Futures of Education: Learning to Become Initiative

Contribution from the World Council on Intercultural and Global Competence to the UNESCO Futures of Education Initiative
Contents

Introduction

Trends Impacting the Futures of Higher Education
  • Technology
  • Exploitation of Global South
  • Environmental Crisis
  • Resources: Competition, Inequality, Insecurity
  • Role of Government
  • Nationalism & Polarization

Shared Optimism for our Collective Futures

The Future of Higher Education

Futures of Education 2050

The Role Intercultural and Global Competence in 2050

Conclusion

Prepared by Yovana S. Veerasamy, Ph.D & Amy Rasmussen, M.S.
Spring 2021
Introduction

UNESCO’s Futures of Education initiative aims to rethink education and shape the future. The initiative is catalyzing a global debate on how knowledge, education and learning need to be reimagined in a world of increasing complexity, uncertainty, and precarity (UNESCO, 2021).

The World Council on Intercultural and Global Competence is a member organization which supports researchers and practitioners in developing a better understanding of Intercultural and Global Competence (IGCs). Additionally, the World Council advocates for assessment of IGC as an outcome in curricula. We believe that maintaining IGCs help promote a peaceful and more socially inclusive citizenship within multicultural societies and across international borders. As part of the consultation process of stakeholders interested in the Futures of Education initiative, UNESCO invited the World Council to participate in a series of focus groups in February 2021; highlights from the discussions are shared in this report.
Trends Impacting the Futures of Higher Education

Participants referred to several major trends that will emerge to impact the futures of education worldwide by 2050. The major trends and their impact are considered in turn.

**Technology**
Technology was praised for its benefits, yet the need to maintain ethical use of technology surfaced as a concern for the future. Reliance on technology in societies raised concerns with respect to ethical development of technology, cyber security, data privacy, misuse of personal data, ethical use and dissemination of Artificial Intelligence, and the proliferation of misinformation over the internet. While the benefits of technology in the delivery of online or digital learning was applauded, addressing deficits in equitable access to technology in the 21st century is a must.

**Exploitation of Global South**
Participants referred to the effects of the existing pattern of exploitation of the southern hemisphere, specifically in relation to the extraction of resources and its ensuing effects on our interconnected existence. The negative effects of this continued exploitation will impact food, water, education and will force human migration.

**Environmental Crisis**
Climate change and environmental challenges were highlighted by participants. Most significantly expressed regarding lifestyles in the global north and the adverse effects of exploitation and harm towards the planet’s natural resources and biodiversity. The impact of climate change and its effect on societies as witnessed in our recent past give cause to adopt creative, sustainable, and equitable solutions to these challenges.
Resources: Competition, Inequality, Insecurity
In an increasingly populated world, the dependency on resources is a cause for concern. Food insecurity and water scarcity are becoming deeply ingrained in multiple societies and in some instances were described as catalysts for forced migration and war. The ongoing destruction of resources is a high-level issue requiring a global solution for access.

Role of Government
Mistrust and dissatisfaction with governments and politicians is another concern. Fear of governments' inability to resolve societal challenges has stirred increased activism amongst youth. The destruction and scarcity of resources has caused increased numbers of refugees. Migration and movement of people will require equitable global collaborative solutions. Access as a concept should be viewed not only as a basic need, but as a fundamental human right.

Nationalism & Polarization
Factors which generate nationalism and polarization are a concern to be addressed. Nationalism and competition for resources have in part led to increased human migration and scarcity of resources. Central to the need in addressing these issues is an understanding and respect between cultures. Using IGC is pivotal in reimagining development of a peaceful, sustainable world in which we can all coexist.
Shared Optimism for our Collective Futures

If we make a deliberate effort to address current challenges, we can view the future with more optimism. Several factors can be leveraged in support of this optimism.

**Technology**
Future ethical development in technology can account for the development of more technology platforms. Broadening and improving access through technology can help us work creatively across cultures to address collective challenges in communication and education.

**Science and Innovation**
Reliance on scientific research and innovation can help enhance the quality of human life. For this to happen we need to increase global collaborations, a currently under-utilized effort. Failing to collaborate means that knowledge is not being shared, this is an impediment which leads to poor dissemination of valuable information. Effective global collaboration requires specific skill sets as much as resilience, flexibility and creativity.

**Collaboration**
The times of crisis have allowed us to reflect on many issues which characterize how we interrelate in an interconnected world. Moving forward we need to increase global collaboration to tackle challenges that impact us collectively. Global collaboration will allow us to view challenges from a broader global perspective as opposed to a narrowed national perspective.
Renewable energy
By leveraging technology we can develop sustainable energy alternatives to meet our growing needs and resolve scarcity. In addition we can develop technology to meet our growing challenges.

Equity & Equality
Our coexistence on the planet requires us to share resources equitably; by doing so we will move towards greater equality. The way Faroe island fishes for whales was cited as an existing example which shows that we can share resources equitably. We also need to work towards greater equality in access to education. The changing face of our current experiences means that larger numbers of children will be learning from their families and not school systems and we need to prepare for that.

Intercultural and Global Competence
Intercultural and global competence (IGC) should not be marginalized in the 21st century. By developing IGC, we can reduce polarization within and between nation states. As activism among young people increases, knowing people who are “different from you” will help deter nationalism and help in humanizing different groups.
The Future Of Higher Education

How should what we learn, how we learn, and where we learn change in the future?

What we learn
What students learn and the provenance of curricula content needs reevaluation. Eurocentric curricula content should be revised to include decolonial narratives and cultural diversity, namely to reflect and respect the true and diverse nature of the world. International centers should refrain from driving curricula. To achieve diversity in curricula, teachers need to be trained in diversity, equity, and inclusion. This training will be relevant in teaching culturally diverse classrooms. “Five Is” should define student learning outcomes:

- Integration
- Inclusivity
- Interconnectedness
- Innovation
- Interculturalism

How we learn
The global health pandemic has led us to reflect on how we learn. We currently lack global collaboration. Future education programs should train learners on global collaboration. We need to move towards more information sharing, first to broaden knowledge and second because open access to information has the potential to assist in solving tomorrow’s challenges. In this vein, at the starting line of collaboration, future collaborators should stand at par with each other to ensure equity between collaborators from the global north and collaborators from the global south. This aim is to achieve equal treatment of collaborators. Placing future collaborators on equal footing will ensure the inclusion and integration of diverse perspectives on challenges and will allow equal rights to development to prosper for different groups.
**Where we learn**

Although today we typically learn through school systems, be it in person or online through technology, the future of learning is forecasted to emphasize what happens within the family. What students learn should be practical, relevant and ethical. The multiple ways of learning must be respected to value the different ways of being human, and inclusion should be at the heart of learning.
Collective Purpose of Futures of Education 2050

The collective purpose for the Futures of Education was perceived by many as needing more global collaboration. Engagement with governments along this path was deemed crucial for the success of our collective futures.

Educational outcomes for students in the future must focus on developing multiple skill sets, including critical thinking, creativity and flexibility. In addition, academic training must be more practical in nature. While theory is important, what is of relevance is being able to use and apply educational content and for students to become change-agents. Vocational training should no longer be underestimated and intentional efforts must be made in education systems to recognize both traditional and non-traditional forms of learning.

In an interconnected world order ICG must be included in curricula to prepare students for direct interactions with diverse cultures. ICG will also facilitate collaboration within and across cultures. Students should have requisite skill sets to identify as citizens of the world so they will be better able to engage with all parts of the world. This will require skills that allow students to work creatively within global teams and with diverse members.

While diversity received a lot of attention, the issues of inclusion, equity and access were also raised. In the future more efforts should be made to provide diverse learners access and inclusion into the education system. Equitable access to education is the way forward for education and intentional efforts should be adopted to dismantle unequal access to education.
Role of Intercultural and Global Competence in 2050

Intercultural and global competence (IGC) are globally required in the 21st century both as the inevitable result of our deeply interconnected world order and the need to respect cultural diversity in our world. In order to succeed in embedding IGC in curricula, it is important to utilize IGC as a frame through which to develop curricula which would go beyond knowledge to include key intercultural skills and attitudes, as well as multiple perspectives. Education should be revamped to include teacher training explicitly on IGC. It is deemed essential that students be exposed to IGC in early childhood. The aim here is for all students to learn IGC with a view to engage in lifelong IGC for more successful relationships with others across difference. Technology can be an ally in providing tools to achieve this desired outcome (see for example, UNESCO Story Circles which are aimed at developing and practicing key intercultural competencies virtually or in person).
Conclusion & About World Council on Intercultural and Global Competence

Conclusion
The futures of education will rely on educating for action. Educators must be trained to share intercultural and global competencies with students in respect of a diverse and interconnected world and multicultural classrooms. Having these required competencies to collaborate equitably across the Global North and the Global South will enable the development of policies and practices which will result in graduates able to use technologies ethically, take action to sustain our environment, innovate to widen equitable access to resources, counteract efforts that divide us, and to build a better world together.

About World Council on Intercultural and Global Competence
The World Council on Intercultural and Global Competence connects researchers, practitioners, educational institutions, and organizations across disciplines, languages, and countries to advance knowledge, research, and praxis of intercultural competence globally. There are four core values guiding the non-profit and non-governmental organization; Global Collaboration, Interdisciplinarity, Praxis, and Engagement. The World Council promotes concrete methodologies for developing intercultural competence such as the UNESCO Story Circles. Its community members are interested in researching various aspects of intercultural and global competence and translating such research into real-world application, through grant-funded projects, toolkits, and other resources. The World Council actively publishes through its publication Intercultural Connector and blog. The World Council works alongside its Founding Affiliates, continuing to open pathways for communication and collaboration.
About World Council on Intercultural and Global Competence

There has been over 60 years of scholarly work on the concepts of intercultural and global competence, much of that in the Global North. There are over 30 terms used for these concepts and many different definitions. Below, we provide the first research-based definition of intercultural competence, along with a recent definition of global competence. The World Council does not endorse any framework or definition and encourages the continued exploration of these concepts. Furthermore, the World Council focuses on interactions across differences, whatever those differences may be (i.e. gender, generation, religion, race, socio-economic status, etc.).

- Intercultural Competence is the lifelong process of developing targeted knowledge, skills, and attitudes leading to behaviour and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions (Deardorff, 2006, 2017)

- Global Competence is the capacity to examine local, global and intercultural issues, to understand and appreciate the perspectives and worldviews of others, to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with people from different cultures, and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development. (PISA, 2018)

Core mission of the World Council on Intercultural and Global Competence

The World Council on Intercultural and Global Competence connects researchers and practitioners across disciplines, languages, and countries to advance knowledge, research, and praxis of intercultural competence globally. To foster a foundation for intercultural understanding across individual and societal differences in pursuit of a more peaceful world.

Warmest thanks to the following World Council members for their participation in the focus groups in February 2021:

- Mohamed Abdel-Kader
- Shingo Ashizawa
- Paulina Bendana
- Carolyn Finck
- Margot Gill
- Jeanine Gregersen-Hermans
- Julia M Gonzalez
- Mark Harris
- Lorlene Hoyt
- Suzan Kommers
- Francisco Marmolejo
- Tojan Rahhal
- Darla K. Deardorff