable world. However, this was not the case a few decades ago when most participants at GE events were policy makers, representatives of development NGOs, and educators working in the formal education system. Young leaders and representatives of youth-focused and youth-led organizations were much less present than today, when young people, whether as individuals or through youth organizations and networks, play a central role in GE. Young people are often aware of global social problems and are frequently participants and leaders in global campaigns (Bourn, 2017). They express concern about their future and value the key role that education plays in preparing them to face current challenges. Some have questioned the formal education system and raised questions about hegemonic, western modes of schooling (Biswas, 2023; Kvamme, 2019) as well as the issue of what is considered worthy of knowing and learning (Saeed, 2020). This is an important change in perspective compared to the frequent assumption that 'young people are merely the passive recipients or vulnerable victims of global change' (Bourn, 2017, p. 43).

Young people's work in non-formal education spaces and activism aims to respond to these concerns and challenges and raise awareness among their peers. They also appear determined to have their voices heard by all generations. They have responded to calls for action and have used existing international and national educational policy frameworks to further strengthen the legitimacy and relevance of their work. This work has been partially analyzed through the concept and practice of 'Global youth work', a form of development education which starts from 'young people's own perspectives and experiences and which develops a negotiated agenda for learning' (DEA, 2004, p. 21 quoted in Sallah, 2009, p. 41). At the same time, youth organizations have contributed to shaping existing policy frameworks through advocacy and engagement in policymaking spaces.

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62 Commonly the term Global Education is defined broadly as education that promotes the understanding of global issues or processes of globalization. However, in this article, this term is defined as used mostly in Europe, as included in the European Declaration on Global Education to 2050 (Dublin Declaration). This declaration defines it as: 'education that enables people to reflect critically on the world and their place in it; to open their eyes, hearts and minds to the reality of the world at local and global level. It empowers people to understand, imagine, hope and act to bring about a world of social and climate justice, peace, solidarity, equity and equality, planetary sustainability, and international understanding. It involves respect for human rights and diversity, inclusion, and a decent life for all, now and into the future. Global Education encompasses a broad range of educational provision: formal, non-formal and informal; life-long and life-wide. We consider it essential to the transformative power of, and the transformation of, education.' We recognise that other terms are being used interchangeably with the umbrella term GE, in both national and international contexts. For instance, Global Citizenship Education has been defined by UNESCO as an approach to help learners understand the world around them and work together as national and global citizens. Thus, although the two terms have different origins, they share the core conceptual characteristics and principles. For a more detailed discussion on terminology, see: Nygaard, A. and Wegimont, L. (2018) Global Education in Europe - Concepts, Definitions, and Aims in the Context of the SDGs and the New European Consensus on Development. Global Education Network Europe.

This is part of a broader trend in social and education policy making. There has been a growing recognition of the relevance of young people's participation in policymaking in general, especially on issues that concern and affect them directly, and more specifically in global citizenship education (Wierenga & Guevara, 2013). This has been accompanied by increased opportunities for participation. Although these opportunities enable and facilitate youth engagement and amplification of youth voices, scholars also question the extent to which this institutionalization of political youth agency also limits youth engagement (Kwon, 2018). At the same time, past studies show that 'whilst there are theoretically opportunities for young people to participate in democratic structures, many of these structures exist outside of the lifestyles and cultures within which young people operate' (Bourn, 2017, p. 48).

It is therefore central to analyze how participation is meaningful and consequential. Tools such as the Ladder of Participation (Hart, 1992) in which young people's engagement can range from manipulation, decoration and tokenism to full shared decision making, or UNESCO's Framework on Meaningfully Engaging Youth (2021) can be useful. The latter identifies four degrees of youth engagement: youth consulted, youth contributing, youth as partners, and youth as leaders. Though each of these ways of engaging can be meaningful depending on the context, the quality of preparation, facilitation, and follow-up, young people's agency can be expressed more fully when they partner and lead; that is, when they are part of the whole policy cycle, including agenda-setting, decision-making, and implementation.

This briefing illustrates how international and national educational policy frameworks have enabled and strengthened youth engagement in GE, showing the utility and impact of these frameworks. It looks at the impact of the Maastricht Declaration (2002) and focuses on the Dublin Declaration (2022) as regional normative frameworks and on the cases of Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, and Ireland to exemplify how youth engagement in GE was promoted through different approaches at the national level. By describing the ways in which 'youth' as a concept and as a set of actors appear in GE policy documents, growing recognition of the importance of youth participation can be identified as an important step in agenda-setting.

Second, this briefing identifies ways in which youth actors engage in policy spaces according to the four degrees of youth engagement noted above, and analyzes how youth agency is expressed so as to critically pinpoint opportunities and challenges. It provides examples of how young people and representatives of the youth sector have been consulted, actively contributed to and influenced policy frameworks, as well as partnering and leading efforts to make them relevant and appropriate for the challenges emerging from practice. Three examples of youth engagement in the international policy process demonstrate this: the process of youth engagement leading to the European Declaration on Global Education to 2050, known as the 'Dublin Declaration' (2021–22) at the European level; the process of youth consultations leading to the revised 1974 UNESCO Recommendation in 2023 and to the UN-led Pact of the Future Declaration in 2024. When analyzing these examples, it is argued that youth participation was meaningful as a result of youth actors' capacities to engage and channel young people's voices, but also because both international organizations' consultative processes and national youth policies and structures had a supporting role.

2 Enabling policy environments for youth engagement in Global Education

2.1 The Maastricht Declaration (2002)

From a historical perspective it is impossible to omit the 2002 Europe-wide Global Education Congress in Maastricht, the Netherlands, that brought together policymakers and practitioners, as it represents a milestone in the promotion and recognition of GE. Already then, the discussions included the role of young people in GE and the need to involve them further. For example, Olav Kjørven, representing Norway, highlighted this aspect centrally (NSC, 2003, p. 32):

The same development congregation should not be saved over and over again, uninformed strata such as the youth sector should be both the main target group and the engine in future Global Education activities. We have also created a Youth Panel that will monitor and criticise our development efforts.

This clearly shows how Norway's representative advocates for youth to be both the main 'target group' and also the 'engine' and proposes practical ways in which youth representatives can have a monitoring and advisory role.

Furthermore, Liam Wegimont, on behalf of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, explained that the Declaration was part of a long-term process that 'wishes to be inclusive of youth, gender, multi-cultural and other perspectives and will keep this to the forefront as we move forward' (NSC, 2003, p. 183). Youth organizations were present at the Congress and the Maastricht Declaration gave them a guiding framework to further develop this area. This approach was reflected in the Declaration's text:

5. Wish to commit ourselves, and the member states, civil society organisations, parliamentary structures and local and regional authorities that we represent to....
(...) 5.1 Take forward the process of defining Global Education and ensuring that a rich diversity of experience and perspectives (e.g. Southern, Minorities, *Youth* and Women's perspectives) is *included at every stage* (emphasis added).

The Maastricht process gave impetus to the GE sector and fostered collaborations with leading youth organizations such as the European Students Forum (AEGEE), the European Federation for Intercultural Learning (EFIL), Youth for Understanding (YFU), CCIVS (the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service), the International Workcamp Organization (IWO), and Youth for Exchange and Understanding (YEU). This is an example of how young people were consulted and contributed to specific actions, such as training. In particular, numerous trainings were implemented in the context of the University on Youth and Development by regional and national institutions in partnership with youth organizations that initiated and led workshops under this umbrella activity.

2.2 The Dublin Declaration (2022)

On the 20th anniversary of the Maastricht Declaration, the 18-month-long process of review, visioning and new Global Education Declaration development took place facilitated by GENE⁶³ in cooperation with member states and in consultation with key stakeholders, among them young people. The so-called Dublin Declaration, or the European Declaration on Global Education to 2050, was adopted on 4 November 2022. Since its adoption, this declaration has inspired youth work at international, national, and local levels across Europe. For illustration, the 2024 GENE Global Education Youth Award highlights youth-led Global Education initiatives, some of which were directly inspired by the Dublin Declaration. At the Pan-European level, the initiative Global Dialogues on Climate Justice implemented by the organization Youth and Environment Europe across Armenia, Bangladesh, Czech Republic, Nepal, Nigeria, Portugal, Slovenia, Turkey, and Yemen in the run-up to COP29 is a great example of an inclusive youth-led advocacy in Climate Justice, an integral part of GE.

At the national level, the initiative Green Skills for Youth with Different Abilities, proposed by the Albanian Beyond Barriers Association, stated as part of its application to the Award: 'This broader environmental education aligns with the goals of the European Declaration on Global Education, which emphasizes the need for young people to understand the interconnectedness of local and global issues.'

Other examples can be also found among international student organizations, such as AEGEE, the European Federation of Psychology Students' Associations (EFPISA); European youth parties, such as Youth of the European People's Party (YEPP); and international youth organizations, such as the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), Youth for Exchange and Understanding, and the Group of the European Youth for Change, among others.

2.3 How national policies have enabled Global Education in the context of youth work

GE is integrated and supported within development cooperation and education policies and there are aspects of GE in youth policies. Increasingly, GE policies have focused on young people more explicitly. Youth has become, in recent years, a clear priority in the development cooperation sector, resulting in a number of emerging GE initiatives where it can be observed that young people are considered more than beneficiaries, appearing timidly, yet increasingly, as implementing partners, accompanied by relevant funding.

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63 GENE, Global Education Network Europe, is the network of Ministries, Agencies and other bodies with national responsibility for Global Education in Europe. GENE supports networking, peer learning, policy research, national strategy development and quality enhancement. GENE works to increase and improve Global Education towards the day when all people in Europe – in solidarity with peoples globally – will have access to quality Global Education.

2.3.1 Belgium

The 2024 Belgium Strategic Note on Global Citizenship Education refers to the Dublin definition of Global Education and it specifies the importance of non-formal education, as well as includes a clear youth focus. This has been translated into the work of specific agencies and programs which have been important enablers of youth engagement.

The Belgian Development Cooperation Agency, Enabel, implements BeGlobal, an expertise center in Global Citizenship Education (GCE) that inspires, connects, challenges and mobilizes education professionals and young people to build a more sustainable and just world. It supports Global Citizenship Education in formal education, focuses on research and actions of international bottom-up youth engagement and promotes global awareness.

The project SoliDare Hub (2024), developed and funded by BeGlobal, wishes to highlight and support the commitment of young people to international solidarity. SoliDare called for youth-led international solidarity initiatives in Belgium aligned with one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). All selected initiatives benefited from advice, networking with international solidarity actors and other project leaders, coaching, personalized support tailored to their needs and funding of EUR 15.000. The initiatives focus on various areas, including: promoting cultural education and social cohesion through the practice of slam poetry as a tool for self-expression, learning, and intercultural dialogue in secondary schools in Belgium, Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi; issues of mental health; and social inclusion through sports, among others. This represents an example of how young people are trusted to lead and implement projects, with financial and technical support at both local level and in the country of origin.

2.3.2 Cyprus

GE is centrally integrated into Cyprus' s revised National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development and Green Transition 2030, permeating all levels of education through the official Curriculum, and including an emphasis on youth mobilization. Young people are also included in policy making spaces. Cyprus has an inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral committee at the level of the Ministry of Education, Sports, and Youth (MoESY) that brings together key representatives related to Global Education (GE), including civil society and youth representatives. In 2023, this Committee decided on the theme of GE week, to focus on youth and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The MoESY's vision features youth empowerment alongside its mandate to develop literate citizens with skills, responsibility, a democratic ethos, historical identity, and respect for diversity. There is an increasing tendency among policy- and decision-makers to create essential opportunities for including youth voices and perspectives to inform policy and decision-making.

The recognition of youth voices in policymaking is accompanied by youth-specific strategies that adopt a global perspective. The first National Youth Strategy (NYS) was developed through multi-stakeholder dialogue in which young people were contributors and in alignment with the EU Youth Strategy, leading to GE being included as one of the priorities under Youth and the World. This is set to continue in the renewed National Youth Strategy to 2030. The NYS called for an investment in young people, prioritizing their rights and aiming to enhance their prosperity and full participation. One of the main targets of the NYS is to reinforce the role of young people in the democratic process in Cyprus. In this case, the importance of youth being consulted and contributing to policy processes is evidenced.

2.3.3 Finland

Finland has a long-standing commitment to GE as reflected in its Global Education 2010 Strategy, where Global Education is defined as a multifaceted activity that guides individuals towards both individual and communal global responsibility. This approach is integrated in education at all levels, including non-formal education in the context of youth work. Research was conducted in Finland, resulting in relevant evidence on the bridges and gaps between research and practice on GE, and more specifically between formal and non-formal education settings, including youth work contexts. The newly adopted National Youth Work and Youth Policy 2024–27 emphasizes the importance of promotion of peace work and democracy education, as well as climate issues and sustainable development among young people. The Policy aims to strengthen the role of youth work in supporting young people's engagement in climate and nature issues nationally, at the EU level, and globally. This has meant support for awareness raising activities as well as those in which young people are actively engaged as contributors and in which they can take the lead. For example, Finland engages youth representatives in regular evaluations on global development and GE related funding instruments, resulting in various improvements including aligning calls for proposals from the NGO sector with the SDGs. This example illustrates efforts to include youth work, fund youth organizations and support young people in gaining the necessary competences to engage in Global Education consultative spaces as well as act as implementing partners.

2.3.4 Ireland

In Ireland, GE is integrated into all educational sectors, including the youth sector. The National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to 2030 published in 2018 and updated in 2025 (Republic of Ireland, 2025) has as one of its five focus areas empowering youth. This has been significant as young people's engagement with global issues in Ireland and at international level is expected and encouraged. Policies have enabled rich practices in the youth sector, notably through its support to the National Youth Council of Ireland. The Council has been playing a key role in supporting its members and representing youth voices, developing materials and programs, such as equipping Irish young people with advocacy skills and support to engage in national and international consultative spaces, such as the UN Delegates Programme (NYCI, 2021). This has resulted from the enabling environment created through the alignment of GE and youth work strategies, which included specific training opportunities for youth workers. In GE policymaking, young people are considered as leaders and partners: they access funding and implement projects and are included in consultative and decision-making spaces beyond those traditionally considered fit for young people. The inclusion of youth-friendly language in GE documents is another example of these efforts. Strengthening of GE in youth work has been based on good practice in formal education, resulting in relevant capacity building opportunities for youth workers in cooperation with a university. Moreover, SDG monitoring indicators were aligned and integrated with youth development ones and young people were included as partners in monitoring and reporting efforts; for example, through the UN Delegates annual reports. In addition, institutionalized strategic partnerships have been established with youth representative structures, resulting in young people's engagement with global issues in Ireland and at international level. Finally, the diversification of the funding modalities and overall increased funding, based on evidence and multi-stakeholder dialogue, resulted in greater access to funds by the youth sector for GE activities.

Looking at the GE policy frameworks at European and national levels, there are numerous examples of enhanced GE youth engagement, increased youth representation, and strengthened competence among young people that also contribute to the development of such frameworks at both national and European levels.

3 Youth contributions to policy frameworks

Youth organizations have been actively participating in national, regional, and international policymaking spaces for a long time, but more conspicuously in the past two decades. For example, youth organizations have joined and contributed to campaigns asking for increased percentages of national budgets dedicated to Official Development Assistance and participated in past Global Education policy making spaces. For instance, the European Youth Forum, OBESSU, Youth Services Centre Turkey, the National Youth Council of Ireland, Youth for Development and Cooperation, FEMYSO Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations all took part already in the Maastricht Congress in 2002.

The next section looks into the processes that benefit from youth involvement and inputs, focusing on the Dublin Declaration on Global Education to 2050 in Europe, on the one hand, and the UN and international processes in education, on the other.

3.1 Young people in the process leading to the Dublin Declaration on Global Education to 2050

Young people and actors in the youth sector in GE received notable recognition during the process that culminated in the European Declaration on Global Education in Europe to 2050. This declaration was adopted at the Dublin Congress held on 3–4 November 2022. This process began on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Maastricht Declaration on Global Education with the intention to review and renovate political commitments made in 2002 as well as contextualize them to current reality. GENE brought together policymakers, international institutions and key stakeholders in GE in Europe and beyond to take part in an 18-month-long consultation process that led to the adoption of the new Declaration.

As part of this process, consultations were held with representatives of youth-led and youth-service organizations, including a number of National Youth Councils across Europe. These consultations, coordinated with the European Youth Forum, took the form of a dedicated working group on Global Education (GE) and Youth.

This working group provided a platform for dialogue and the identification of youth priorities for the new Declaration. There were preparatory meetings in which representatives actively participated in the drafting of the Declaration's text.

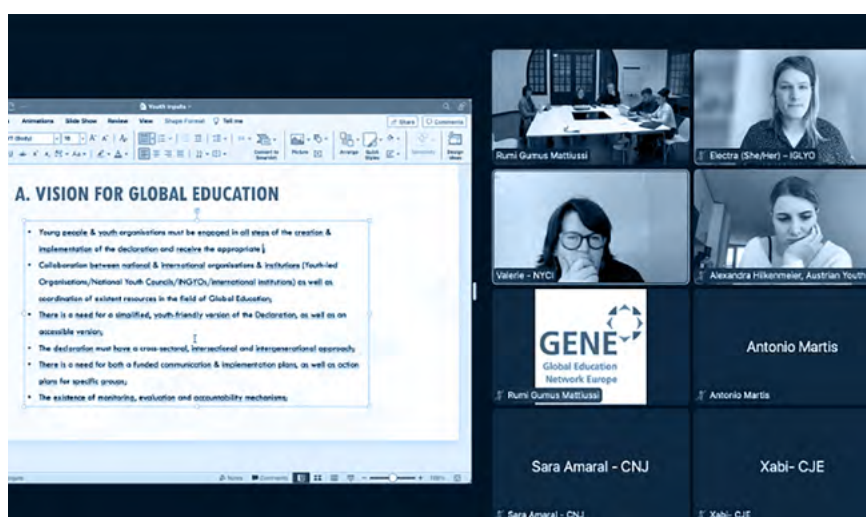


Figure 1: March 2022 hybrid meeting of the GE and Youth group (Source: GENE)

As part of the process, the GE and Youth working group decided to conduct a survey among young people and youth workers involved in GE in Europe. The survey was translated into several languages and involved hundreds of young Europeans. This informed the values, understandings, and GE activities in which young people are involved in Europe today. The representatives of the GE and Youth working group actively participated in dialogue with other actors in the process, mainly local and regional governments and CSOs, aligning priorities and presenting them to policymakers in charge of the Declaration drafting.



Figure 2: March 2022 hybrid meeting of the key stakeholders, including youth representatives, during the Declaration on Global Education to 2050 drafting process (Source: GENE)

According to the coordinator of the Youth and Global Education working group, Rares Voicu, a representative of OBESSU (Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions), ‘Youth participation is a fundamental part of building fairer, more inclusive societies. But meaningful involvement requires more than just goodwill or empty gestures—it demands structural support for young people and youth organisations alike.’ (GENE, 2024, p. 5). This thinking has been clearly reflected in the youth proposals to the Dublin Declaration.

The following issues highlighting youth priorities were brought to the Declaration’s Drafting committee:

- The importance of making non-formal and informal education settings and practices more central in the document;
- The need to recognize specifically the role of educators working in civil society organizations and consider their training;
- The need to assure accessible funding schemes for youth organizations, which often have little financial management capacity;
- The importance of making more and better use of existing youth engagement platforms, networks and mechanisms;
- The relevance of making the SDGs a reference point for the implementation of the Declaration.

The youth group played an active role in the drafting process of the Dublin Declaration, providing valuable feedback and comments on the draft text and articulating youth expectations from policymakers. These insightful contributions and feedback were carefully integrated into the declaration, ensuring that youth voices were heard and youth perspectives represented. This is an example in which youth representatives were not only consulted and contributed but also were partners in the drafting process.

According to Peter Butchkov, the former Acting Deputy Minister for Youth and Sports of Bulgaria, who spoke at the Dublin Congress, ‘We have a long way to go to empower and engage youth. I believe this shows that youth have a place in GENE. This is the right way to engage youth. Whenever they are stakeholders, invite them to work with you while you are working on the documents.’ (GENE, 2024, p. 17). This exemplifies the alignment of Global Education policymakers’ and youth in engaging young people and their representatives.

Young people represented 25 percent of participants at the Dublin Congress. Representatives of youth-led and youth-focused organizations participated as speakers and facilitators in several sessions, including at the Ministerial Session where a youth statement was presented, recognizing the pivotal role of youth in formulating the new European Declaration on GE to 2050. In addition, the event involved a select group of young journalists⁶⁴ who interviewed participants and developed youth-led perspectives through video footage on the Congress. Also, a talented young artist visually captured the essence of discussions, adding depth and interest to the event.

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64 Young journalists included Louise Finan, Fabian Boros, Matthew Jess, Alannah Wrynn, Darragh Walsh, Angel Williams, Carolina Meregalí da Rocha, Mark Healy, coordinated by TJ Hourihan / YMCA Cork, Ireland.



Figure 3: Piece of graphic harvest by Amy Lauren during the Congress (Source: GENE)

During the Dublin Congress, the Youth Parallel Session that took place in the plenary generated numerous ideas on how to engage young people in GE, including the following:

- Having youth-only panels and decision-makers in the audience;
- Inviting young people in from the beginning of the process;
- Creating Youth Advisory Panels;
- Recognizing the difference between youth representation and youth participation;
- Letting young people speak first;
- Developing youth research and ensuring collective representation.

The results of the youth sector's participation in the Dublin process showcased the depth and breadth of GE practices and the commitment to GE. But it also highlighted the need for a supportive policy environment that can respond to the learning needs of young people regarding GE, and that can also be nurtured by their ideas and innovative practices.

3.2 Young people's perspectives shaping UN policymaking related to education

Young people's contributions to policymaking in relation to educational policies can also be observed at the global level, and there is some evidence that indicates the role of national youth policies in enabling youth actors participation in these. Two examples of how young people expressed their perspectives in UN system consultative spaces related to Global Education illustrate this.

The first example is the contributions of young people to UNESCO's Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (commonly known as 'the

1974 Recommendation'). The perspectives of young people were gathered during a side event at the 2022 ECOSOC Youth Forum co-organized by the United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth (OSGEY). More than 160 participants from across the globe took part in the online consultation.

According to the consultation's report, participants raised issues such as 'the importance of youth agency and resiliency: in particular with regards to youth participation in the development and implementation of education policies and practices.' (UNESCO, 2022, p. 3). They expressed concerns about fragile political institutions and poor governance, socio-economic inequalities and challenges such as racism and poverty which continue to hinder progress in achieving peace, universal human rights, and the SDGs. In this context, adequate educational approaches and opportunities, including in non-formal and informal education spaces, were deemed crucial. This aspect was well-reflected in the revised Recommendation which connects formal, informal, and non-formal education, and advances the importance of a whole-of-society approach.

A second example is the contributions of young people to the Pact for the Future, which included a Declaration on Future Generations adopted at the Summit of the Future held in New York in September 2024. Young people expressed their perspectives and proposals in multiple ways, through specific events and participating in formal consultative spaces such as the ECOSOC Youth Forum in April 2024. To support their participation, they developed written contributions and public statements such as the one developed with the support of the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) the representative body for voluntary youth organizations in Ireland. Its GE work is supported by national policies and more specifically in relation to GE by Irish Aid. They developed the document entitled 'Recommendations of the Young People of Ireland for the Summit of the Future 2024' which specifically recommended (NYCI, 2024, p. 7):

Reform education systems and curricula for the seeds of peace to take root: Build a new type of education at the national and international levels focusing on *peace, local to global development*, and current events, to be *rooted in the Sustainable Development Goals*, therefore supporting people *to become empowered local and global citizens*. (Emphasis added).

Through their inputs and statements young people demonstrated how aware and concerned they are about global challenges and the key role of education when addressing these. Young people stressed the need for quality inclusive education, and this was centrally reflected in the final Declaration (UN, 2024a). Furthermore, during the Summit the vital role of young people's voices in shaping the discussions and decisions was highlighted as shown in public statements such as the one by UN Secretary General, António Guterres (UN, 2024b):

The Pact for the Future is about turbocharging the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement, accelerating a just transition away from fossil fuels, and securing a peaceful and livable future for everyone on our planet. It includes a groundbreaking commitment by governments to listen to young people and include them in decision-making, at the national and global levels. (Emphasis added)

These examples of youth participation in global fora, showing their understanding of issues and their deep awareness of how current decisions will affect their lives and those of future generations, demonstrate that young people's engagement is a prerequisite for a transformed and healed world.

4 Opportunities for strengthening policy and practice

The development of international policy frameworks requires strong political leadership, a vision, and a firm belief that change is possible, where there is dialogue, focus and coordination. Strategic frameworks such as the Dublin Declaration on Global Education provide an opportunity for Global Education at national level to strengthen its political relevance, as well as mechanisms of policymaking that increasingly include youth. The following paragraphs address opportunities for youth and GE at both international and national levels.

4.1 Opportunities at international level

The Dublin Declaration process has brought together the key European institutions working in the field of Global Education, namely the European Commission, the Council of Europe, including the North-South Centre, the OECD, UNESCO and UNECE, facilitated by GENE. The dialogue among these international institutions has contributed to the alignment of each other's work in GE, strengthened the understandings beyond silos, and enhanced cooperation in GE and mutual support at both regional and global levels. Youth has been a priority in GE policymaking during this process and has affirmed its place through the recognition of its importance and relevance.

One of the great opportunities of the Dublin Declaration internationally is to reinforce policy cohesion across different fields and sectors. Policy dialogue on themes related to Global Education needs to involve youth as an equal partner in policymaking. This is not a given, as it requires recognition of the role of young people in Global Education, a systematic engagement of young people in policymaking, as well as multi-stakeholder dialogue on GE. This also needs to be accompanied by relevant support and funding. In the conclusions of the recent Youth and Global Education: Practice and Policy chapter, youth involvement has a double benefit: 'Where youth sit together at the table as one of the actors in the multi-stakeholder dialogue on GE, there are increased possibilities for GE being integrated across youth policies, and at the same time youth concerns being present across GE strategy and its programmes.' There is an increased openness among many policymakers at both national level and as part of European institutions to involve representatives of youth organizations and national youth councils to take an active role in bringing GE themes into the different international policy fields, and to encourage youth actors to share their perspectives as part of GE policies and programs.

4.2 Opportunities at national level

International policy frameworks, including the Dublin Declaration, represent an inspiration and strategic guidance for policymaking at national level. Often, what is practiced in policy internationally has a direct impact at the national level. For instance, when youth is recognized as an important GE stakeholder internationally, opportunities at the national level arise. Within the context of the multi-stakeholder dialogue on GE at the national level, and in places where it was not common practice, youth representatives are getting invited to the table. Similarly, through national policy sharing among different countries, national policymakers are often inspired to dialogue on how to improve national mechanisms enabling youth participation in GE policymaking at all levels, including the formal education and non-formal education sectors. Dialogue and cooperation between civil society, local and regional governments and organizations on GE is enhanced when there is an enabling policy environment that facilitates networking, experience-sharing, peer learning, capacity building and access to diversified funding.

Given the complex realities at the national level, promoting national GE policy can be a challenge. Some countries develop clear national strategies on GE involving youth at every step of its design, implementation and evaluation. Other countries opt for strategic policymaking without having a national strategy such as a policy document, but rather developing mechanisms facilitating policy dialogues among the key stakeholders in GE, including youth, and providing support and funding to GE and GE actors. Whatever is the level of current youth involvement in GE policymaking, it can be further enhanced and explored together with young people, namely representatives of national youth councils and youth organizations.

5 Conclusions

Including young people and youth-led and youth-focused organizations in processes leading to agreed policy frameworks not only increases their legitimacy, but also the relevance of and support for the lines of actions proposed. Partnerships with young people in GE policymaking have moved from an *ad hoc* to a more systematic and institutionalized character at both international and national policy levels. While in many places youth participation has been legally supported, one has to be wary of tokenistic approaches to youth engagement and how to address those. Representatives of civil society and local and regional governments working on GE can also be great partners in strengthening the role of youth as partners in GE policymaking.

The Dublin Declaration provides opportunities at both international and national level, for enhancing GE policymaking while considering youth as equal partners, starting where the country or international institution is at. Guided by the GE values of solidarity, global social and climate justice, and the vision of a better world, where everyone has access to quality GE and is inspired to take action locally, nationally and globally, young people together with policymakers are invited to take the steps jointly. In some cases, this may require innovation and development of new ways of cooperation. In others, it may require new knowledge development through involving young people in defining the policy research agenda in GE and creating new opportunities for youth-led research in GE. In conclusion, there are immense possibilities to further strengthen the role of young people in GE policy and practice. Let us explore them further together with young people.

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Aaron Benavot serves as Professor of Global Education Policy in the School of Education at the [University at Albany-SUNY](#). His [scholarship](#) explores diverse educational issues from comparative, global and critical perspectives, most recently on the monitoring of adult education, global citizenship education, and the ‘greening’ of education. For nearly 8 years Aaron worked at UNESCO headquarters, first as Senior Analyst and then Director of the [Global Education Monitoring Report](#), an independent, evidence-based [report](#) analyzing progress towards [international education targets](#). He also served as a Fulbright Specialist in Vietnam (2018) and a High-Level Expert at the East China Normal University in Shanghai (2019), in both instances focused on lifelong learning. Since 2020 Aaron has overseen indicator development at the [Monitoring and Evaluating Climate Communication and Education](#) project, which publishes case studies, [country profiles](#) and [global indicators](#) of climate communication and education to inform intergovernmental discussions and national policy making.

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Libby Giles is Director of the New Zealand Centre for Global Studies and has been engaged in global citizenship education (GCED) for 16 years. With a background in philosophy and international relations, her work is centred in understanding who we are and what makes us citizens of the world. As a teacher and senior leader in schools, her focus was holistic and whole of school. Recent roles have given Libby a range of opportunities to provide support across sectors and levels of learning. She is developing a suite of 'Step up to the World' initiatives that are about learning to embrace opportunities with courage and responsibility. Inspired by her role as a 'global critical friend' to the Dublin Declaration and partnership in the Asia Pacific dialogue on UNESCO's Recommendation, Libby seeks to coordinate and support efforts in Aotearoa and the Pacific. Conversations with potential partners on research and projects with impact are welcome.

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Susan Iannuzzi is an education consultant in curriculum design, materials development, and assessment. She specializes in first- and second-language curricula. She has worked with local partners to draft national curricula and has led ministry textbook teams in these subjects in Africa, the Middle East and Central and Southeast Asia. Her original materials have been published by Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, and McGraw-Hill as well as regional publishers.

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Mary Kangethe is the Director/Education at the Kenya National Commission for UNESCO (KNATCOM). Having previously served as the Coordinator of the Inter Country Quality Node (ICQN) on Peace Education under the Association for Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). She led the designing and implementation of key national peace education programmes in Kenya including development of an Education Sector Policy on Peace Education, integration of peace education into the curriculum, conduct of research, capacity development of teachers and development of peace education teaching and learning materials. She previously served as an official in the Ministry of Education (quality assurance and education officer and policy developer) at local and national levels.

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Manuela Mesa is a researcher and consultant specializing in Global Citizenship, Peace Studies, and Gender. She holds a Ph.D. in Sociology and Anthropology. Since 2007, she has served as the editor of the Annual Yearbook on Global Trends and Conflict. She is the Director of the Center for Education and Research for Peace at the Autonomous University of Madrid. Dr Mesa has worked extensively with development NGOs and research centers focused on peace and conflict studies, contributing to the Spanish Peace and Development

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Nele Noe is an international education consultant with over 25 years of expertise in teacher training, educational reform, and school improvement projects. She holds a Master's degree in International Educational Leadership and Policy (US), as well as a Master's degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (UK). As a University of Cambridge certified teacher trainer, she is committed to promoting continuous professional development around the globe. Nele has collaborated with educators from more than 50 countries across 30 nations. Her expertise encompasses customized training, coaching, curriculum development, and school improvement programs. Her recent engagements with UNESCO, the British Council, and other global organizations and Ministries of Education span multiple regions, and includes addressing post-pandemic challenges through innovative hybrid solutions. With a focus on tailoring professional development to diverse cultural contexts, she prioritizes partnerships with local entities to deliver high-quality CPD, fostering improved student outcomes and educator growth. Originally from Belgium, she champions innovative and reflective practices in education.

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Andreas Schleicher is Director for Education and Skills at the OECD. He initiated and oversees the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and other international instruments that have created a global platform for policymakers, researchers and educators across nations and cultures to innovate and transform educational policies and practices. He has worked for over 20 years with ministers and education leaders to improve education. Former US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said that Schleicher “understands the global issues and challenges as well as or better than anyone I’ve met, and he tells me the truth”. Former UK Secretary of State Michael Gove called Schleicher “the most important man in English education” – even though he is German and lives in France. He is the recipient of numerous honours and awards, including the “Theodor Heuss” prize, awarded in the name of the first president of the Federal Republic of Germany for “exemplary democratic engagement”. He holds an honorary Professorship at the University of Heidelberg

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Margaret Sinclair has worked on education planning and education in emergencies with UNESCO, UNHCR, Education Above All and other agencies. She initiated a UNHCR (later INEE) Peace Education Programme (operational in refugee camps in Kenya, 1997–2005) and has since published several books under the title 'Learning to Live Together' and related themes. In 2018, she was a co-founder of NISSEM, seeking ways to help put 'learning to live together'-infused materials into the hands of teachers and students in low and middle income countries.

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Andy Smart is an education, textbooks, reading and publishing specialist with over 30 years' experience working in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Having started his career as an English teacher in Sudan and Egypt, he worked in education and children's publishing in the UK and Egypt before becoming an independent consultant. His interests and expertise are mainly in textbook policy and development, educational publishing sector development, primary education and curriculum development, literacy, and educational materials development, including training, mentoring and collaborating in developing textbooks and reading books. He has written books for children, published several academic papers and is vice-president of the International Association for Research on Textbooks and Educational Media ([IARTEM](#)). He is also a founder member and co-convenor of [NISSEM.org](#).

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Dylan Wray is an innovative education leader and globally respected facilitator with over 28 years of experience spanning teaching, curriculum development, and digital transformation. Dylan pioneered AI tools for learning design and co-developed custom AI tutoring systems. He recently launched the School AI Navigator programme, training and supporting school teams to responsibly and ethically integrate AI in education. His extensive international experience includes facilitating Global Citizenship Education training for UNESCO APCEIU for 10 years. As a human rights and democracy education specialist, he has supported teachers and Departments in Colombia, UK, USA and Kenya, where he co-wrote the Children's Report of the TJRC. As Executive Director of Shikaya, he led

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Professor Miri Yemini is a full professor at the Technion - Israel Institute of Technology, specializing in education research. With a background in the exact sciences and business administration, she’s a member of the Young Israeli Academy and founder of the Technion’s People & Planet Lab, focusing on Global Education policy and sustainable development. Her globally recognized research, published in leading journals and books, has earned her numerous awards. She leads a major ERC COG-funded research project on youth activism and has held various visiting professorships internationally.

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The ***NISSEM Global Briefs*** series aims to show how SDG Target 4.7 themes and social and emotional learning (SEL) can be embedded in education policies, programs, curricula, materials, and practice. Since the publication of the first volume in 2019, the series has become well-established as a regular overview of an important dimension of education worldwide.

This fifth volume highlights the potential of international and regional policy frameworks—especially the European Declaration on Global Education to 2050—to inspire transformative education.

Through 12 papers by a total of 20 contributors from a wide range of countries, and an introductory conversation among the co-editors, Aaron Benavot, Douglas Bourn, Margaret Sinclair and Andy Smart, this volume explores how education systems can navigate global challenges while cultivating student agency, resilience, and hope. It also examines the role of textbooks, social media, AI, and diverse cultural traditions in shaping meaningful learning experiences, particularly in low- and middle-income contexts.

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Global Education Network Europe (GENE) is the European network of Ministries and Agencies with national responsibility for policymaking, funding and support in the field of Global Education. Working towards the day when all people in Europe, in solidarity with peoples globally, will have access to quality Global Education.

ANGEL

ANGEL was established through close collaboration between Global Education Network Europe (GENE) and the Development Education Research Centre (DERC) at IOE, UCL, the Otto-Friedrich-University Bamberg (Germany), the University of Oulu (Finland), and the University of Bologna (Italy). ANGEL responds to a growing need to strengthen connections among scholars and academic institutions and with policymakers engaged in Global Education and related fields.

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