



Education, Democracy and Peace

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We live in an Era of globalization, fuelled by rapid innovation and liberalization of habits. Our system of global governance is, however, rather primitive as much as education is, while nationalism is rising leading to civil strife and conflicts. Our ethical standards are also far from perfect. There exists inequities between individuals as much as in nations, and our environment is being destroyed.

It is important to improve the links between school education, civil society and the family, making good use of results achieved in school or out-of-school, to learning how to develop skills with a strong ethical component in a world of expanding information, a condition for survival and of personal and social progress to guarantee the access to societal relations and an acceptable degree of peace by means of culture, by respecting values like tolerance, understanding, acceptance of differences, cooperation and peaceful settlement of conflicts.

Improving conditions and strategies to foster the development of education is the basis for encouraging solidarity, improving the quality of teaching, and rendering the educational system more effective and useful to society. It is, in fact, important and urgent to mobilize public opinion with a view of giving greater priority to educational progress.

Within the modern context of decentralized education systems, the State will be required to strengthen its own role and to take responsibility for ensuring that the basic needs of everyone are met, equal opportunities exist and the administration has the ability to propose and manage educational changes and to preserve the impartiality of the system.

It is, however, recognized that *Democracy, Peace and Education* have become very crucial factors in the evolving patterns of modern societies as there cannot be Progress without Peace, no Peace without development, and neither Peace nor Development without an appropriate platform of Education. The dynamic interaction of these factors provides the context in which citizens live.

Education systems must be designed and monitored in order to respond to new conditions in such a way as to ensure that Democracy, Peace and Education are fostered by giving priority to underprivileged groups, and to women.

A prominent problem currently faced by higher education is the poor quality of syllabuses and of teachers, institutions, scientific, cultural and technological structures. The capacity to fulfill these needs demands cooperative work to ensure justice for deprived groups, minorities and especially girls and women abused by intolerance, violence at domestic and social level, and xenophobia. These problems have actually created an urgent need for cooperation in the fields of education, to encourage efforts and reinforce understanding for respecting individual, social and cultural differences.

The role of associations, public institutions, non-governmental organizations and the State shall not be reduced but shall grant conditions to overcome disequilibria, abuse, organized violence and environmental degradation. This new role of institutions is expected to diminish tensions and foster stronger participation of citizens, in order to build a solidary society.

The organization and role of families have regretfully changed in recent years. Families have become smaller and the number of one-parent homes (many headed by single mothers) has significantly increased. The traditional parents' role and domestic tasks have also changed, determining new types and new channels of communication. As a result, there is less control over children and youth, who now have more free time to spend in the streets and be members of groupings characterized by ignorance with lack of interest concerning history or future scenarios.

There is also a variety of profit-making institutions using low-cost teaching strategies, lacking adequate information needed to help students and their families in selecting higher education and careers.

Training elites is a crucial aspect of educational policies as the massive expansion of higher education in recent years has triggered a growing variety of institutions and generated wide differences in the quality of teaching. In fact, the goals of the concerned institutions are no longer homogeneous as the system is becoming increasingly bureaucratic, while the enrollment of students poses greater financial problems, resulting in a sharp decline in educational quality and admissions.

The role of educational institutions should adapt to actual changes generated by decentralization, new market forces and increased accountability. A balanced distribution of functions between central, regional and school authorities should be defined as they require qualified staff especially in the areas of management, informatics, testing and research. It may be necessary, accordingly, to change the criteria and mechanisms for staff selection, to collect and diffuse information for making education more transparent. At the same time, Principals and teachers should not be responsible for selecting textbooks. In summary, the design of educational strategies shall be regarded as a new challenge for implementing effective learning systems, with social consensus.

A well informed public opinion is crucial for building consensus and promote education by supporting efforts aiming at: a) improving the pedagogical qualities of teachers, b) evaluating achievements reached in any rank of educational contexts, c) encouraging research projects and comparing the results in a systematic manner granting social approval, d) and inducing less bureaucratic regulations generated by vested interests.

Today there is a real need to improve the diffusion and sharing of knowledge and value tolerance that can reduce risk of future conflicts. One cannot in fact expect to contribute appropriately to social, economic and cultural progress if educational system produces a higher level of illiteracy and dropouts who do not possess the necessary skills to be employed.

A transdisciplinary area which we ought to examine within all these key-fields is *Education for a Culture of Peace*. This issue deals with how to educate people to respect Human Rights. This also implies decisional experience in the light of examples provided by History all over the World.

Other organizations contributing to sustain and diffuse *Education for Peace* are UNICEF, UNFPR, the World Bank and IDB in cooperation with the United Nations Development Program and UNESCO. In the United Nations the theme of *Education for Peace* remains however a principal preoccupation. The military and diplomatic apparatus deployed areas around the world are a risk for millions of people. Only Education for Peace can stop this.

“A positive concept of Peace goes beyond the mere absence of war.”

It is evident that international organizations such as the U.N., the European Union, and others have an important role to play in promoting continuity and knowledge of national and international educational policies, thereby providing guidance to avoid frequent changes of governments and international organizations, and fighting corruption at institutional and political level.

A positive concept of Peace goes beyond the mere absence of war and encompasses issues based on physical violence in the sense that Peace results in Security, Security results in Peace, and Peace results in Progress eventually with the aid of Diplomacy.

Through the experience we have acquired in recent years Humanity’s culture of Peace seems to grow, violence is eventually avoided through negotiations, compromises and other diplomatic initiatives, in a way that has had an effect on the human sensitivity. We have seen how the League of Nations evolved into the creation of the United Nations, though today the ‘Veto power of certain Nations’ at the Security Council becomes a disturbing obstruction, hampering Peace and Human Rights.

The U.N. is in fact today a very important institution for human Peace and Progress which Mankind cherishes, starting from the almost total abolition of death-penalty, slavery, epidemics and analphabetism, as the EURO-CHINA Association has heralded since its creation.

EURO-CHINA is a Europe-based organization. It was set up under the auspices of the European Union and the United Nations, registered in France. The creation of EURO-CHINA received full support by the business communities and the governmental agencies in Europe, in China and generally in all developing countries, as well as by the European Commission, the UN, the World Bank, etc. This Program fosters Peace between Nations and aims at converting centuries of errors into a heritage for future generations along the slogan: “Never more war, but Peace and Security for All.”

EURO-CHINA provides assistance to nations in all these areas by diffusion of information about trade and investment, organization of study tours, fairs and exhibitions, market surveys, projects design and implementation, such as the very recent “New Silk Road” project launched by China’s President Xi Jinping.

To this purpose EURO-CHINA is actually preparing a calendar concerning the next Annual Forum “Meet your Partner”, with the support of institutions and enterprises from various parts of the world. (For further information please contact euro-china@libello.com)

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