



The Challenges for Future Education: A Global Perspective

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1. Introduction

Today we are living in a globalized world where interconnections between human beings as individuals, and nations and states, are becoming wider day by day, making us encounter cultures that are pretty different from our own.

These interactions are increasingly growing not only because of the modern amazing tools that make them easier than in the past (take the internet and the social networks for example), but also because today, as a globalized world, we find ourselves in front of difficult and complex challenges which necessarily need a global response in order to be solved: we need each other to survive not only as nations and states, but as a species. So, what is the role that higher education systems should play in this context? Universities across the world host students that one day will be the leaders of our world, those who will work to solve national problems and who will cooperate with other leaders in order to solve global issues and to build a more united international community.

This is why universities should provide their students with all the right tools that they will need in future not only to have a successful career, but also to be able to create valid international cooperation that will allow them to find creative and shared solutions for all kinds of problems.

But now the question is: what are these tools?

2. Moving Towards a Global Education

Universities are places where the adults and leaders of tomorrow are forged. It is then very much important to make higher education free of charge for those students coming from lower income social classes: this is a first step to ensure that those who are willing to invest their time in higher education are able to do it so they can direct their lives towards self-realization; in this way not only will we stimulate social mobility, but we will also build a fairer society with a qualitatively better human capital. Resuming free education means better chances for both individuals and societies.

Having said that, we need to remind ourselves how universities should be places where students not only are taught, but where they can grow as self-conscious and self-confident individuals, finding the chance to acquire important skills while developing their personal qualities, understanding what their path is in life. At the same time, they should be educated in order to be able to live in this complex world, knowing its history and its characteristics in an in-depth way.

Education should then be based on three main pillars:

1. Knowledge
2. Competency
3. Values and Skills

2.1. Knowledge

- a. knowledge of the globalization process: students should be able to fully understand globalization, analyzing it in a critical way; they should know how to recognize its positive effects but also be aware of the negative ones, thereby learning how to deal with them.
- b. knowledge of human history and philosophy: students should interiorize through education those that can be considered the most important and universal human values, such as the prominence of human rights, of democracy and of social justice; they should learn the fundamental significance of dialogue both between individuals and countries/cultures.

2.2. Competency

- a. critical thinking: universities should teach students to deal with complex problems and to analyze them with a critical and open mind; students should also learn the importance of reconsidering their opinion in the face of new evidence.
- b. ability of seeing problems and facts from different points of view: this is a very important point. How can universities ensure that students are able to fully understand a particular issue? The answer may be multidisciplinary or even transdisciplinary: these two approaches can be central in showing students how different disciplines can contribute to explain the complexity of the world and its challenges.

Today's problems and challenges are much more complex than in the past and cannot be explained in any satisfying manner if not analyzed from every possible point of view: only in this way we will be able to see the whole picture and to take wise decisions in order to tackle problems. Different disciplines should collaborate in a student's education in order to make him analyze and resolve complex issues.

- c. intercultural competency in communication: this is an aspect that must not be underestimated. A university student should be taught to recognize the worth of any culture and to understand how every single socio-economic system can contribute to enrich the whole world. Our own culture is not the best in absolute terms. At the same time, not only recognizing the worth of other cultures is important; it is fundamental to give students all the right instruments to create solid communication canals with other cultures, in order to establish a strong cooperation which is indispensable for tackling global problems, which require global solutions that can be reached only through an active cooperation built through mutual respect and understanding.

It is very important that students learn how to imagine a common future with better living conditions for everybody. Future education should find then a new paradigm that

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challenges inequality by boosting feelings of solidarity among human beings, allowing students and future leaders to see themselves as part of a bigger human community.

- d. team working: this is all about making sure that students participate in activities which require teamwork: only with constant practice in such kinds of activities they will understand how everyone can contribute in the achievement of a particular goal, on the basis of our personal qualities and skills.
- e. ability to deal with conflicts: conflicts, when we talk about humans, considered both as individuals and as societies, are pretty common, probably even inevitable. This is why students should be taught how to avoid them or, when necessary, how to deal with them in a wise way: talking about international politics, they should understand how war prevention is one of the most important issues in the world today. Our chances of survival as a species are based on the capacity of preventing wars and other kind of conflicts.

2.3. Values and Skills

- a. self-esteem, self-confidence: Even if these two elements seem to be quite simple to understand, they must not be taken for granted: in universities students should understand that the worse kind of failure is not trying: they must be encouraged to commit themselves to studying and to all kinds of parallel activities. They should be encouraged to get out of their comfort zones and to try new activities and challenges: if they fail, they must understand that from failure we rise. Failure helps us to improve our skills and to correct our mistakes. If they succeed in their tasks or activities, their confidence gets a boost: if we are able to develop fully confident youth, not only we will raise the chances of seeing them achieve their goals in life, but we will have raised great individuals whose life will have a positive impact on the whole society.
- b. social responsibility: students should learn the importance of social justice, the importance of creating a fairer world at all levels—national, regional and global levels.
- c. environmental responsibility: we have only one planet, but we still take it for granted. Students must learn that it is our responsibility as humans to make sure that our environment is respected. Especially today, since one of the main global issues is global warming, a complex problem which connects different dimensions of our living: politics, economics, etc.

3. Methodologies

What can be some good methods to make sure that higher education can provide students with the needed skills and abilities?

Here are a few proposals:

3.1. Global connections between universities.

It is important for students, as already mentioned, to know other cultures and comprehend their values. How can this be done?

- a. student exchange programs: implementing and strengthening student exchange programs is probably the best possible way to achieve this goal. Sending students to study abroad and welcoming students from different parts of the world is the absolute best way to ensure an interchange between countries and to let students understand other cultures and countries and their points of view.
- b. hosting researchers and professors coming from other parts of the world: by doing this, universities will enrich their didactics, giving students the chance to benefit from listening to professionals with different approaches to teaching.
- c. making sure that students know about the existence of the so-called MOOCs: in this way students will know how to have online access to courses taught by other universities. Universities should participate in this, and have their courses on online platforms.

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3.2. Making students work on a project

Students should learn how to work on a project both alone and in a team. Such projects should also be presented and discussed in front of the whole class, so that students learn not only to write an essay, but also to speak properly in front of an audience.

3.2. Making sure students have access to cultural anthropology courses.

On the basis of my very personal experience, I think the importance of anthropology is underestimated: this subject can provide students with the right tools and knowledge to understand cultural relativism: there is no hierarchy between cultures and knowing this is fundamental in order to create a valid cooperation with other countries.

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