

4. EDUCATION AND LEISURE

The only way to educate for democracy is to educate democratically. If the link is established, a virtuous circle can be drawn facilitating better and broader access to education and from there, to a wider respect for human rights.

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Education is a fundamental human right in itself. It is an essential for human development as well as a tool to attain and enjoy other rights. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) establishes that everyone is entitled to education and that education should be provided free at least at the basic level, which should be obligatory. Article 2 of Protocol No.1 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) guarantees the right to education for all. Secondary schools, professional training and university studies, which in today's Europe are still not accessible to everyone, should be as widely available as possible.

However, free access to basic education alone is no longer considered sufficient to guarantee the right to education. Three other requirements should be met:

1. **Equal opportunity:** The state should guarantee not only equal access, but also equal opportunities for success. This means that some children may need extra help and special conditions. Deaf children, for example, have a right to reasonable arrangements to help them learn, such as sign language, hearing aids and interpreters whenever needed. Similar adjustments should be made for all children with special needs so that they can be included in the same schools with other children and have an equal opportunity to succeed. For example, some children, such as children of travellers' groups in some European countries, may be deprived of their right to education if special schooling is not provided to accommodate their parents' nomadic way of life.

Equality in opportunities for success in education also requires attention to other aspects such as the use of a child's mother tongue, homework conditions, access to books, or any learning difficulty. Learning in one's mother tongue not only favours school success, but also constitutes a cultural right. School failure is no solution for learning difficulties. These must be met by well-trained teach-



ers capable of differentiating learning styles and with non-teaching staff such as social assistants, mediators or psychologists. Equal opportunity in education plays a key role in fighting poverty.

2. **Quality education:** The state should guarantee equal access to quality education. Too often a two-tier system exists, with one kind of schooling for the elite with well-trained staff and a high-quality infrastructure, and another for the poor without the necessary technical and human resources. A basic education that is common to all up to a certain age and that promotes the knowledge and skills needed for the future should be guaranteed. But quality education cannot be limited to increasing material inputs into the school system or enhancing school effectiveness. As defined by UNESCO,¹ quality education must be based on a human rights approach and address new areas including cultural diversity, multilingualism in education, peace and non-violence, sustainable development and life skills.
3. **Education for full development of the human personality:** The education to which all human beings are entitled is not just the fundamentals of literacy and numeracy. The UDHR explicitly states that education should aim at “the full development of human personality, the respect of human rights and understanding and peace among the nations of the world”. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) elaborates further on the kind of education to which every child is entitled:

The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.

CRC Article 29

The right to education is therefore also the right to an education for human rights. This holistic view of education can be served by both formal education and non-formal education, which refers to educational programmes outside the formal school system and are often provided by non-governmental organisations. The two forms are complementary to each other.

It may seem strange to some children that education is a right but also obligatory. They might understand this requirement if they could learn about children who do not have access to schools and consider how this deprivation may affect their present and future lives.

Linked to this issue is the question of children’s work. While adults are entitled to ‘the right to work’, children are entitled to special protection from excessive or dangerous work. Going to school is considered the child’s main ‘job’. However, some children must work to support their family’s survival, and all children can – and should – help their families. Many children work in summer to earn pocket money, which can be an important life experience with a strong educative function. However, children should also know that laws protect them from abuse and from activities that are dangerous or harmful to their health. A child’s work should never interfere with the right to education or the right to rest and play (CRC Articles 32 and 36). Children can learn about exploitative child labour in the past through stories or films. Older children should learn about modern forms of children’s work and understand the difference between appropriate work for young people and exploitation.

Challenges to education in the twenty-first century and a new focus in education policies

In 1996 a UNESCO commission provided an outline of the main tensions facing the world and affecting education:²

1. tension between the global and local
2. tension between the universal and the individual
3. tension between tradition and modernity



4. tension between the spiritual and the material
5. tension between the long term and the short term considerations
6. tension between competition and equal opportunities
7. tension between the extraordinary expansion of knowledge and the capacity of human beings to assimilate it.

As a strategy that could help address these challenges, UNESCO has highlighted 'four pillars' of learning:

1. *Learning to live together*: Specifically, this means that education should strengthen in students the skills and abilities necessary for them to accept their interdependence among other people: to manage conflict; to work and plan with others for common objectives and a common future; to respect pluralism and diversity (for example in gender, ethnicity, religion and culture); to participate actively in the life of the community.
2. *Learning to know*: This means that education should help students to acquire the instruments of knowledge: the essential learning tools of communication and oral expression, literacy, numeracy and problem solving; to gain both a broad general knowledge and an in-depth knowledge of a few areas; to understand rights and responsibilities; most importantly, to learn how to learn.
3. *Learning to do*: Education should help students to acquire occupational skills and social and psychological competencies that will enable them to make informed decisions about diverse life situations, to function in social and work relationships, to participate in local and global markets, to use technological tools, to meet their basic needs and to improve the quality of their own and others' lives.
4. *Learning to be*: Education should contribute to developing the personality and enabling people to act with greater autonomy, judgement, critical thinking and personal responsibility. It should aim to develop all aspects of potential: for example, memory, reasoning, an aesthetic sense, spiritual values, physical capacities and communication skills; a healthy lifestyle and enjoyment of sports and recreation; an appreciation of one's own culture; possession of an ethical and moral code; an ability to speak for and defend oneself; resilience.

These educational challenges have motivated other international organisations to develop new strategies to meet future objectives of education. The European Union in its Lisbon Strategy³ specified key competencies necessary to achieve an effective and well-trained citizenry in Europe:

- communication in the mother tongue
- communication in foreign languages
- mathematical competencies
- basic competencies in science and technology
- digital competence
- learning to learn
- social and civic competencies
- sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- cultural awareness and expression.

Two key concepts are being integrated into European educational policies: the vision of *lifelong learning* in a *learning society*. The idea is a community where people are offered different possibilities to develop their competencies throughout their lives. There is a growing recognition that in these processes formal education and non-formal education have complementary roles. Non-formal education is able to address a wider range of topics and methodologies. Its more flexible approaches may provide literacy and other skills to millions of children and adults who are denied access to the formal education system or who are functional illiterates.

QUESTION: *Have you ever participated in any non-formal training? What was your experience? How did it differ from formal education?*



The right to leisure and play

Play is of such importance for a child's health and development that it is recognized as a fundamental right in Article 31 of the CRC. According to the International Association for Children's Right to Play, "playing ... is a fundamental activity for the development of every child's potential ... because playing is a way to learn to love and to invent life and not merely a way to spend time."⁴ At any age a child at play is developing skills, exercising the body and imagination, and engaging in crucial socialisation. The same Article of CRC goes on to state that children have rights "... to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and (States) shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activities."

Playing, cultural and artistic activities are not simple recreation and joy. These activities contribute to the development of a child's autonomy and promote their interpersonal and intercultural skills. Through play and art children can experience key principles of human rights such as respect, dignity, equality, inclusion, fairness and cooperation.

Sports also convey the social values of participation, cooperation, commitment, effort and positive competition. However, to derive these educational benefits from sports, facilitators and children alike must consciously use them for such purposes and also be aware of the dangers that sports can present, especially when they become predominantly competitive.

International organisations, human rights and education

UNESCO Programme 'Education for All'

The World Education Forum held in 2006 accepted the Dakar Framework for Action, the new worldwide strategy on 'Education For All', which is to be implemented by UNESCO and governments in the following decade. This programme focuses on early childhood care, quality education, eliminating gender disparities between girls and boys, and the improvement of life-skills.

Council of Europe

Council of Europe activities on education are based on the **European Cultural Convention**. There are two main sectors of the Council involved in education, the Directorate of Education School, Out-of-school and Higher Education and the Directorate of Youth and Sport. The activities of the Directorate of Education School, Out-of-school and Higher Education concentrate on quality education, modern education policies, intercultural dialogue through education and education for democratic citizenship.

The Directorate of Youth and Sport elaborates political guidelines and initiates programmes for the development of coherent and effective child and youth policies at local, national and European levels. It provides funding and educational support for international activities aimed at the promotion of child and youth democratic citizenship, participation, human rights education, social cohesion and inclusion of young people. The Youth sector works as a European resource centre on non-formal education.

The Council of Europe also promotes sport as a mean of developing fair play and tolerance among people and encourages healthy lifestyles and participation in sport. For example, in cooperation with the European Union the Council produced the *Clean Sports Guide*, an educational pack for schools and sports organisations.

Useful Resources

- Delors, Jacques, *Learning: the Treasure Within*: Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century: UNESCO Publishing, 1996:
www.unesco.org/delors/delors_e.pdf



- *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning*, Doc: (2006/962/EC), Official Journal of the European Union, 2006:
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_394/l_39420061230en00100018.pdf

Useful Websites

- Council of Europe: www.coe.int
- Directorate of Youth and Sport, Council of Europe: www.coe.int/youth
- Enabling Education Network: www.eenet.org.uk
- European Paralympic Committee (EPC): www.europaralympic.org
- European Sport Charter: www.coe.int/t/dg4/sport/SportinEurope/charter_en.asp
- Football against Racism in Europe: www.farenet.org
- International Play Association: www.ipaworld.org/home.html
- Let's kick racism out of football: www.kickitout.org
- Right to Education Project: www.right-to-education.org
- UNESCO: portal.unesco.org/education

References

- 1 See UNESCO, Peace and Human Rights Education: www.portal.unesco.org/education
- 2 Delors, Jacques, *Learning: the Treasure Within*: Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century: UNESCO Publishing, 1996, p.16
- 3 *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning*, Doc: (2006/962/EC), Official Journal of the European Union, 2006
- 4 'Declaration' International Play Association, 1982

