

# EXTENSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS TO EDUCATION II

CONTINENTAL CONFERENCE  
IN AFRICA  
DEMOCRATISATION & DECOLONISATION  
OF EDUCATION

STUDENTS' VIEWS ON THE  
RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN TIMES OF  
POLYCRISES

PROJECT ARTICLE 26  
LECTURE SERIES · 2022-24

SELECTED TOPICS &  
POLITEKNIK ARTICLES



**Poli**Teknik

a publication of the Project Article 26



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**ZEYNEL KORKMAZ**

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**PREFACE**

Our first book under the Extension of Human Rights to Education Project (in short: Project Article 26) was published in June 2020. This book contains selected papers from the two symposia held in Germany in 2016 and 2018, as well as selected articles from the article series titled „Ideas and Recommendations on Extension of Human Rights to Education” published in the PoliTeknik journal.

Project Article 26, which originated as an idea in the fall of 2015, aims to renew the 26th article of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights with a progressive declaration based on broad legitimacy, bringing it into line with the requirements of the modern age.

Today the project is celebrating its 10th anniversary. During this period, many institutions and organizations that supported the project joined us as partners. These are mostly unions from the education and other sectors including public, service, health, agriculture, construction, textile, forestry, and mining sectors. We are talking about approximately 100 unions from around 45 countries across 4 continents, as well as universities, student unions, academics, associations, publishing houses, and other organizations.

The 5-year period following the first book witnessed many different developments. For example, we witnessed an extraordinary moment in world history with the Covid-19 pandemic. International multiple crises, ranging from war to

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the economic crisis, the extraordinary restriction of democratic and social rights at the national level, to the obvious violation of international law, and from there, a new and profound rupture for humanity, the genocide against Palestinians.

This 2nd book of Project Article 26, you are holding in your hands, is a compilation of a series of studies conducted to shed light on these periods of multiple crises and to illuminate these periods. Well, what did these studies entail? A digital book initiative to be prepared and published by university students, a conference held in Johannesburg in December 2023, and a lecture series that began in 2022. In addition to these studies that comprise the chapters of the book, the final section includes a selection of articles published in PoliTeknik journals and articles on specific topics. All of these studies have been efforts focused on extending the right to education or offering perspectives and developing discourse in this direction. Now let's take a closer look at these initiatives.

### **1) A digital book initiative with university students and the metamorphosis of this initiative in relation to Article 26 of the Project**

In 2020, as PoliTeknik, we launched a digital book project examining how university students analyzed and interpreted multiple crises, primarily the pandemic, and what kinds of democratic demands and forms of action they developed within the scope of these analyses. The following objectives were set for this digital book, which university student unions will publish and own as co-publishers; to bring together the experiences gained by students during the pandemic and multiple crises in a permanent work for readers, to enable student unions to contact each other and to be mutually informed about the democratic struggles they carried out during those periods, and to help them cooperate with each other on a voluntary basis.

How could we reach student unions we had no connection with until then, especially when the idea was to do this on a global scale? It was difficult to establish contact with them, because we had to research and track down their whereabouts either generally or country by country based on certain words in different languages on the Internet. As time passed,

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it became possible to find out the contact information of student unions through their websites or social media accounts, and thus establish contact. We also asked our Project Article 26 partners to help us establish communication with the students. Within this framework, positive results were also achieved.

Articles submitted in response to the first international call for the digital book project developed under the heading *“STUDENTS’ VIEWS – Human Rights to Education in Times of Covid-19 and other Crises”* were published in the 3rd issues of the online PoliTeknik International, PoliTeknik Español, and PoliTeknik Português magazines in September/December 2020. The invitation read as follows:

*“Dear Student Friends from all over the World,  
This is a call! A call to go beyond our local and national scaled conditions and to meet on a shared platform at a macro level! We see the necessity to share our views, to interact with each other and to articulate our benefits. It is clear that we have enough reasons for such an interaction. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that humanity is a whole entity; however, the economic, social and political crises as well as the destruction of nature are equally valid examples for the previous claim.*

*This is an Invitation! We can experience that students from all around the world are listing their demands and dreaming for a better, more just future regarding their natural right to education. All these efforts are precious, and their permanence would mean a great success. We, the Students eBook Project aim such a permanence and take a step to become a shared voice on a global scale.*

*Because of this reason, we have managed to come together due to our members who participate from Latin America, Africa, Europe, Oceania and Asia. We kindly invite you and would like to see you in our ranks!*

*The title of the eBook is: “STUDENTS’ VIEWS – Human Rights to Education in Times of Covid-19 and other Crises”*

*Dear friends,*

*With this in mind, we would like to invite you and your organization to be a part of this mission by writing an article for our new eBook. This eBook will be a co-publication with all stu-*

*dents' unions which accept our invitation. This eBook will focus on students' perspectives on the following topics:*

- 1. Ideas and suggestions on the Extension of the Human Right to Education*
- 2. Student protagonism and social movements*
- 3. Colonialism, International policy, Economy, Independence*
- 4. National education policies and current education reforms*
- 5. Teacher training and Human Rights*
- 6. Black lives matter and other antiracist or antifascist movements*
- 7. Covid-19 and its consequences to education*
- 8. 100 years of Paulo Freire and his legacy*

*The desired length of the article is minimum 2,500 words and maximum 7,000 (including references). Deadline for receiving these articles is the end of march 2021.*

*We would like to hear personal perspectives/experiences with socio-political changes affecting education, the current pandemic, its psychological impact on students, mass movements etc. in your country. With this wide range of thematic areas, possibilities are endless!*

*We are in constant contact with professors, scholars, UN, UNESCO etc. so that we can secure funds in order to get physical copies of this eBook published. With a plethora of views on all these topics, we aim to understand global situation of accessibility to quality education better.*

*A further project could be the organization of an international scientific survey with students on the Extension of the Human Right to Education.*

*[...]"*

So who were the members of the eBook project? We were able to establish so many contacts that we had created exceptionally favorable conditions for truly high-quality work. The list, which would later change, was as follows:

- Malawi National Students Union MALAWI
  - Southern African Students Union SASU
  - Federación de Estudiantes del Perú FEP • PERU
  - Students' Federation of India SFI • INDIA
  - Independent Youth Association BAGEP • CYPRUS
  - Correnteza Students Movement • BRAZIL
-

- 
- The International Relations Students, Representation at the State University of Paraíba • BRAZIL
  - Sindicato de estudiantes de Cataluña SEPC • CATALUÑA
  - Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios del, Ecuador FEUE • ECUADOR
  - Law Students' Union of SRI LANKA
  - Kurdistan Students Association • IRAQ
  - Hyderabad Students Unions • INDIA
  - Revolutionary Students Front RSF • PAKISTAN
  - Students of Social Work, University of Barcelona • CATALUÑA
  - The Union of Communist Students • FRANCE
  - Student from the University of Santiago • CHILE
  - Communist Workers and Students for the Social Change • PUERTO RICO
  - Youth Syriza • GREECE
  - Youth Coalition For Education in Liberia YOCEL • LIBERIA
  - Studens from the University of Toliara • MADAGASKAR
  - Uganda National Student's Association UNSA-NEC • UGANDA
  - Student Union of the University of MAURITIUS
  - Bangladesh Students' Union • BANGLADESH
  - Students Union University of Ibadan • NIGERIA
  - Zimbabwe National Students Union ZINASU • ZIMBABWE
  - Students group from the University of EAFIT • COLOMBIA
  - Burundi National Students Union BNSU • BURUNDI
  - tudents Union, National Polytechnic University Institute Bamenda-Cameroon • CAMEROON
  - Swaziland National Union of Students SNUS • SWAZILAND
  - Czech High School Students Union CSU • CZECHIA
  - University of Mozambique Finalist Students Association AEFUM • MOZAMBIQUE
  - Brigada Estudantil • PORTUGAL
  - SV-Bildungswerk • GERMANY
  - General Association of pupils and students of the Ivory Coast (AGEECI) • IVORY COAST
  - Synergie des Eylèves et Eytudiants du Togo SEET • TOGO
  - Des Eytudiants en Lettres Arts et Communication (CELAC) • NIGER
  - A Student from the Mulungushi University • ZAMBIA
-

However, after much effort, all the student and student unions that came together for the digital book were unable to write articles and submit them to the editorial board by the specified dates, perhaps precisely because this period of multiple crises was being experienced. The deadline has been extended repeatedly, but no results have been achieved. Even though we don't have enough articles to publish the planned digital book, we still received a number of articles.

This digital book project by university students took two years to complete. Subsequently, the initiative itself was re-structured in July 2022, and since then, efforts have been made to continue with a new list of students.

In this second phase, an unexpected development occurred, and teachers' unions also joined the social media network we had just established. The relationships we have been working to establish with the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) since 2015, within the scope of Project Article 26 and the "Ideas and Recommendations on Extension of Human Rights" article series, have unexpectedly and positively flourished within this network. We will discuss below how positive this development has been.

In any case, the second phase of the digital book project with university students, like the first phase, had to be terminated in 2024, much to our regret, because the articles did not reach our editorial board by the specified and renewed deadlines.

The articles submitted to the editorial board were deemed appropriate for inclusion in this 2nd book because their primary subject matter was education and they were directly related to Project Article 26. In this book, you will find articles written by university students from Brazil, Germany, Sri Lanka, Spain, Mauritius and Ivory Coast.

### **The metamorphosis of digital book work -**

#### **Turning point 2025**

Now let's move on to the metamorphosis of this digital book project.

PoliTeknik International, PoliTeknik Español, and PoliTeknik Português featured the following headline on the front page of their 7th issues published between January and April 2022: *"International Students' Council (ISC)- PoliTeknik's*

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*invitation to student organisations worldwide for a united platform – the groups’ positions. On 18th of April 2022, a video conference was held on this objective.”*

Student organizations that came together at PoliTeknik’s invitation adopted the idea of forming an “International Students’ Council” and discussed how this council could be shaped in articles they wrote for PoliTeknik magazines. However, this initiative to establish a council came to an end unexpectedly, due to an external intervention that we will clarify in future. This process was followed by a new and unsuccessful attempt in September 2023.

And finally, in 2025, the idea of establishing an *International Students’ Council* came up again. One of the relationships established for the digital book was the South African Students Congress (SASCO). We were in contact with Letlhogonolo Dire from SASCO. It was possible to contact new student unions regarding the establishment of the ISC based on Dire’s initiative. These student unions expressed their support for the establishment of the ISC in articles published in the January-April 2025 issues of PoliTeknik International and PoliTeknik Español (Why wasn’t it published in PoliTeknik Português? Well, PoliTeknik Português, which we managed to publish only 7 issues without the editorial team that left us by breaking away, is now available online).

We informed the student unions that establishing the council could take between 6 months and 1 year, but they acted quickly. Surprisingly, by the end of July 2025, an Interim Constitution had been drafted and adopted by unanimous vote. Efforts are continuing to stabilize this council. The interim executive board was elected and commenced its duties.

As the main objectives of the International Students’ Council include the democratization of education, we believe that opportunities for cooperation with Project Article 26 will arise sooner or later. We have already informed them that we would like to invite them to a conference we plan to organize in Johannesburg next year, if possible. This conference will take place within the scope of the Project Article 26 Pilot program. Pilot program? Yes, this is also an important issue that will be discussed below when addressing relations with SADTU.

To summarize, university students whose paths crossed with our digital book project, which began in 2020, contributed to the second book of our project, and also entered a path where they could organize themselves through ISC and potentially become partners in the future with Project Article 26. We wish them success.

## **2) December 9–10, 2023 - Johannesburg Conference**

We decided to hold a conference on the 75th anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The 3rd event in the scope of the project, titled *“DEMOCRATISATION and DECOLONISATION of EDUCATION - Continental Conference on 9/10 December 2023 – Johannesburg”* was initially planned to be held in Zambia, but developments showed that conditions were more favorable for it to be organized in South Africa.

When the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (SADTU) agreed to become a partner in 2022 and offered its support with a large team, there were no obstacles left to holding the project’s new conference in Africa. We extended our gratitude to both SADTU and, through them, to the Minister of Basic Education of the Republic of South Africa, Ms. Angie Motshekga, for her opening address at the conference.

Since Project Article 26 seeks to formulate a declaration based on broad legitimacy, it naturally raises questions about which issues will be prioritized in different countries and regions around the world. Within this framework, the prominence of the concept of „decolonization” in Africa is quite natural. Indeed, the colonialism that the continent has faced for centuries and continues to face has become one of the major problems, it must be erased from education as well as from all other aspects of society, and never to return.

If a conference were to be held in Türkiye –and preparations for such a conference have already begun– what would be the main topic? Of course, it would be the restructuring of education in accordance with the principle of laicism, alongside the debate on semi-colonialism. This should not be surprising for a country where feudal relations still persist to a certain extent. Or, as in India, the caste system must be addressed when the right to education is reformulated in a progressive manner as a human right.

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The December 2023 Johannesburg Conference was instructive in terms of presenting a general framework for education in a country or continent, and it served as a reference point for future conferences.

Selected topics address the history of human rights in Africa, establish the relationship between democratization in education and national independence and economic progress, and discuss the effects of privatization-related problems on education and society in Africa. a platform is provided for university students' analysis of education policies and their democratic demands, opinions are expressed on worker education, and the problems of refugee education are described, and the examination of whether the current reform initiatives for the democratization of the UN are sufficient was facilitated from an African perspective. It is clear how accurate the title chosen for the conference is, especially in a context where the UN is increasingly shifting its organizational structure to Kenya and questions are being raised about whether this is linked to a new colonialism initiative.

However, it has not been possible to publish all the presentations from the conference in the book. It is impossible to transcribe the two-day conference due to the lack of video recording. In any case, it is clear that the book you hold in your hands has been enriched by including the experience of the Johannesburg conference.

### **The road to the South Africa Pilot Program**

Thanks to the progress made in the project, it was decided that the project's academic advisory committee would meet online in February 2024. A crucial proposal made during this online meeting was to launch a pilot program to demonstrate to our numerous education partners from approximately 45 countries how concrete outcomes can be achieved while progressing toward project objectives. The proposal was addressed directly to SADTU General Secretary Comrade Dr. Mugwena Maluleke. Comrade Maluleke's warm reception of the pilot program was a moment that accelerated the process. We can call it a moment of qualitative leap in terms of the project.

Capturing such a moment was important, because prior to the pilot application, in order to establish a broad legitimacy

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base for a declaration, it was necessary to organize conferences in many countries, form scientific committees, and ensure that the societies in those countries expressed their views on the „Declaration for the Expansion of Education Rights“, due to the difficulty of building simultaneous and coordinated engagement and the financial infrastructure that would make this possible, it took a very long time. Earlier attempts to overcome these difficulties were made through continental coordination or established commissions, but the turning point was only reached with the pilot application.

With the confirmation that the pilot program would take place in South Africa, a detailed invitation letter was prepared (link: <https://politeknik-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/RSA-PILOT-PROJECT-INVITATION.pdf>). A scientific committee and coordination team have been established for the South Africa pilot program. The pilot program's development process involved The South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU), South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU), South African Youth Council (SAYC), Prof. Rasigan Maharajh (founding Chief Director of the Institute for Economic Research on Innovation at Tshwane University of Technology) and Prof. Martha Matashu (Director of the School of Commerce and Social Studies in Education at the North-West University).

Therefore, the first members have been determined for the coordination team and scientific committee that will represent the effective work to be launched nationwide. This is a strong representation consisting of civil servants, workers, students/youth, and academics.

As this preface is being written, efforts for the first national conference of the pilot program, planned for December 2025 in Johannesburg, are gaining momentum and taking concrete shape. This also foreshadows the third book of the project.

### **3) Lecture Series launched in 2022 under Project Article 26**

The work conducted and initiatives launched under Project Article 26 are always directly or indirectly related to the goal of expanding the right to education as a human right.

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The lecture series that began in February 2022 has been such an event. In addition to printed and online publications, it has provided listeners with the opportunity to listen to presentations on topics they are interested in, ask questions, and make comments. The fact that video recordings are published on the PoliTeknik International website has also created a permanently accessible visual resource archive.

The lecture series has been an interesting project that raised critical questions. The following are the crucial questions that have been raised so far in the search for answers while extending the right to education as a human right:

- The human rights - are they finally definable?
- What is the “human nature”?
- Is the market conformity of education not at the same time its inescapable limitation?
- Is the human being reduced to wage dependency not already disconnected from “human rights”?
- The link between unskilled labour requirement and exclusion from education
- Education transformations driven by international organizations
- Illegitimate interventions in education policy at national and international level
- Right to education in conflict zones
- Economic crisis and its effects on the right to education
- The erosion of the international law and its effect on the right to education
- Interdependence of national independence, Industrialization and educational progress
- Elite education or qualitative education without competition?
- Which interests are absolutely opposed to a “qualitative education for all”?
- Democratization of the UNO – Is a reform enough for a substantial change or do we need a voice, vote and veto right of the working class?

The lecture series addressed some of the above topics and questions, taking into account the key points identified by the speakers. For example:

The following selection comprises Chapter 3 of this book:

- Children's rights, education and poverty in times of corona crisis
- Project Article 26 & the role of the UN: what to expect?
- Human rights and discourses: is it definable finally?
- Following in the footsteps of humanity
- Education transformations driven by international organizations
- Human right to education and the world of work
- Political and economic instrumentalization of the SDGs – Impact on education
- The erosion of the international law
- The right to flourish through common sense education
- The right to resist
- Privatization of education – the situation of the teachers in the private sector
- Reconstructing workers' education on Marxist Foundation
- Worker education, how it has changed and why it remains central to our struggle in the labour movement
- The risks and the opportunities of AI for the enhance sustainability in different fields of Social psychology and education
- Coaching industry in India / a failure of education system

The "Lecture Series" meets the reader with a rich content thanks to contributions of Prof. Dr. Michael Klundt from Germany, Prof. Sanjoy Roy from India, Prof. Dr. Xavier Diez, Prof. Enrique-Javier Díez-Gutiérrez and Rosa Cañadell from Spain, Prof. Raquel Melo from Brazil, and Dr. Mahir Konuk from Türkiye.

#### **4) Selections from articles published in PoliTeknik magazines and special topics**

As in the first book, we drew on articles published in PoliTeknik International and PoliTeknik Español for the second book; we also identified specific topics and suggested them to our authors for them to produce texts on.

The selection we made from PoliTenik International/ PoliTeknik Español includes the following articles:

- Dr. Erkan Aydoğanoglu: The function of education and curriculum in capitalism
-

- Rama Kant Rai: SDG4 and challenges of right to education for unorganized children in India
- Prof. Dr. Michael Winkler, Prof. Dr. Marlies W. Fröse (Prof. Sanjoy Roy and Zeynel Korkmaz have provided recommendations for the content.): The extension of the human right to education - UDHR Art 26 - A political agenda - A draft

### **Specified topics and authors:**

- Simon Kunert/Lukas Eble: Market Conformity of Education
- Prof. Dr. Michael Klundt: Human Right to Education for Peace needs knowledge about contexts of crises and conflicts
- Prof. Enrique-Javier Díez-Gutiérrez: Educate in human rights in Palestine
- Mbasa Mvenene: The political and economic instrumentalisation of the COVID-19 pandemic by the business and the political elite in South Africa: Profiteering from disaster.
- Yavo Nando: The Evolution of the Educational Rights in Africa During the Era of the 4th and 5th Industrial Revolutions: Challenges and Opportunities
- Alex Anfruns Millán: The right to education in Niger, before and after the seizure of power by the CNSP
- Kamrul Anam: Education of Child Labour in the Textile Sector in Bangladesh

We would like to thank all the authors who contributed to 4th chapter.

It is necessary to mention PoliTeknik's studies that are not included in this book but are potential sources for the 3rd book: The reason we have included this subheading is that all of the PoliTeknik studies listed below have a direct or indirect relationship with, or form an organic link to, Project Article 26. Some work has begun, some work is about to begin, or is in the discussion phase. Let us now explain two examples of PoliTeknik's work at these different stages and their connection to Project Article 26:

#### **1) Textile Unions Solidarity Agreement for Joint Action (TUSA)**

Textile unions have gradually joined the ranks of Project Ar-

ticle 26 members; the first were unions from Bangladesh and Uganda. A conference titled „Textile Unions and the Right to Education“ was held with these unions on September 1, 2023.

A series of online meetings and conferences were held during this period, and by August 2025, a Textile Unions Solidarity Agreement for Joint Action had been adopted. Textile union representatives from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Lesotho and Malawi, who came together under TUSA, have decided to launch their first campaign under this joint action agreement. The campaign proposed by PoliTeknik, extended to include ‘primary schools’ by Comrade Towhidur Rahman, President of the Bangladesh Apparel Workers Federation, carries the following title: “The right to creches/kindergartens/primary schools in textile factories”.

The campaign aims to reach every member of the unions that are parties to the agreement in the countries mentioned above and to make them part of a long-term initiative to extend education rights as a democratic demand. There is nothing more natural than the right to education struggle in this sector, where child labor is prevalent and women’s labor is intensive and insecure, receiving the support of Project Article 26, which has a declaration based on broad legitimacy. This is the perfect time to mention the project’s important slogan: „The part of humanity that excluded from democracy tries itself out as a legislator, as a representative of its own interests undistorted from the outside. In this context, we wish all textile unions and representatives success.

## **2) The Idea of the Relocation of the UNO Headquarters, which is not new and which we have approached from our own perspective**

During our conference in Johannesburg on December 9-10, 2023, I included the following words in my speech on behalf of PoliTeknik: *“We propose moving the United Nations headquarters from New York to the struggling lands of Africa. India would be a good location for the UNESCO headquarters, and Chile or another Latin American country could be the home of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Should the UN be reformed or democratized? This is a vital question. It is an issue that will occupy us for many years to come, as the political economy of a multi-polarized world dictates this reality. Regardless of whether they are efficient or not, the UN institutions, which are*

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*committed to the defense of peace, international law and human rights, should be considered to be in exile or under occupation from now on.*“

It is impossible to discuss the role of the UN without considering an initiative that seeks to reformulate Article 26 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which describes education, in a progressive manner based on a broad foundation of legitimacy. International law, which is not exempt from debate, can now be clearly violated in a way that falls short of its requirements, and even, although it has not yet been absolutely defined, in an era when the increasingly referenced “rules based order” is sought to be established, addressing the future of the UN is vital for Project Article 26. What kind of UN and what kind of reformulation of Article 26 of the UDHR awaits us? A fair question.

This is why we brought the UNO Relocation debate to the table in the PoliTeknik magazine and in online presentations. The result was an interesting collection compiled from magazine articles and presentations. There was a series of authors that included the following names: Dr. Hans von Sponeck (Former UN Assistant Secretary-General & Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq), Prof. Rasigan Maharajh (Chief Director of the Institute for Economic Research on Innovation, Tshwane University of Technology), Prof. Enrique Javier Díez Gutiérrez (University of León-Spain), Prof. Dr. Xavier Díez (USTEC-STES-IAC, Trade Union of Education Workers of Catalonia), Kamogelo Seitireng (South African Transport and Allied Workers’ Union (SATAWU)). Our readers can access this file, which features an illustration we created specifically for the UNO relocation idea on its cover: [https://politeknik-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/UNO-RELOCATION-DOSSIE\\_EN.pdf](https://politeknik-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/UNO-RELOCATION-DOSSIE_EN.pdf)

The phenomenon of the UN increasingly settling in Kenya, mentioned above and still escaping public attention is not fed by the same source as the UNO relocation we have mentioned. The following issue, which we frequently address and illustrate whenever we have the opportunity, perhaps reveals that we are at opposing ends: “Democratization of the UN – before or after a great war?”

To summarize, the (non-new) discussion of the UNO Relocation from our perspective goes beyond a symbolic step. The idea of relocation is a necessary step to examine the need

for a renewed UN structure, which is essential for updating Article 26, and under what conditions or at what cost it can be achieved, and against whom it represents a gain in the fight.

Dear readers,

As you can see, the book you hold in your hands is a work rich in content and has required a great deal of effort. The Extension of Human Rights to Education has been nurtured by numerous different initiatives that either originate from or lead to Project Article 26. We have much more to say because our vision is based on the ability to maintain continuous momentum, and we consider ourselves to have only just begun to express these ideas. Therefore, we can say that a productive process has already begun for a new book.

We would like to express here that, our readers can easily move beyond their position as mere readers in this dynamic process if they see themselves as actors in the extension of educational rights, and that they can contribute to our productivity with their criticism and suggestions.

Lastly: I would like to express my gratitude to all members and supporters of the Project “Extension of Human Rights to Education”, including Comrade Dr. Mugwena Maluleke, General Secretary of SADTU, who made the South African pilot program possible as its first supporter, to Comrade Renny Somnat from SADTU, who is always ready to contribute to the plannings, to the invaluable Comrade Prof. Rasigan Maharajh, who never withheld his support and whose patience I tested day after day with my endless suggestions, to the founding and honorary members of the International Students’ Council, to all the unions and veteran representatives who have united under the Textile Unions Solidarity Agreement for Joint Action and have begun to organize their joint actions, I extend my deepest gratitude both for their contributions and for promising a hopeful future in terms of the struggle of those excluded from democracy.

***August 22, 2025***

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Translation from Turkish into English: PoliTeknik

**About PoliTeknik**

PoliTeknik is a magazine published as print edition every four months in Turkish in Germany, released its first issue on 11 April 2014. In 2020, three new free online magazines were launched: PoliTeknik International, PoliTeknik Español and PoliTeknik Português. Of these, PoliTeknik Português continued until 2022 and seven issues were published. The other publications are still ongoing.

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**CHAPTER I**  
**CONTINENTAL CONFERENCE**  
**IN AFRICA**  
**DEMOCRATISATION &**  
**DECOLONNISATION**  
**OF EDUCATION**





**MRS. ANGIE MOTSHEKGA**

MINISTER OF BASIC EDUCATION · THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER  
OF BASIC EDUCATION,  
MRS. ANGIE MOTSHEKGA,  
AT THE CONTINENTAL  
DEMOCRATISATION AND  
DECOLONISATION OF EDUCATION  
SYMPOSIUM**

*Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Esteemed Delegates,  
Honoured Guests,*

It is both a privilege and an honour for me, in my capacity as the Minister of Basic Education of the Republic of South Africa, to address this distinguished assembly at the Continental Conferences in Africa, focusing on the Democratisation and Decolonisation of Education.

Today, as we gather here at the Southern Sun O.R. Tambo International Airport in Gauteng, we stand at a critical juncture in the history of African basic education.

Building upon the foundations established by two international symposia held in Germany in 2016 and 2018, this conference is part of the Project for the Expansion of the Right to Education (Project Article 26).

This conference marks a historic first – it's the first time this event is held on African soil, focusing specifically on our continent's unique challenges and opportunities.

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We are here to build upon the foundations laid by Project Article 26, which ambitiously aims to expand the Right to Education as articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) establishes that education should be free, at least at the elementary and fundamental stages.

It represents the first internationally agreed definition of the right to education.

Over time, this right has been described as a dual right, combining both fundamental freedoms and social and economic rights.

Our presence here signals a significant shift in the education discourse in Africa – a shift from passive acceptance to active engagement and from historical impositions to a future of self-determination in educational policies and practices.

As we converge here, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) latest figures paint a grim picture. Of all regions, sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rates of education exclusion.

Over one-fifth of children between the ages of about 6 and 11 are out of school, followed by one-third of youth between the ages of about 12 and 14.

According to data from the Institute for Statistics, almost 60% of youth between the ages of 15 and 17 are not in school.

Without urgent action, the situation will likely worsen as the region faces a rising demand for education due to a still-growing school-age population.

Education in Africa is a major priority for UNESCO and its Institute for Statistics.

In response, the Institute for Statistics develops indicators to help governments, donors, and United Nations partners better address the challenges.

For example, the Institute for Statistics tracks the extent to which schools lack basic amenities, such as access to electricity and potable water, while monitoring classroom conditions – from the availability of textbooks to average class sizes and the prevalence of multi-grade classrooms.

In South Africa in 1996 (two after ushering in our democracy), the Schools Register of Needs study found fewer than half of the schools had adequate facilities.

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However, the 2022 School Monitoring Survey shows substantial advancements: 87% now have proper toilets, 81% have access to running water, and 93% have electricity, indicating marked system improvements.

With seven out of ten countries facing an acute shortage of teachers, the Institute for Statistics also produces a range of data on their training, recruitment and working conditions.

Ladies and gentlemen, girls' education is a significant priority. Across the region, 9 million girls between the ages of about 6 and 11 will never go to school at all, compared to 6 million boys, according to Institute for Statistics data.

Sadly, their (girls) disadvantage starts early: 23% of girls are out of primary school compared to 19% of boys. By the time they become adolescents, the exclusion rate for girls is 36% compared to 32% for boys.

At home, the situation has somewhat improved in the last fifteen years since the world, including Africa, helped us to defeat the apartheid regime in 1994.

According to Statistics South Africa's latest survey, basic education access for seven-to-15-year-olds has improved significantly and is now nearly universal.

Early childhood development (ECD) opportunities have also increased: fewer than 40% of five-year-olds attended educational institutions in 2002, compared to almost 90% recently.

One must admit that we have moved at a snail's pace to reach where we are. Fewer than one in 20 black South Africans born in the 1940s completed 12 years of education. By 1960, this was about one in 10. For those born in the 1980s and finishing school in the late 1990s, it was about three in 10. According to household survey data from 2021, the figure is now nearly six in 10.

Despite the disheartening statistics, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) acknowledges the progress achieved in Africa's educational sector over the past decade.

Moreover, UNICEF's report, "Transforming Education in Africa," proposes recommendations for fostering a more equitable education system that aligns with the demands of the modern era.

Significantly, by 2050, it is projected that half of the African population will be under 25 years of age, presenting a

substantial opportunity for growth and advancement contingent on enhancing educational opportunities.

We recognise that education in Africa cannot be dissociated from its history – a history deeply scarred by colonialism and its lasting impacts.

Yet, this history is also marked by resilience, resistance, and a relentless pursuit of autonomy and identity.

Our endeavour here is not just about expanding access to education but redefining what education means in Africa.

It is about ensuring that our educational systems reflect our values, histories, and aspirations.

The critical evaluation of current global education policies and their impact on Africa remains a priority.

We are tasked with the responsibility of not only questioning these policies but also offering tangible, culturally resonant, and sustainable alternatives.

Our discussions should aim to disentangle our educational systems from neo-colonial narratives and to embed them deeply within the rich tapestry of African sociocultural contexts.

As the former vice-chancellor of the University of Cape Town, Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng, put it: “We cannot be content with simply consuming and critiquing the educational models imposed upon us. We must be the architects of our own educational destinies, drawing upon the deep well of knowledge and wisdom embedded within our own cultures and traditions.”

Professor Phakeng argues, “It is only by reclaiming the narrative of education in Africa that we can truly empower our children to thrive in the 21st century.” (Phakeng, M. (2019). *Epistemologies of the Global South: Towards an African Renaissance*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.)

Professor Phakeng argues, “It is only by reclaiming the narrative of education in Africa that we can truly empower our children to thrive in the 21st century.” (Phakeng, M. (2019). *Epistemologies of the Global South: Towards an African Renaissance*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.)

Ladies and gentlemen, our symposium also addresses the necessity of reforming the United Nations (UN) to better reflect the multipolarity of the current global landscape. This is

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particularly pertinent for Africa, a continent often side-lined in international decision-making processes.

As we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we must reflect on the erosion of international law and its implications for human rights, including the right to education. The challenge is ensuring that the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are not just lofty ideals but lived realities for every African child.

As we sit here, who will speak for the plight of Palestinian school-going children trapped under the rubble in Gaza, for those helplessly fighting famine and diarrhoea in South Sudan, and for those using schools not as centres of education and knowledge but as shelters in Ethiopia?

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These children, robbed of their childhoods and burdened by the weight of war, carry the heavy responsibility of rebuilding their lives and their nations, a daunting task in the face of such immense loss and uncertainty.

Yet, within their eyes, a flicker of hope remains, a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and a plea for a world where the innocence of children is no longer sacrificed on the altar of war.

In a world beset by wars, pandemics, and economic crises, it is more crucial than ever to address the educational needs of the most vulnerable.

Therefore, this conference's objectives must extend beyond the halls of this symposium. The discussions held here, the perspectives shared, and the policies proposed will be collated and published, contributing to an interim report to be submitted to the UN Secretary-General.

This report will not only reflect our collective wisdom but also lay the groundwork for a transformative educational agenda for Africa.

However, it will remain a minefield to solve the nagging education problems in a world beset by wars and a United Nations controlled by superpowers.

The speakers over these two days, hailing from diverse backgrounds and representing various African nations, bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience. Their insights will be invaluable as we navigate the complexities of democratising and decolonising education in Africa.

As we embark on this momentous journey, let us be guided by a spirit of collaboration, a commitment to inclusivity, and a resolve to forge an educational future for Africa, by Africa.

Our task is monumental, but the collective will and expertise gathered here give me confidence that we are up to the challenge.

Our task is monumental, but the collective will and expertise gathered here give me confidence that we are up to the challenge.

Yes, it must be like “letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend,” as famously said by the leader of the Chinese Communist Party, Mao Zedong, in 1956.

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to the fruitful deliberations and outcomes of this seminal conference.

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PROF. DR. MARLIES W. FRÖSE

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## GREETING AT THE OPENNING

*Why we should turn to complexity as a possibility... towards education: "What actually makes people human ..."*

Honorable Mrs Angie Motshekga, Minister of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa,

Dear Comrade General Secretary Mugwena Maluleke and comrades from the SADTU team,

Dear Mr Siziphiwe Rola Programme Administrator of Networking HIV and AIDS Community of Southern Africa (NA-COSA);

Dear colleagues, dear international friends of our network,

I am speaking to you today on behalf of Prof. Dr Michael Winkler. He very much regrets not being able to be here today and asked to deliver this opening address.

And I am very happy to do so because I know that Mr Winkler, like Zeynel Korkmaz, has been responsible for this unusual network "Extension of Human Rights to Education". For more than seven years, you have been holding the threads together, while it was growing internationally, all the time. I am very impressed by this network because it shows, even though it has little money, how important education is worldwide. My name is Prof Dr Marlies W. Fröse. I am an educational scientist and until Rector of the Evangelische University of Applied Science in Dresden, Germany. I have worked aca-

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demically in leadership, management, organisation, human resources and coaching for over 26 years.

Our network is expanding, and we can be proud of the fact that the world is far more open to its commitments. Today's Continental Conference in Africa shows how important the democratisation and decolonisation of education are, and this is reflected in its impressive programme.

I want to touch briefly on some important aspects.

Firstly: Perhaps our starting point is to understand the "diversity of cultures as a common gain, even if we live according to very different values and truths" - a necessary discourse for the future and for education, as Kwame Anthony Appiah points out in "The Cosmopolitan". To realise that diversity can be a common gain for us.

Secondly: As you know better than I do, the majority of African countries became independent in the 1960s/70, when they threw off the shackles of colonial rule - think of Kwame Nkrumah's famous liberation speech in 1957. Education, health and economic independence - formed the basis for these independent developments in the global South, which were later incorporated into the Resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, adopted on 14 December 1960. I also think of the impressive speech of Martin Kimani (UN ambassador of Kenya) at the special session of the UN Security Council in February 2021. When he explained what we can learn from African countries on the occasion of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

Thirdly, and this is something I wish for all of us at this conference: In order to understand the world, we need to be amazed, curious and open. We have to deal with a multitude of complexities. Complexity (lat. complectere) can be understood as an embrace or encompassment of topic or an object.

Complexity is sometimes associated with chaos, and Sandra Mitchell, a complexity researcher, notes: "The world is indeed complex, and our depictions and analyses of it must be correspondingly complex." This is the only way in which new patterns of thought and action can emerge. Because there are always several ways of thinking: "*The idea that there is only one true representation of the world that corresponds exactly to its natural essence is presumptuous. At best, every representation is incomplete, idealised and abstract.*" (2008, S. 23).

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The philosopher Peter Bieri assumed in 2012 that education can be located on several different levels: Education as world orientation, as enlightenment, as historical awareness, as articulation, as self-knowledge, as self-determination, as moral sensibility, as poetic experience, and as passion.

Such understanding of education signpost for a new discourse that includes practical-political responsibility, as well as the inner voice of leadership, as indispensable components - beyond the "dictatorship of busyness".

In their book, "Was den Menschen eigentlich zum Menschen macht ..." (What really makes a human human), the philosophers Lessing and Steenblock point to a tension inherent to the educational process. Education can be a humanitarian concern, but when education is only an end and no longer a means, it can also lead to an anti-human dogmatism. Education must be based on free will, i.e., the ability to decide between alternative courses of action:

*"Education begins with curiosity. When you kill someone's curiosity, you steal their chance to educate themselves. Curiosity is the insatiable desire to find out what the world has to offer. Education is something that people do with and for themselves: You educate yourself. ... We undergo training with the aim of being able to do something. When we educate ourselves, on the other hand, we work on becoming something - we strive to be in the world in a certain way. This way of encountering the world and ourselves is my theme" (Bieri, 2010, p. 205f.).*

Peter Bieri is convinced that education is everything. Education does not mean knowing everything. It is about developing an understanding of what is currently happening and understanding why it has developed in this way. Because what do we know, what do we really understand, and what do I or others only think we know? Many of the questions Bieri asks to make us resistant to rhetorical drill and trends. They sharpen our perceptions of our own and other mental models - the supposed "habits of thought and speech". It is therefore essential to know which cultural and historical consciousness we use to explain our world. "Only those who know and recognise the historical contingency of their cultural and moral identity have truly grown up." (ibid., p. 211). And the awareness of diversity and respect for the foreign

and, in particular, the “withdrawal of initial arrogance” are formative moments of education. This also includes the still urgently needed examination of culture, as when Clifford Geertz (1987), Norbert Elias or Joseph Henrich (2022) anthropologically turn the conventional history of cultural understanding on its head. This includes discourses on anti-Semitism, anti-racism and postcolonial positions that have been necessary for many years.

I would like to end with the words of Hannah Arendt: “Where certainty ends, thinking begins the departure of the knower into the unknown.” The many ways of thinking need to be re-appropriated in all learning and educational processes: Trial and error, experimenting, unlearning, translating, taking detours, learning to forgive, setting in scene and building confidence in people can shape them. Hannah Arendt formulated this in a downright challenging way in 1951:

*“All that seems to be given to us is the earth, to provide a place where we can pitch our tents in the universe (that is, space); life, as the span for our dwelling (that is, time); and reason, initially to guide us to make ourselves at home here for a while, and then, when dwelling is finally taken care of, to end in wonder that something like the earth, universe, life and man exist at all. With the best will in the world, no more ‘purpose’ can be read into the whole event.”* (Arendt, 2002, p. 130).

I wish you, and all of us, every success at this conference, also in the name of Prof. Dr Winkler, together with a lot of exchanges and the joy of thinking together for our futures. Thank you very much!

**Prof. Dr. Marlies W. Fröse**

(Darmstadt, Germany – December 2023)

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**ZEYNEL KORKMAZ**  
POLITEKNIK

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## POLITEKNIK SYMPOSIUM'S SPEECH

*Honorable Mrs Angie Motshekga,  
Minister of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa,  
Dear Comrade General Secretary Mugwena Maluleke and  
comrades from the SADTU team  
Dear Mr Siziphiwe Rola  
Programme Administrator of Networking HIV and AIDS Com-  
munity of Southern Africa (NACOSA);  
Dear Speakers, Dear Project Partners and Guests,*

We propose moving the United Nations headquarters from New York to the struggling lands of Africa. India would be a good location for the UNESCO headquarters, and Chile or another Latin American country could be the home of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Should the UN be reformed or democratized? This is a vital question. It is an issue that will occupy us for many years to come, as the political economy of a multi-polarized world dictates this reality. Regardless of whether they are efficient or not, the UN institutions, which are committed to the defence of peace, international law and human rights, should be considered to be in exile or under occupation from now on.

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**Dear participants, dear guests,**

I would like to welcome you all to this conference which is organized by SADTU and PoliTeknik. Thank you for accepting our invitation. We are very grateful and honored that you are participating today in the symposium of **Project Extension of Human Rights to Education, in short Project Article 26.**

We feel honored that the Honorable Minister accepted our invitation. We are all very pleased that honorable Ms Minister has spared us her valuable

time on this wonderful day to deliver the opening speech of this symposium. We express our sincere gratitude.

This meeting was possible to organize thanks to the dedicated efforts of SADTU and the contribution of NACOSA. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the entire SADTU team, in particular to esteemed Comrade GS Mugwena Maluleke, and to NACOSA for this. We were in constant contact with Comrades Renny Somnat and Cindy De Lange during the preparations for the conference and I would like to mention their names here and thank them.

**Dear participants, dear guests,**

My knowledge of English is limited, so I would like to inform you in advance that I will have some challenges with articulations. I prepared my presentation in Turkish and translated it into English with the support of an interpreter. Please excuse me in advance.

After the symposiums we organized in Germany in 2016 and 2018, today we come together for our 3rd conference. We are in Africa for the first time and we are in the right place, because half of our partners from 48 countries come from the African continent. Why do we have so many partners in Africa? Well, I am trying to make sense of this myself, and maybe the title of this symposium might give an answer.

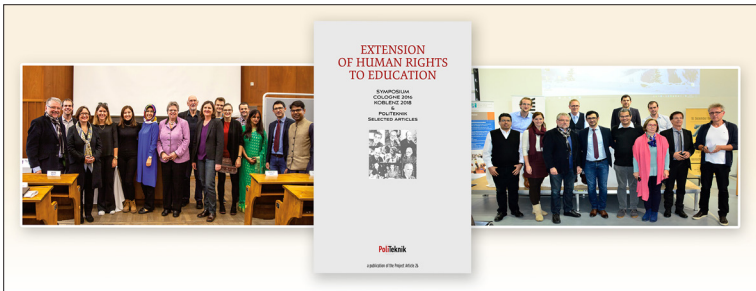
In my presentation, I will first cover the origins of the project, I will share some important impressions and memories, and examine the geopolitical climate in which the project was implemented, and I will reveal its objectives, its organizational strategy, its successes and challenges. By doing so, step by step, I will summarize the past 7 years in an outlined manner. At the end of my presentation I will give a few minutes to my colleague Prof. Michael Winkler from Germany.

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We've been working with him on this project for many years (Prof. Marliese W. Fröse took the floor instead of Prof. Winkler during the conference).

**Dear participants, dear guests,**

Project Article 26 was first discussed as an idea in *PoliTeknik* magazine in autumn 2015. It was developed in a series of articles published in the journal under the title **Ideas and Recommendations on the Extension of the Right to Education**. The project further evolved at the October 2016 symposium and was officially started in January 2017. From conception to preparations, from implementation to experiences, the process took 8 years. In a sense, it was a very long struggle for survival for a movement that started from the ground up, on a voluntary basis, without any national or international support, without any connections at the beginning, with personal dedication and pure human power. It is good that we have continued so that we can be here today with our colleagues and comrades.



Our first contact with SADTU dates back to 12 October 2015; we wrote an email asking for their contribution to the series of articles, and a week later we received a positive response. Since then we have been in contact.

I am quoting from an email I wrote on 27 October 2015 to Prof. Michael Winkler, with whom I am working on this project (translation from German):

*"[...] The published series of articles represents the first step in the preparations for a conference on the same topic next year. The event is intended to implement a two-year project (until 10 December 2018; 70th anniversary of the UN Declaration of Hu-*

man Rights), which envisages the establishment of a coordination office and a scientific council. These are to organise cooperation at a global level with all stakeholders seeking to expand the human right to education, develop their joint positions and inspire the global public and UN member states to implement these positions.

In the coming weeks, PoliTeknik plans to approach potential partners for project development and long-term cooperation as part of this commitment and to win them over for this commitment [...]”.

The mere preparations, infrastructure and introduction of this initiative, which was planned for two years, now seems to easily exceed 10 years. Given the time that the UN, with its vast resources, has spent on the Millennium Goals and Agenda 2030, more than 2 decades as of now, 10 years is really not that long.

### **Dear participants, colleges and comrades, what Project Article 26 aspires to achieve?**

The project will be based on a foundation of international legitimacy for the redrafting of Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Several social actors involved in the extension of human rights to education will work on different aspects of this issue in order to create a

„Declaration on the Extension of Human Rights to Education“ to be voted at the UN General Assembly. The project focuses on Article 26 of the UDHR, which needs to be amended in a phased extension.

#### *Article 26 of UDHR:*

- 1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.*
  - 2. Education shall 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.*
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*3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.*

**Dear participants, dear guests,**

The goal of extension Article 26 of the UDHR while developing a broad base of legitimacy will be a meaningful experience for all people excluded from democratic decision making processes. This is an interesting relevant perspective, a vision, because there is rarely time for humanity to act as legislators and articulate it's from the outside undistorted interests. We have formulated these words as a motto: **The sections of humanity excluded from democracy will experience themselves as a legislator and a representative of their interests that are not distorted from the outside.**

The uniqueness of our initiative lies in its refusal of concepts prepared by elites or circles that produce the illusion of broad participation. In other words, the project does not seek support for a ready-made concept, nor does it relegate participants to a passive, subordinate position. Instead, all partners in this initiative are invited to work actively and design the content of the declaration themselves. The project is designed in such a way that it cannot function without the active participation of volunteers. The idea therefore rightly sends the following message: **Please build your own unity together!**

This project should be organized in the same way a country drafts a constitution: imagine a constitutional process that invites all social groups to participate. Take the example of Cuba's constitutional draft, which was adopted on February 24, 2019 with a vote of 86% in favor. *"Out of a total island population of 11 million, 7,370,000 people participated in the constitutional debates. 111,872 discussion meetings were held. During these meetings, 1 million 445 speeches were given. There were 659 thousand suggestions, 560 thousand requests for amendments, 27 thousand requests for additions and 38 thousand requests for deletions"*<sup>1</sup>

**Dear participants, dear colleagues and comrades,**

How many of us are ready for such an endeavor, how many months or years do you think patience and concentration can last? If this project is a worthy effort, it will certainly not be easy. It is clear that we are not wasting time on small reforms.



Such a strategic approach entails the exclusion of imported agendas, and requires maturity and emancipation. We can characterize this as the first step towards self-determination through self-awareness.

We, the initiators of the project, have therefore intentionally limited our task to coordination and handed over the determination of the content to experts and to those who make democratic demands. And the coordination activities have been opened to all partners through the commissions that we have established and which will be presented tomorrow. This will make it possible to bring together progress that is probably stalled at the national level through our project at the international level. The concrete goal of extending Article 26 allows us to interact permanently, in real-time and plan joint activities globally.

I will now present some of the highlights from the article series „Ideas and Recommendations on the Extension of the Right to Education“ and from past symposium speeches, because they contain the first opinions which set out the need for the project and guided its discussions and showed a direction for the critical perspective in this debate.

At perhaps no other time since the right to education was enshrined in the 1948 United Nations declaration of Human Rights has it needed a renewed pledge in light of today's increasingly complex global reality.

Although great strides have been made to increase access to education during the last 15 years, 60 million children remain out of school. In spite of education being an inalienable human right and a public good, across

the world this right continues to be denied due to a combination of under- financing of education, the impacts of inequalities in accessing and completing education and above all, a lack of political commitment and will.[2.English Project Dossier: [https://politechnik.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/PROJECT\\_DOSSIE\\_EN.pdf](https://politechnik.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/PROJECT_DOSSIE_EN.pdf), Page 6.]

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**Susan Hopgood**

***President of Education International***

***Federal Secretary of the Australian Federation of Education Unions – (AEU)***

“At perhaps no other time since the right to education was enshrined in the 1948 United Nations declaration of Human Rights has it needed a renewed pledge in light of today’s increasingly complex global reality.

Although great strides have been made to increase access to education during the last 15 years, 60 million children remain out of school. In spite of education being an inalienable human right and a public good, across the world this right continues to be denied due to a combination of under – financing of education, the impacts of inequalities in accessing and completing education and above all, a lack of political commitment and will.”<sup>2</sup>

**Mary Cathryn Ricker**

***Executive Vice President of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) – USA***

“Today, human rights and the right to education are attacked on a daily basis worldwide. Despite the gains that have been made, our collective human and civil rights work is far from complete. The UDHR’s education declaration must be refreshed and modernized to establish more ambitious and specific goals, with specific reference to the rights of girls to education, as well as the rights of all children to early childhood education and secondary education.”<sup>3</sup>

**Student Representative Council**

***Wits University – South Africa***

“We find ourselves in an era of vastly expanding advancements in all facets of life. Technology, Medicine, Agriculture, Engineering and the Arts are all progressing quickly but many developing countries are being left behind due to the lasting effects of colonialism, global capitalist economies which dictate a narrative of oppression and political systems which are designed to exclude the voice of the masses. The only way to remedy this is by educating our people and providing them with specialised skills to fulfil their personal potential and to contribute to reaching the potential of the country.”

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“It is therefore necessary for the rights in Article 26 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights to include further education and training in an attempt to address the issues outlined above.”<sup>4</sup>

**Prof. Dr. Eva Borst (Germany)**

“Human rights education and the right to education are interrelated because the UDHR must be read, understood and interpreted in the respective socio-historical context by every human being. Although this is initially only an ideal concept of human coexistence, human rights nevertheless represent the backdrop against which barbarism and inhumanity stand out. Even if they have not been realised either nationally or internationally and their significance and meaning are interpreted differently, they are nevertheless a sign of humanity and justice, which should be the objective of every community and every society. They are convinced that it is possible to achieve freedom, equality and solidarity and to allow all people to share in these values.”<sup>5</sup>

**Prof. Dr. Armin Bernhard (Germany)**

“Would like to start with a quote: “Equal exploitation of labour power is the first human right of capital.” This is how Karl Marx put it in his Critique of Political Economy of 1867 (MEW 23, p. 309). In analogy to the topic of our conference, one can continue Marx’s ironic sentence with the formulation of another human right, for example as follows: “General production of labour power (thus education) is the second human right of capital.” Educational understanding and practice are subject to the constraints of social production and reproduction and the relations of domination that correspond to them. Domination and the government assigned to it determine the hegemonic understanding of education, what is to be understood by education. They define what education is and determine the scope, quality and tailoring of educational services from their concrete interests.”<sup>6</sup>

**Prof. Reaquel Melo (Brasil)**

“Lindgren Alves (2013, p. 24) draws attention to the Western character of the UDHR, highlighting its Enlightenment heritage, like that of the UN itself. The author states the following:

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Adopted in this way, without consensus, in a forum then composed of only 56 States, Western or “Westernized”, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was not, therefore, “universal” even for those who participated in its creation. Under these conditions, those who did not participate – the vast majority of today’s independent States – had more reason to label the document as a “product of the West”. (Alves, 2013, p. 24, free translation).<sup>7</sup>

These are indeed interesting positions. Some call for a modification of Article 26, others believe that a real democratization of the education systems is in fact a head-on collision with the existing world order. These indicate that the fundamental debate before the declaration needs to go much deeper. We have already targeted the following issues: Questions can be discussed as to whether the project, with the aim of progressive modifying Article 26, is only meant to send a signal, and can it do so at all? Can we get a vote at the UN General Assembly? What happens if our joint declaration is rejected? How should we then proceed with a strong, globally established legitimacy base? Should the vote be positive, would this result already be seen as a guarantee for the realization of progressive change in the countries? Should the declaration formulate a concrete control mechanism to ensure implementation? In the case of a positive or negative vote, is the UN in its existing form the right address?

Inspired by these questions, I would like to give you an example. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) was founded in 2007. Its goal is explained as follows:

*“On July 2017 – following a decade of advocacy by ICAN and its partners – an overwhelming majority of the world’s nations adopted landmark global agreement to ban nuclear weapons, known officially as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. It entered into force on 22 January 2021”<sup>8</sup>*

The first two paragraphs of Article 17 of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons are as follows:

1. *This Treaty shall be of unlimited duration.*
2. *Each State Party shall, in exercising its national sovereignty, have the right to withdraw from this Treaty if it decides that*

*extraordinary events related to the subject matter of the Treaty have jeopardized the supreme interests of its country. It shall give notice of such withdrawal to the Depositary. Such notice shall include a statement of the extraordinary events that it regards as having jeopardized its supreme interests.*<sup>9</sup>

As you can see, an NGO can convince the UN General Assembly, but the crucial question remains between the adoption of demands and their implementation. Let's imagine that we expand the right to education through a declaration, would it be acceptable that states can restrict this right in special cases? In the declaration we want to draft, these aspects have to be taken into account.

Other fundamental questions also need to be asked: Can human rights be definitively formulated? Do we have to take the biological nature of human beings or the social characteristics of the societies they founded as a starting point or a combination of both? Whose interest and what image of humanity underlies the UDHR? Is an evolutionary process underway that determines the socio-historical context and has to be re-evaluated from one age to the next? If so, what kind of extension is imminent in our age?

**Dear participants, colleagues and comrades,**

I would like to continue as follows. Does talking about extending human rights to education mean taking courage against the global downward trend in education?

*"From the end of the last decade, along with Greece's unbearable financial debt, basic human rights are also up for negotiation, among which is the right to education. Under such conditions, the goal of collective struggles can easily be shifted from the extension of social gains to their defence, with any dialogue on further extension seeming an undue luxury".*<sup>10</sup>

Dialogue on extension of rights as an undue luxury? Well. For once in our lives, we wanted to allow ourselves that kind of undue luxury with the Project Article 26!

It is very difficult to get free of the images of the old world and imagine a good future. Dreams are subject to auto-censorship. When it comes to the extension of democratic rights, we are pessimistic enough to call it a luxury. These heavy chains of thinking clearly define the size of the existing oppression that needs to be overcome.

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**Dear participants, dear guests,**

I would like to share with you a short but very important memory, which we have often mentioned in many of our talks. When we came up with an idea for extension article 26 of the UDHR in 2015, we shared it with our close circle; and one of our friends, Cem Şentürk, he is still working in the Foundation Centre for Turkey Studies and Integration Research in Germany, said the following; “Yes, this article can be amended, but only after a great war!” Of course, by referring to the Second World War.

And now this question is confronting us all: Will a truly great war be determinant? And what about the events after 1945, colonialism, the neocolonialism articulated by Kwame Nkrumah, the Cold War, coups, civil wars, revolutions and counter-revolutions, unipolar or rules-based international order, debates about a multipolar order... what is the answer? Are we facing a sufficiently painful collapse of civilization in the new century? The destruction of civilian settlements in other countries is not enough for us to be buried under the rubble of lawlessness? It is a question that everyone is obliged to answer. We have returned to the conditions of the World War I and are witnessing the division of the world capitalist market between the rising superpowers and the old ones. After the World War I, the League of Nations was established, its aim was to keep the peace, it was not enough, the World War II gave birth to the UN, it was not enough.

This is a time when the war supporters now pride themselves on having successfully misused agreements under international law into war tricks and how brilliant they understood the teachings of the famous Chinese military theorist Sun Tsu. In the face of this, there's no place for us anymore for hesitation. Yes, this is a perfectly legitimate question: After or before a great war? In past conversations and debates we have tried to answer this question in the following way:

*“Anything can come to an end anytime, and everyone or everything may have to start and set out it again from our current point. Humanity, in any case, will live and learn whether it adopt human rights permanently, after or before a big disaster, through a conscious activity based on its free will.*

*In this essential time-course, we prefer to leave audience grandstand; and this move indicates a tremendously dynamic*

*situation: We have no doubt that in this project, there is a quality of life which emerges thanks to an engagement occurred in an optimist manner and in harmony with social nature of human”.*

**Dear participants, colleagues and comrades,**

Up to this point in my speech, my focus has been on pointing out the reasons for our demand for the extension of Article 26 of the UDHR and the historical turning point when it is taking place. This is a time of growing recognition that the balance of power, laws, images, aesthetics and all other elements of the old world are rapidly collapsing. The new is being born with all of its pains and waiting to be characterized. And we seek to define the educational dimension of the new world. Yes, we “dared” to do this together with those who are excluded from democracy. Do these words, dear participants, colleagues and comrades, sound a bit pompous words? At this point, let us ask the question: If we were billionaire philanthropists, would we need to talk about courage? Circles of interest that can go so far as to authorize the WHO to intervene in the internal affairs of states over epidemics can easily engage in the most undemocratic practices when they wish. No, our request is in no way from the sphere of fiction, it is nothing else as the recognition of the right of the masses to envision the future also for themselves.

**I will now explain what kind of strategies our project follows and what phases it foresees.**

**Our 2 phases and awaiting duties**

In general terms, our project is moving to a turning point of ground breaking works. These ground breaking works will be considered complete once a certain number of countries have joined the project. In other words, when the participants of the project will have a common view regarding sufficient legitimacy of the upcoming declaration, the ground breaking works will be regarded as completed.

In this first phase of the project, the partners support to extend the number of partnerships to many other protagonists in different countries. For this goal, our project dossier has already been translated into 8 languages: English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, Russian, German and Turkish.

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Once legitimacy has been established and coordination units have been set up in countries, academic advisory boards can be established. The academic advisory boards will prepare catalogs of proposals for the joint declaration. This first phase of establishing legitimacy is still in progress.

The following tables visualise our planned structures at local, continental and global scales.

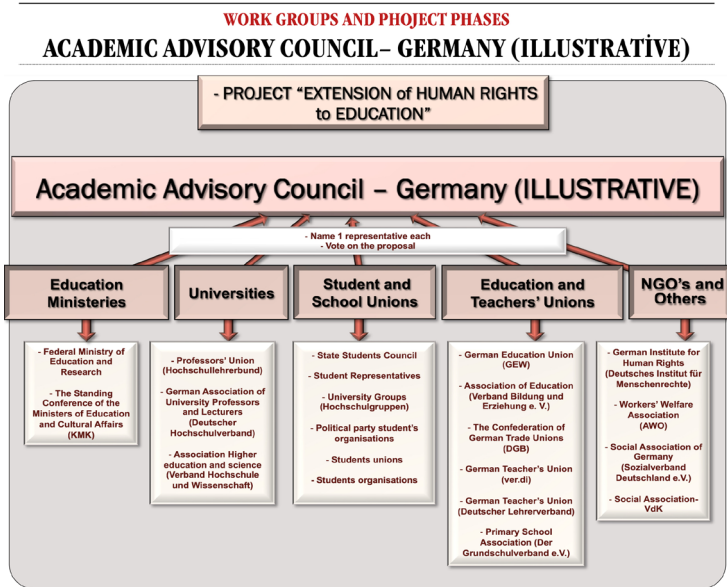
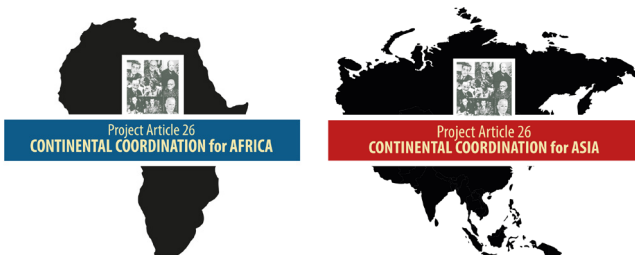


Table 2

Extension Human Rights to Education

As of July 2021, continental coordinations are also considered as active organisations for the project. Logos of continental coordinations:





**As of 5 May 2023, we started to establish three commissions**

- 1) Commission for the development of relations with UN bodies and governments
- 2) Commission for the development of relations with trade unions, federations, universities, NGOs, students and student unions, parent organisations and experts
- 3) Commission of experts for analyses and publications on current global education policies and debates.

These three methods that we have followed to develop our international legitimacy ground have been activated in recent years. In particular, the United Nations, the Education International (EI), the World Federation of Teachers' Unions (WFTU-FISE), IndustriALL, the Building and Woodworkers' International (BWI), etc., which operate on a global scale

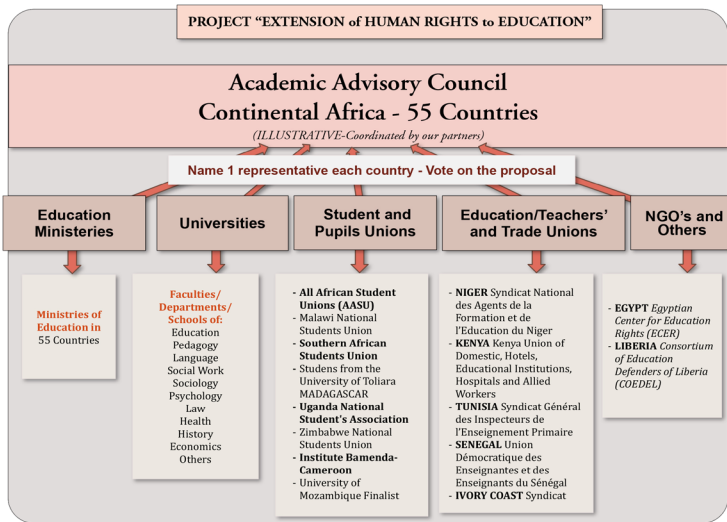


Table 3: Example of continental coordination in Africa

On 10 December 2018, we sent a letter to the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres requesting a meeting. We had a meeting with Robert Skinner, Director of the UN Partnerships Bureau, on 10 July 2019 on behalf of the Secretary-General. In this meeting, we requested that our project dossier be forwarded to the representatives of all UN member states. We did not receive a positive response to this request, as it

was stated that the countries were busy with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Education International (EI) is a federation of education unions and organisations from nearly 180 countries. The chronology of our continuous efforts to develop cooperation with EI since 2016 is as follows:

- 2016: E-I was represented by the President of the German education union GEW at our international symposium in Cologne. E-I was of the opinion that the UDHR should not be put up for discussion and recommended not to take up the project. We decided to continue and the project started officially on January 2017.

- 2018: following recommendation from colleagues in India, an official invitation for partnership was addressed to the E-I President Mrs. Susan Hopgood. Our colleague Mr. Rampal Singh (may he rest in peace, we lost him this year), who was an E-I Board member at the time, handed over this invitation at the E-I board meeting in Brussels

- July 2019: Another invitation was handed over to the GS Mr David Edwards during the E-I World Congress in Bangkok. Colleagues from the Turkish, Nepalese, Somalian and other teachers' unions handed over this letter

- November 2019: Colleagues from the Turkish and Spanish teachers' unions agreed with us to talk to David Edwards in Brussels about the project partnership.

- December 2019: After our colleague Heleno Araújo, President of the CNTE-Brazil, shared David Edwards' contact details with me, I sent to him the invitation again via WhatsApp.

- Between 2020 and 2021 we repeatedly tried to contact the EI continental representative offices. Finally, in December 2022, another invitation was delivered to David Edward in Thailand by our partners from India and Sri Lanka. Since 2016, there has been no response to any of our attempts, neither verbally nor in writing.

A similar situation happened with the World Federation of Teachers' Unions (WFTU-FISE). I communicated to WFTU-FISE President Mohanty from India and Second President Jayasinghe from Sri Lanka that I would present our correspondence in the form of constructive criticism at this conference. In an email I sent on 22 August 2022, I stated the following:

*“As you know, as PoliTeknik magazine, we have been trying to invite WFTU and FISE to become partners in our project” Extending the Human Right to Education.*

*Unfortunately we have not made any progress for nearly 3 years. It is shocking that comrades from the WFTU or FISA ignore us and our efforts to establish contact!*

*[...]*

*The answer we received by e-mail on 05.10.2020 is as follows:*

*„FISE supports the campaign „Extending the Human Right to Education in the UN Declaration of Human Rights“ and the amendment of Article 26 of the Declaration of Human Rights. For the fulfilment of every child’s right to education to become a reality in the 21st century. We will send our official document next week“ [...]*

We underlined the importance of relations with International Education Federations. Teaching is an idealistic profession that contributes to the growth of small potentials. However, we were surprised by what we encountered. Therefore, we decided to educate ourselves.

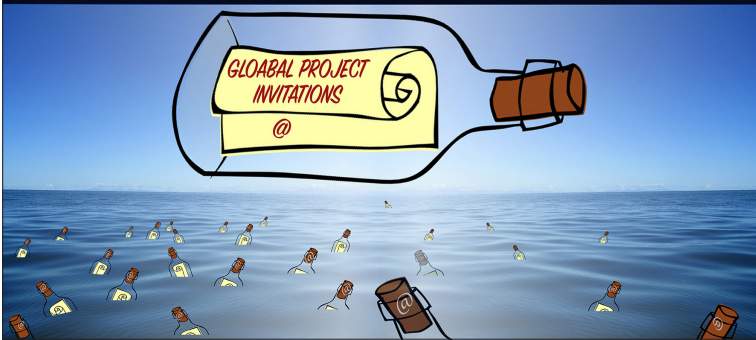
Over the years, through PoliTeknik relations and especially through our online research, we have collected the contact details of approximately 17,000 experts, trade unions, student unions, NGOs, etc. and informed them about our project. We illustrated this hard work with the metaphor of a letter in a bottle. As you know, sailors used to put their letters in a bottle and leave them in the seas and oceans, with the dream that maybe one day they would reach land and someone would read them. It is known that some letters were washed ashore after a century. We now have more than 100 volunteers from about 50 countries who read the letters in our bottle and responded positively. The first phase made progress under these conditions.

### **Dear participants, dear guests,**

The goal of extension Article 26 of the UDHR while developing a broad base of legitimacy will be a meaningful experience for all people excluded from democratic decision making processes. This is an interesting relevant perspective, a vision, because there is rarely time for humanity to act as legislators and articulate it’s from the outside undistorted interests.

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WE SEND INVITATIONS to ca. 17.000 UNIONS/ORGANISATIONS/EXPERTS via EMAIL & MESSANGERS since 2016



## Second Phase

The second phase, which has partially begun, will constitute a platform for a long-term and in-depth debate. A platform on which the Declaration will be based on the legitimacy created.

In this second stage, a campaign of clarification is needed. On the one hand while seeking answers to a series of questions we have mentioned above, what is a human being, are human rights universal, can they be formulated in an ultimate way, should they be modified according to the historical period, etc., on the other hand, the formulations of those who make democratic demands in this direction should be brought to light. As in our series of articles.

The expert commission that we have set up should put the crucial aspects of the discussions into a general framework, and the democratic demands should be placed within this framework and gradually developed into a declaration. The expert commission members are:

- Prof. Dr. Michael Winkler (Germany)
- Prof. Dr. Armin Bernhard (Germany)
- PoliTeknik (represented by Zeynel Korkmaz)
- Dr. Mugwena Maluleke (Secretary General of SADTU, President of the Education International)
- Prof. Dr. Vernor Muñoz Villalobos (former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Costa Rica)
- Prof. Dr. Heinz Süner (UK, Germany)
- Prof. Dr. Marlies W. Fröse (Germany)

Prof. Dr. Eric Mührel (Germany)  
Rama Kant Rai (National Coalition for Education - India)  
Prof. Dr. Benjamin Bunk (Germany)  
Prof. Xavier Diez (Spain)  
Prof. Dr. Rasigan Maharajh (South Africa)  
Prof. Dr. Michael Klundt (Germany)  
Prof. Dr. Peter Rödler (Germany)  
Prof. Enrique Diez (Spain)  
Prof. Martha Matashu (South Africa)  
Prof. Sanjoy Roy (India)

The framework parameters are guidelines for the preparation of the proposal catalogues in the respective countries. They aim to regulate a complex text production process for the purpose of formulating a common declaration by clearly defining areas of responsibility.

The scientific advisory board specifies the areas of responsibility for the creation of the proposal catalogues. Here is an example of a framework:

All proposal catalogues take a position/comment on:

- a) Definition of education
- b) Quality of education
- c) Costs of and access to education
- d) Providers of education
- e) Duration of education
- f) Implementation of the declaration
- g) Others (max. 10 pages)

A maximum of 5 articles may be written for each point. The justifications for these articles will be made available to the coordination management and will be published or archived.

The proposals are written in the form of legal articles, each of which can consist of a maximum of 200 words. All catalogues are entered into the form provided for this purpose (WORD file; font: Arial; point: 12). These are written in the tradition of the UDHR in a language understandable to the masses.

Naturally, we are also carrying out activities to deepen the discussions required by the second phase. In addition to articles and symposia, in February 2022 we organised a series of online presentations in different languages, for example under the following headings:

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- *Project Article 26 and the role of UN: What to expect?*
- *Human Rights and Discourses: Is an Ultimate Definition Possible?*
- *Following the footsteps of humanity*
- *Textile unions and the right to education*
- *Human right to education and the world of work*
- *The erosion of the International Law*

### **Working Plan for 2024**

- Academic Advisory Board will meet in February to finalise the Framework parameters
- An interim report to be drafted for submission to the UN Secretary- General in May
- The committees will continue to develop the legitimacy base and will hold meetings to visit both the UN and ministries of education in different countries
- Online presentations and publications on Article 26 will continue
- Textualisation of first proposal catalogues for the extension of human right to education
- Publication of the second project book

**Dear participants,**

**Dear colleagues and comrades,**

The progress and success of the project can be measured by the level of commitment of the partners. It stagnates or increases exponentially with the performance of those involved. And the possibilities of so many partner organizations must be well understood, these are in fact immense. We are just waiting for it to finally unfold. We cannot repeat this fact often enough.

### **EPILOGUE**

The Project Article 26,

- is an initiative of those who are excluded from democracy,
  - stands for the recovery of realistic hope,
  - means the rediscovery of solidarity,
  - stands for the critique of the existing concept of humans (in their absolute majority) as degraded beings.
-

**Frequently repeated slogans of the project are:**

- This project is a longterm process. Sooner or later an exponential rising will be a natural result of its' continuous engagement
- Project Extension of Human Rights to Education – is a special democratic experience for humankind
- Those parts of humanity excluded from democracy will experience themselves as a legislator and a representative of their interests that have not been distorted from the outside.
- Extending Article 26 of the UDHR before or after a great war?

In this determinist time-course, we prefer to leave audience grandstand; and this move indicates a tremendously dynamic situation: We have no doubt that in this project, there is a quality of life which emerges thanks to an engagement occurred in an optimist manner and in harmony with social nature of human.

Thank you for listening to my presentation.

Translation from Turkish into English: PoliTeknik

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<sup>1</sup> <https://kubadostluk.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/KAY-A4.pdf>; Page 7; translation: PoliTeknik

<sup>2</sup> Extension of Human Rights to Education Project Dossier: [https://politeknik.de/p8492/#flipbook-df\\_15024/1/](https://politeknik.de/p8492/#flipbook-df_15024/1/); Page 6.

<sup>3</sup> *ibidem*: Page 6.

<sup>4</sup> *ibidem*: Page 7.

<sup>5</sup> Borst, Eva: Über die Aushöhlung des Menschenrechts auf Bildung, in: Ideen und Vorschläge für die Erweiterung des Menschenrechts auf Bildung: <https://politeknik.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/DOSSIER-BILDUNG.pdf>; Page 19, translation: PoliTeknik.

<sup>6</sup> Bernhard, Armin: Illegitime Eingriffe in das deutsche Bildungssystem, in: Extension of Human Rights to Education: <https://politeknik.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Extension-of-human-rights-to-education.pdf>; Page 165, translation: PoliTeknik.

<sup>7</sup> Melo Raquel: The Project "Extension of the Human Right to Education" and the role of the United Nations Organization,; limitations and possibilities, in: [https://politeknik-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/PoTe-INT\\_6.pdf](https://politeknik-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/PoTe-INT_6.pdf); Page 10, 11; translation: PoliTeknik

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.icanw.org/the\\_treaty](https://www.icanw.org/the_treaty); translation: PoliTeknik

<sup>9</sup> TREATY ON THE PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS: <https://d3n8a8pro7vbm.cloudfront.net/tectodevms/pages/2417/attachments/original/1571248124/TPNW-English1.pdf?1571248124>; Page 10; translation: PoliTeknik

<sup>10</sup> Charamis, Pavlos: Eğitim Hakkı: Sınırlandırma mı Genişletme mi?, in: <https://politeknik.de/p13186/>; translation: PoliTeknik

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**DR. MUGWENA MALULEKE**

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# THE EDUCATION SYSTEM, PRIVATIZATION AND THE FUTURE OF ARTICLE 26 RIGHTS TO EDUCATION

## **Introduction**

Education is universally recognised as a fundamental human right, essential for the development of individuals and societies. Strong public education systems are instrumental in fulfilment of Human Rights Obligations as articulated in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which asserts that “everyone has the right to education,” emphasizing that states have a duty to ensure free and compulsory elementary education for all individuals by providing equitable access to learning opportunities.

Education is a public good, not a commodity to be bought and sold. Turning education into a business undermines equity and access, especially for poor and working-class communities.

In post-apartheid South Africa, the right to education is enshrined as a fundamental human right in section 39 as included in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution. However, the increasing trend toward the privatization and commercialization of education poses a serious threat to the vision of a just, inclusive, and equitable education system. The South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (SADTU) and national policy frameworks like the National Development Plan (NDP) emphasize the need to resist privatization and instead focus on strengthening the public education system as a tool for redress, nation-building, and economic development.

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Despite this, the global trend toward the privatization of education poses significant challenges to achieving equitable and accessible learning opportunities for all. This article explores the impact of educational privatization and underscores the imperative of building robust public education systems worldwide.

### **The Imperative of Strong Public Education Systems**

Public education systems are critical for the long-term stability and growth of any country. Democracies thrive because of good public education systems (Dewey 2024).

Public education systems set up several roles for a country's growth and development. Part of this set up is to innovate and respond to challenges to meet the future needs of a country (Fusarelli and Young 2011). For example, water shortages are likely to affect South Africa soon because the amount of water required to support the population is likely to be exceeded. Much thinking will be required to resolve the water supply issues and reflecting on climate change will be an important learning trajectory. Like climate change, school needs to prepare learners to use technology to solve future problems. The public education system can collectively incubate and adapt to the needs of the country in a systematic manner.

Building and maintaining robust public education systems is crucial for the promotion of social cohesion. Public schools serve as sites of diverse cultures, fostering mutual understanding and respect among students from various backgrounds. This environment cultivates social cohesion and prepares individuals for active participation in a multicultural society.

Investments in public education yield significant economic benefits. According to the World Bank, there is a 9% increase in hourly earnings for every additional year of schooling, underscoring the role of education in driving economic growth and reducing poverty. Investing in public education contributes to skills development, job creation, and inclusive economic growth. A quality public education system equips all students to participate meaningfully in the economy and society.

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In addition, public education systems are subject to national standards, laws, and public scrutiny, making them more accountable and ensures that improvements may be made to change the system (Gutmann 1988). These education benefits have far reaching consequences for achieving progress related to social harmony, population health, literacy, social tolerance or relationships among many other benefits (Reid 2002).

Public education, when adequately funded and managed, can provide consistent and high-quality education to all students, irrespective of their socio-economic status. This approach helps mitigate disparities and promotes equitable outcomes. Public education systems, when adequately funded and managed, can provide consistent and high-quality education to all students, irrespective of their socio-economic status. This approach helps mitigate disparities and promotes equitable outcomes.

### **Commodification and Privatization**

Given the importance of public education system in democracies, there is a need to preserve public education systems against commercialization of the systems where privatization starts to breakdown the very foundation of the education system. Commodification and privatization is premised on division and breaking down of a unified coherent education system into small units that could be utilized for profit making (Ball 2004). We must guard against the increasing involvement of private entities in the provision, funding, and management of education. This phenomenon manifests in various forms, including the establishment of private schools, private companies managing public schools, corporate influence in curriculum design and assessment tools, the introduction of voucher systems, and the outsourcing of educational services.

While proponents argue that privatization can introduce competition and efficiency, evidence suggests that it often exacerbates existing inequalities and undermines the quality of education. Privatization can lead to a stratified education system where access to quality education is contingent upon financial means. This dynamic disproportionately disadvan-

tages marginalized communities, deepening social and economic divides and the exacerbation of Inequality.

The shift toward private provision often results in reduced transparency and public oversight and an erosion of public accountability. Private institutions may not be held to the same standards as public schools, leading to inconsistencies in educational quality and accountability.

Privatisation of education often leads to the erosion of teachers' rights. In many private institutions, educators face poor working conditions, job insecurity, and limited union representation. This undermines teacher professionalism and weakens the capacity to build a motivated, skilled, and stable teaching force.

With this visual in mind, the public education system is progressively being broken down for the purpose of commodification (Berkley 2019). In the end, access to education will be tied to income and parents' ability to pay for education. The graded private education system will link "quality" to costs. This approach risks commodifying education, where financial considerations overshadow sound educational objectives.

While South Africa does make provision for the establishment of independent schools and some of these are subsidised, the growth of the private education system and accelerated commodification depends on the breakdown of the public education system (Monahan 2004). In the South African education system, policy interference and technology serve as tools for this to be possible.

The progress that any country can achieve through privatization is more likely to benefit a few at the expense of the country (Ndimande 2017). The long-term impact of privatization does imply that the very foundation on which societies grow, and democracies are likely to be sustained will be undermined to benefit a small group of for profit entities (Adrião, Garcia et al. 2017).

### **Interference in the Public Education System**

Often influences in education are directed towards the end points of public education without a focus on what supports good, quality education. The generation of data, especially from nonprofit organizations funded by the private sector,

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support this view. The generation of learner performance data and the utilization of this data to build on activities that support division is evident in the South African context. The continuous push for national assessment systems continues as part of the structure to feed the privatization agenda.

The rhetoric around data, the generation of data and how data should lead the evidence-based interventions is often a smoke screen for the private sector agenda to undermine progress in the public education system (Silbaugh 2011).

Added to this is the role of monitoring and evaluation and the growth of “non-profit organizations” funded by the private sector to take over public education sector functions and to get a foot into the education system. For example, there were attempts to introduce “Charter Schools” under the guise of parental choice to change the status of some public institutions or schools.

For this approach to be palatable, influencing public opinion and public discourse on the poor quality of the public education system serves as part of the puzzle piece. The media reporting on the so-called data and on problems in public education and often making artificial connections between mechanisms that protect public education like teacher unions and poor-quality education.

Valuable intellectual resources are also deployed in publications that supports views that negatively impact the public education system. Platforms are then created to fuel the negative conversations. Instead of research efforts and publications that bring solutions to the education system, divisive content is promoted in the system.

### **Technology Makes it Easy**

There is acceptance that future problems, because of its complexity and level of problem solving, require high level cognition and digital technology to solve. For this to materialize, placing mental growth together with digital technology is an important cross cutting education priority; however, in the South African context digital technology represent as a means for commodification (Monahan 2004). Mental development takes a secondary role to filling the system with digital resources for the purpose of controlling the public education system. Digital technology also makes it possible to

take over school and teacher functions, for example attempts are being made to populate the public education system with external assessments for the purpose of control.

### **Other Privatization Efforts**

Home schooling, online teaching and tutoring efforts that promote isolation and problems associated with such isolation to the extent that policies are created to support this. Home schooling that depends on private sector interventions, like tutoring and assessment, supports profit generation at the expense of locating education in social settings that are more beneficial.

Those taking this option also means that parents and children take responsibility for failure. If the learner is not successful, it is something that the parent or learner did or did not do that remains the centre of cause of failure.

### **De-Professionalization and Defunding**

Teacher agency will progressively decline as more and more roles are taken away from the teacher. An implicit view of “Artificial Intelligent” as a teacher replacement is promoted in South Africa. Instead of AI being a tool, it is set up to occupy a central position discounting the psychological dimensions of the education system.

Provinces in South Africa are faced with funding constraints and schools are reducing the teaching force. Such measures also interfere with the public education system where schools are asked to cope with less resources while learner numbers continue to creep up (Vally 2018).

### **Conclusion**

The current and future stability of a country including South Africa depends on the role of a public education system to adapt and deliver on a promise of a better future for all and this remains a central feature of Article 26 the Right to Education. A public education system is accountable to the public and to parents and is the centre of human rights distribution against forces that militate against them (SPREEN and VALLY 2014). The commodification of the education system as explained in this article works against a public education

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system in favour of conditions that promote for profit organizations to exploit the system.

Every effort must be made to preserve the public education system because it is the way in which countries make progress and the poor walk out of poverty. Education is a public good and should remain so and Article 26 provides a guiding light to protect parental choice and human rights.

The privatization of education presents significant challenges to the realization of the right to education as enshrined in international human rights instruments. While private entities can play a complementary role, the primary responsibility lies with states to provide free, quality public education. Strengthening public education systems is not only a legal obligation but also a strategic investment in the social and economic well-being of societies globally.

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## THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESS OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Today, besides facing an unprecedented ecological crisis brought about by unbridled exploitation of our planet, progressive struggles must contend with other serious challenges such as the latest wave of nationalist, racist and pseudo-populist politics that seek to divide and rule communities already fractured by years of social and economic upheaval, repression and growing inequality. These reactionary political agendas divert attention away from the real causes of today's social and economic problems. The human rights framework established following the second world War has been torn to shreds by the Biden administration in the US and earlier Trump as well as the EU. These governments in the North by their support of Israel are supporting a genocide in material ways. Israel has violated the Geneva Accords, the Rome Statutes and almost every convention and treaty on humanitarian and human rights law. So there has to be a rethink on how human and education rights can be implemented. Clearly to have a genocide in the 21st century should give us cause to rethink.

Israel's crimes are so heinous, their depravity so disturbing, Palestinian suffering so intolerable, and the UN so paralysed that people around the world are increasingly rising in outrage. This level of global solidarity – students on hundreds of university campuses demanding divestment; workers refusing to handle goods and arms to and from Israel;

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cultural workers and sports people condemning and boycotting events with Israeli participation; communities declaring apartheid-free areas and even countries taking tentative steps to impose sanctions on Israel - was last witnessed during the struggle against apartheid South Africa.

Furthermore, Israel has repeatedly shown that its actions are a threat to global peace and security. Over decades, it has blatantly violated international law with abandon; rejected UN resolutions and rulings of the ICJ with disdain; labelled UN institutions “terrorist” and as enabling “terrorism”; undertaken illegal actions in various countries of the world, including assassinations, bombings and other acts of violence against individuals and states with impunity. Israel also possesses a large nuclear arsenal and its officials, at different times, have emphasised their willingness to use those weapons of mass destruction, thus imperilling the region as well international peace and security more generally. Its weapons industry is a threat to peace in various parts of the world, particularly as Israel is unconcerned about producing and using banned weapons such as cluster bombs and white phosphorus. In June 2024 the Human Rights Council and several independent experts again reiterated their call to states and arms manufacturers to cease the sale, transfer and diversion of arms, munitions and other military equipment to Israel.

There continues to be a deliberate effort to comprehensively destroy the Palestinian education system, aptly described by Palestinian-British scholar Karma Nabulsi as *scholasticide* - long before the direct destruction of universities and schools - as a “slow, sadistic crushing of learning, a stifling of the life opportunities it provides” and *sophicide*, referred to by the Palestinian Feminist Collective as “the Zionist regime’s deliberate annihilation of indigenous knowledge traditions inspired by the land itself, as well as the carriers of that knowledge, including elders and women”. The terms refer to the systemic obliteration of education through the arrest, detention or killing of lecturers, teachers, students and staff, the destruction of educational infrastructure and the erosion of the intellectual and cultural fabric of Palestinian society. Thus far, 450 schools and all 12 universities in Gaza have been bombed, together with archives, libraries and printing presses. Israel’s destruction of this infrastructure leaves 625,000

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school and 90,000 university students in Gaza without access to education. To date, 8,600 students, 497 educators and administrators, 98 professors and four university presidents have been killed, many with their families. In the West Bank, the occupation forces have systematically attacked Palestinian universities and other educational spaces.

Together with reproductive genocide, infanticide, ecocide and domesticide we are challenged to make meaning of the purpose of the academia as we counter the epistemological, methodological and conceptual limitations of the academic-industrial complex where particular forms of power and knowledge are privileged and which prevent the necessary solidarity required in an age of genocide.

The Tanzanian Julius Nyerere professor of law, Issa Shivji has subjected Western leaders to a withering critique concerning their hypocritical double standards. In a recent discussion Shivji shows how the situation in occupied Palestine apart from it being a humanitarian crisis is also a crisis of human rights and of humanity! It is also a scholasticide, thousands of Palestinian teachers, academics and students have been killed, all universities bombed.

Craig Mokhiber, the former Director of the NY office of the UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights in his recent resignation letter emphasized that we are witnessing a "text-book case of genocide", echoing the words of Jewish Holocaust and Genocide scholar, Raz Segal in an article published by *Jewish Currents*.

### **So what is the context we face?**

The pandemic: It exacerbated the fault lines of inequality and its tragic consequences on people, their communities, institutions and highlighted many of the cruel and dystopian absurdities of the present global system. In the context of the pandemic alone, these include pharmaceutical companies apportioning vaccines initially to the highest-income countries, the vaccine apartheid or vaccine nationalism practiced by the governments of rich countries in hoarding vaccines, protecting the profits of their pharmaceutical corporations and their appalling conduct in the World Trade Organisation in preventing the waiver on vaccine patents and related technologies (Okereke 2021).

Just one aspect of how responses to COVID 19 exacerbated inequality both during the pandemic and its afterlife: UNESCO's recent publication 'An ed-tech tragedy? Educational technologies and school closures in the time of COVID-19' (finally published after massive delays) includes important sub-sections on how ed-tech has empowered and enriched powerful private sector actors, enabled new and invasive forms of surveillance and control, and ushered in often overlooked environmental impacts, among other harms. The (quite large) report discusses technology solutionism, commercial edtech, and the acceleration of privatisation.

**Specific relevant sub-sections include:**

Learners leaving state-provided education ("a flight from public education to homeschooling") - p.162

The private sector tightened its grip on public education - dedicated section on p.259 and detailed sub-sections on:

- Unprecedented growth and lucrative initial public offerings for commercial ed-tech providers
- Corporate dependencies and reduced government Oversight

There is also a detailed section on how inequalities were supercharged (see p. 84).

**Climate Catastrophe:** The manifest lesson of the past few years underscores the point *about capitalism's insatiable appetite for maximization and economic growth and its disregard for "the balance that is necessary in all ecological systems"*. The new Sixth Assessment Report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2022) tells us **without hyperbole** that humanity is on a cliff's edge. Many believe that the spread of zoonotic diseases will continue - a consequence of the economic destruction of critical ecosystems and the interface of this with agribusiness monocultures and global commodity chains (Ibid). Similarly, alarmed by the chain of environmental catastrophes resulting from global warming (Ibid) - including record heat waves, persistent droughts, out-of-control wildfires, megastorms, unprecedented floods, torrential rainfall, glacier melts, and sea level rise - many exhort us to challenge capitalism's culpability

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itself in contrast to the conservatives' denialism and the liberals' technological fixes and market incentives.

In South Africa as in many countries of the South today, these global challenges are compounded by the blind faith in neo-liberalism, austerity and marketisation and aggravated by flagrant kleptocratic behaviour, patronage and desperate violence largely against the vulnerable in society.

**Inequality** in South Africa is recognized as one of the most salient features of the society and the country consistently ranks as the most unequal country in the world (we compete with Brazil), a fact rooted in a history of colonisation, apartheid and racial capitalism. The negotiated settlement between the apartheid regime and the former liberation movement the ANC did not result in the rupture of this history and the adoption of a neoliberal macroeconomic policy in 1996 (partly to pacify the markets locally and lobally) which displaced the mildly social democratic Reconstruction and Development Programme has exacerbated inequality.

Almost 50% of South Africans rely on the meagre social grants to survive (SASSA, 2021) and approximately 55% of the population live in poverty with 25% of the population facing food poverty (World Bank, 2020). In 2021 the average income of the top 1% increased by 50% while that of the poorest half fell by more than 30% (The Economist, 2021). According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey for the first quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate was 63,9% for those aged 15-24 and 42,1% for those aged 25-34 years, while the current official national rate stands at 34,5 (Stats SA, 2022). The more accurate expanded definition of unemployment, including people who have stopped looking for work stands at 44.1% (Ibid). 60% of children live below the 'upper-bound' poverty line (with a per capita household income of R1, 183) per month. 27% of children younger than 5 years are stunted with chronic malnutrition.

**Poverty, inequality and unemployment correlates along colour, gender and spatial lines with black women being the poorest.**

So this brief look at the social context of the pandemic, climate issues and inequality is to underscore the point that education is one strand (albeit a crucial one) in the tapestry of economic, political, social and ecological policies and prac-

tices. Education itself is shaped by the economic and social structures of society and the agency of social forces that constitute racialised, classed and gendered lives. In this crucible, education can reproduce extant social relations and inequality or it can transform them. Education is not an autonomous social force and socio-political, economic and ideological factors exert a profound impact on education.

“Education on its own cannot transform the world but the world cannot be transformed without education,” (Nasson as cited in Chisholm, 2004:13). Saleem Badat: Changing the world and societies requires political action, including the courage to design and pursue economic and social policies that address inequalities and create more equitable futures for all people.

Early on following Paulo Freire and others we realised that education while a necessary condition cannot on its own address the social problems our society has to confront. It is not a panacea. It is abundantly clear amongst critical educators that reforms directed at the educational system alone are inadequate and that successful education reforms must be based on an understanding of the contextual and structural character of poverty and inequality. These cannot be resolved alone through education policy reform from above.

Commenting on the link between schooling and the socio-economic background of learners, Patrick Watkins (2010:13) explains that,

...the learning process is not only affected by the quality of schooling, but also heavily influenced by the socio-economic background and environment (health, books at home, help from the community, to name but a few ingredients). So, when it comes to education (as in many other fields) equity is not enough. Quite to the contrary, giving everyone the same amount and quality of education regardless of children’s backgrounds is profoundly unjust and a recipe for reproducing inequalities.

A number of educationists have written about the problems besetting the post-apartheid education system in South Africa and I’m sure this analysis exists in other countries in the majority world. They include writings on educational management, school governance, curriculum, language, assessment, equity, teacher education, professional develop-

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ment and support, early childhood development, adult basic education and many other issues involving the process of educational reform. Although prolific in quantity and rich in their theoretical and analytical contributions, many volumes of educational analyses leave a major gap in understanding policy in practice. Poverty and inequality undermines education, and in South Africa the majority of children live under conditions of protracted poverty. Regardless of how enlightened a curriculum might be or how much teachers are motivated, none of this will matter if a child comes to the classroom hungry. By obscuring this simple reality, we miss the real issue.

Secondly, the patent failure of the public education system to provide quality education for most learners has dangerously spawned several suggestions including the crude resort to an apartheid-like disciplinary regime (as a backlash against the perception that 'learners have too many rights'). This often involves for example, privatization of education and the nostalgic call for a return to the apartheid-era authoritarianism characterised by the 'fundamental pedagogics' of didactic and choral recitation, the banking education that Paulo Freire warned about, 'talk-and-chalk' rote learning, even corporal punishment and blaming teachers and learners (and not systemic inequality) for educational shortcomings. All these 'solutions' have the potential to undermine the hard-won gains in promoting a rights-based quality education system for the public good.

Neoliberalism and privatisation and their attendant consequences on the education sector impact negatively on the right to education. Austerity measures often result in cutting teacher salaries, reducing material and personnel support to schools, less learner support material, larger pupil: teacher ratios, larger class sizes, and user fees undermining the right to education. Seeing education as a market where profits are to be made is at odds with the notion of education as a fundamental human right and a public good.

The upshot of neoliberal discourse in education has been to ignore the problems faced by public schools and to promote market solutions through private schools, vouchers, charters, and public-private partnerships and the like. This proposed 'market solution' to our education crisis, even with state reg-

ulation, is less a case of a pragmatic attempt at resolving the problem than a case of ideological wishful thinking. This ideological agenda is uncaring about any idea of human rights and of their role in producing social cohesion and social equity through the provision of education, but instead, it is about lucre and profit-making.

In our book *Education, Economy and Education* (Vally and Motala, 2014) we argued, following from our struggle history that the purpose and value of education is much broader and should be linked to our rich tradition of educational praxis based on social justice and democratic citizenship and not reduced solely to the needs of economic growth. Knowledge, skills and the competencies derived from education and training processes are of course critically important for all societies and the well-being of nations. However, the reduction of their value to the labour market needs of employers, to the exclusion of their wider societal purposes, is a serious limitation on their social role.

The emphasis placed on the relationship between education (schooling and post-schooling in the main) and the economy is invariably about how education and training both at the individual and systemic level can enhance the possibilities for jobs. It is regarded as both a consequence of economic development through the growth of the economy and as necessary to stimulate and enhance the very possibilities for aggregate economic growth through education and training.

Taking issue with the human capital theory rationale behind the dominant view of education, the economist, Chang, has similarly argued that the links between education and raising the productivity of an economy is tenuous at best and that the reasons to invest in education do not rest in the common-sense and instrumental and economic rationales for education. He argues:

... there are many subjects that have no impact, even indirectly on most workers' productivity – literature, history, philosophy and music, for example. From a strictly economic point of view, teaching these subjects is a waste of time. We teach our children those subjects because we believe that they will eventually enrich their lives and also make them good citizens. Even though this justification for educational spending is increasingly under attack in an

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age in which everything is supposed to justify its existence in terms of its contribution to productivity growth, it remains ... the most important reason to invest in education (Chang, 2010:182).

Furthermore, I argue that given the resources at the disposal of the World Bank, its influence and “advice” have a pervasive and profound effect on the policy and practice of education systems globally, including the ever-present specter of its sanction or at the very least disapproval. This conservatism and underlying overt economic assumptions, despite claims by the World Bank of “political neutrality,” are essentially ideological. The effects of this ideological position are manifest in:

- How and *what* questions are examined for the purposes of education policy-making and practice.
- The ascendancy of *technical solutions* uninformed and deliberately obfuscatory of contextual and historical analysis.
- The reliance on “*experts*” who provide such technical advice to the exclusion of other expertise, especially since the criteria by which they are chosen is rarely defined or agreed by those who are directly affected by the nature of their advice.
- The socially divisive and privileging effects of the “*solutions*” that are provided by such advice and its deleterious consequences for socially and economically disadvantaged social classes.

(Motala et al., 2010, p.250)

Simmons, comments on the false “promise of schooling” and a human capital approach to development. For instance, he argues that while the ostensible goal relates to income distribution and raising living standards of the poor majority, educational investment as presently understood is more likely to enhance the power and privilege of those who are already socially advantaged “far more than it enhances the power or position of those who [are] not” (1986, pp. 7-8). This means, in his view, that the real cause of unemployment is not attributable to the educational system but to the economic system, in which unemployment benefits employers because it reduces the costs of labor. How and why education



continues to privilege the economically advantaged underscores why “rights through education” need to be manifest in any understanding of the purposes of schooling.

The problem of development cannot be resolved through neoclassical theories about the development of human capital, or through forecasting and the supply and demand analyses that characterized manpower planning in the past and what is called human resources/human capital today. Nor can it be dealt with through a strategy for education and training alone. Meaningful strategies would require a better understanding of the problems of how labor markets are shaped and segmented through a variety of social, political, environmental, cultural, and economic forces and a better understanding of the interventions needed to deal with the problems of such segmentation.

Policymakers and analysts in countries like South Africa are wont to borrow policies and their prescriptions largely from Europe and North America, regardless of the vastly differing histories, contexts, and circumstances. These imitative approaches are adopted uncritically. In effect, although many of the borrowed policies have been shown to be ineffective in the very countries of their origin, they continue to be purveyed as policies and “best practice” useful to development elsewhere. Such policy borrowing is fostered, regrettably, not only through the work of “expert” consultants (often from developed economies) but also by “native” researchers who have little regard for the critical literature on this issue. They are intent on providing “solutions” based on these ostensible “best practices” – some of which have been severely criticized by researchers in the very countries of their provenance. Privatisation next session.

A useful concept in this regard is “academic capitalism”. It aims to explain the integration of the university into the global economy, more specifically how faculty, students, administrators and academics use “a variety of state resources to create new circuits of knowledge that link higher education institutions (HEIs) to the new knowledge economy” (Slaughter and Leslie 1997, 210). This refers to the encroachment of the profit motive into the academy and represents “a shift from a public good knowledge/learning regime to an academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime” where students be-

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come consumers and institutions the marketers (Ibid). The idea of higher education as a public good is surrendered to the logic of the bottom line and antithetical to the vision of an engaged university.

Increasingly in South Africa, in the light of annual deficits and student debts we see universities pressured to pursue entrepreneurial activities through third-stream funding ventures modeled on businesses.<sup>5</sup>

For Richard Hall and Kate Bowles (2016): “In this volatile international marketplace for educational services, both research and, critically, pedagogy are now governed by a language rooted in productivity and organisational development. Universities deliver return on investment through brand, portfolio and product; and with other large corporations they have refocused their strategic planning.” This development weakens, instrumentalises and commodifies community links and resources for research to advance the ideals of critical citizenship and democracy in favour of corporate interests – including that of the increasingly corporate university itself (Baatjes, Spreen and Vally 2012).

Science, technology, engineering and mathematical subjects and disciplines that have a purchase in the marketplace are valued more highly and research publications are in the hands of a handful of wealthy transnational corporations. Solidarity and learning that addresses the self to public life and social responsibility to robust public participation and democratic citizenship is marginalised.

Progressively, the relevance of academic work is linked to productivity as measured by rating and ranking scales and what Gonzales and Nunez (2014) call the “rankings regime” which reinforces the managerial culture in higher education (Orderika and Lloyd 2015). Moosa (2018) discusses how this regime perpetuates historical inequalities between universities and within universities. She writes, “... some South African universities are pursuing a global presence which may be to the detriment of national priorities such as the call for decolonisation of institutions and the curriculum, the student fee crisis, considerations of free HE, student success and improving teaching and learning” (Moosa 2018, 52).

Entrepreneurial forms of techno-utopianism, robotics and blind faith and evangelising in educational technology are often uncritically embraced by university administrations as Mirrlees and Alvi (2020, vii) write:

The importance of technology and the development of technological skills is a necessary social objective though not at the expense of an uncritical approach to the existing global political economy. Critical questions need to be asked about the political economy of technology itself, and its pedagogical and social implications. “Beware of the Bot” (Baatjes 2020, 7) states that “at present, the 4IR is presented as the new development that operates like a force of nature – we cannot argue with it any more than we can argue with the inexorable laws of gravity ... In South Africa many activists, scholars and critics have raised critical questions about the promises of the 4IR. Can it address the triadic problems of inequality, unemployment and poverty? How can it deal with the issues of ‘race’, class and gender? How will it address the ecological crisis and global warming?”

In similar vein, Badat (2022, 3) argues that “... lest we imagined 4IR as the harbinger of a (technocratic) utopia, we had to confront the fact that the first three industrial revolutions did not create a just and humane world. Why did we imagine that the 4IR would do so. Some aspects of 4IR could *potentially* enrich people’s lives – but *which* people, disaggregated by ‘race’, class, gender, disability, age, geography and nationality.”

Several implications flow from the points I have raised in this article as they relate to unemployment, poverty and inequality. We need to explore more fully the relationship between the alternative livelihoods, citizenship-based, cultural and solidarity economy activities in which especially the most marginalised sections of society are engaged *together with* the learning that takes place in the alternative activities of such communities. Such an exploration would provide a stronger theoretical, practical and organisational basis for a more robust and meaningful curriculum – not determined by the requirements of capitalist labour markets but by the requirements of a democratising society. Moreover, the alternatives suggested relative to work and learning should be consistent with progressive ways of thinking about sustaina-

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ble planetary ecology. Given the urgency of dealing with climate change an eco-pedagogy is also necessary.

Bearing in mind the genocide taking place in Gaza and in these bleak, dire and precarious times, with constant assaults on reason and education for liberation we remember Paulo Freire, who is an antidote to despair. Freire in his seminal work *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* calls on us to imagine a world that is less ugly, more beautiful, less discriminatory, more democratic, less dehumanising, and more humane. Donalddo Macedo (2005:11) in his introduction to *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* writes that in his work and in his life, Paulo teaches us and the world—with his hallmark humility—what it means to be an intellectual. As always, he teaches us with his penetrating and unquiet mind the meaning of a profound commitment to fight social injustices in our struggle to recapture the loss of our dignity as human beings. “We need to say no to the neoliberal fatalism ... informed by the ethics of the market, an ethics in which a minority makes most profits against the lives of the majority. In other words, those who cannot compete, die. This is a perverse ethics that, in fact, lacks ethics. I do not accept . . . history as determinism. I embrace history as possibility [where] we can demystify the evil in this perverse fatalism that characterizes the neoliberal discourse.”

An unjust world is not inevitable. We are often accosted with the demand to produce an alternative or an emphatic TINA (There Is No Alternative) argument. The riposte to this is THEMBA (There Must Be an Alternative) or TAPAS (There Are Plenty of Alternatives).

Despite the indignity of the times, I agree with the cultural theorist: Raymond Williams: to be truly radical is to make hope possible rather than despair convincing.

Another World is not only possible, it is necessary!



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## ECOLOGICAL PRECARITIES AND CAPITALIST POLYCRISES IN OUR CONTEMPORARY CONJUNCTURE <sup>1</sup>

Humankind inextricably exists within a dynamic network of living and non-living elements that collectively constitute our biophysical ecology. As noted by Marx, “Man lives from nature — i.e., nature is his body — and he must maintain a continuing dialogue with it if he is not to die. To say that man’s physical and mental life is linked to nature simply means that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature” (Marx, 1974). Our intrinsic interconnectedness with our geophysical and biodiverse environments have largely framed our ecological consciousness and shaped both our evolutionary development as well as our various revolutionary socio-economic developmental surges. We have crafted world systems which are currently deeply entangled within increasing and escalating polycrises emanating from within the contemporary globalised capitalist mode of production. It is estimated that we now number approximately 8.27 billion people at the midpoint of our two thousandth and twenty-fifth circumnavigation around the barycentre of our solar system year of our common era (UN, 2024). Notwithstanding our collective demographic success, we remain stratified and segregated through inequities that are manifest in material conditions of despair, deprivation, and destitution experienced by major sections of our global population. To better appreciate our increasing precarities, it is critically important that we understand our material location within our contem-

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porary conjuncture and recognise the contradictions underpinning these manifestations and the processes of unequal exchange that serve to reproduce uneven yet combined development in world systems.

Our home planet is considered to be approximately 4.5 billion years old. In this biophysical timeline, our appearance as a species-being entitled as *homo sapiens sapiens* is measured to a mere 2-300,000 years ago or less than 0.006% of our home planet's existence. Our longer history back to the last common ancestor which we share with other life-forms is indicative of our co-evolution amongst the wider biodiversity that is currently in serious decline. Our subsequent dispersal across the planet was propelled through our social capacities and capabilities to adapt to the ecologies we encountered and even to adapt our environmental conditions to match our needs notwithstanding the consequent degradations. This earned humanity the classification as a 'breakout species' yet such an ascription tends to mask the destruction of ecological biospheres and extinctions of endemic lifeforms resulting from our entry and occupation of those territories. Many now agree that we are living through a sixth mass extinction and where we are both complicit and culpable.

Our global human population is very unevenly distributed across the planet and prone to persistent mobility through non-linear migrations. Whilst the continent of Asia is currently home to the largest proportion of the living human beings, the continent of Africa, from where all of our species-being originates, has the youngest age cohort, the highest fertility rates in world systems, and yet does not share the quality of life experienced by those located in high-income countries in world systems. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (aka World Bank) was established in 1944 and classifies its current 189 member countries and economic territories according to their respective gross national income per capita. According to the latest data, 25 countries are designated as low income (<\$1,135); 50 countries are lower-middle income (\$1,136-\$4,495); 55 countries are upper-middle income (\$4,496-\$13,935); and 93 have achieved high income (>\$13,936) status in 2025 (Metreau et al, 2025). This classification portrays a normalised equitable distribution of incomes amongst the respective national pop-

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ulations whilst intra- and inter-state iniquities arising from iniquitous relations of production within the political economy of the hegemonic capitalist mode of production renders a wholly unequal picture of the international division of labour.

Contemporary world systems are social determinations resulting from the political balance of economic class forces and the collective compromises secured though the monopoly of state violence wielded ostensibly in the interests of the dominant strata to maintain their privileges. Our efforts at terraforming our home planet have seen us destroying wild or natural spaces and building increasingly denser ‘synthetic’ settlements through urbanisation and industrialisation. We have also supplemented our evolutionary process with revolutionary surges underpinned by an increased utilisation of our global knowledge commons and manifested in the scientific and technological advances resulting therefrom. With the benefit of hindsight, we can now identify at least six major scientific and technological surges [also known as techno-economic paradigms] that have propelled us into our contemporary conjuncture from circa 1785 CE or when Europe experienced its first major industrial revolution. It should be remembered that whilst other peoples and territories had experienced significant increases in productivity such as the current Peoples Republic of China which realised an industrial surge during the Southern Song period (960-1269 CE), the domestic phenomena did not result in major global transformations.

According to the most recent update to the World Economic Outlook Database of the International Monetary Fund, global gross domestic product to the value of \$110 trillion was generated in 2024 (IMF, 2025). The single largest economy in nominal terms was that of the USA with approximately \$30 trillion whilst that of the PRC followed with \$19.23 trillion in 2024 (IMF, 2025). Even though operating within a singular global system, both leading economies do not however share the same organising frameworks, and their comparison therefore tends to be misleading. Adjusting the data utilising purchasing power parity renders the PRC as the largest economy occupying \$37.07 trillion and the USA second at \$29.17 trillion (IMF, 2025). Uneven yet combined development con-



tinues to characterise world systems especially due to the hegemony of the capitalist mode of production notwithstanding the regional variations.

In its combined form however, revolutionary techno-economic surges have generally increased productivity levels (output per unit of labour) but have not necessarily generated more equitable levels of income distributions. The inherited legacies of colonial incorporation, expropriation, and imperial exploitation served to also accentuate disparities in wealth acquisition. In *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Walter Rodney argued that the "... connection between Africa and Europe from the fifteenth century onwards served to block this spirit of technological innovation both directly and indirectly" (Rodney, 1972). Samir Amin introduced the concept of an 'imperialist rent' which established, maintained, and reproduced unequal exchanges and ensured the flow of resources from the colonised territories to enrich the countries of the core capitalist economies (Amin, S. 1976). Recent scholarship has not only served to validate the subjugation of the world majority to the collective west but also begun to quantify the exploitation and expropriation of value being undertaken. Hickel and colleagues studies the period between 1960 and 2018 and found that "...the global North ('advanced economies') appropriated from the South commodities worth \$2.2 trillion in Northern prices – enough to end extreme poverty 15 times over. Over the whole period, drain from the South totalled \$62 trillion (constant 2011 dollars), or \$152 trillion when accounting for lost growth" (Hickel et al, 2021).

Our collective development as a species-being has wrecked significant impacts upon our environment and contributed to our escalating ecological precarity. Extensive research into the biophysical basis for life on our home planet has identified nine core processes that regulate the stability of Earth's systems. These processes range across physical, chemical, and biological dimensions and dynamics. The resulting Planetary Boundaries framework affords us the opportunity to measure the 'safe operating' space and thresholds for tipping points whereby irrevocable and catastrophic changes are triggered. We had collectively exceeded six of the nine planetary boundaries by 2023 (Richardson et al, 2023). Our

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respective contributions to our environment has also been differentiated according to our uneven yet combined developmental trajectories. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change of the United Nations during a recent public lecture entitled *Assessing Climate Change: Scientific Needs for Africa and Beyond*, the whole of Africa produces less than 5% of greenhouse emissions in the world (IPCC, 2025). Whilst this largely represents scientific consensus, the World Meteorological Organization has reported that Africa is experiencing some of the most severe impacts of global warming (WMO, 2025).

It has to be noted that the UN Charter was signed by Jan Smuts, then Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa—a racist regime that had expropriated and exploited the majority whilst enforcing segregation and their exclusion from political participation. Smuts had also been a key figure in the League of Nations and had contributed significantly to the drafting of the preamble of the UN Charter. Yet, as Vahed (2008) notes, citing Saul Dubow, Smuts was condemned at the General Assembly of UN for hypocrisy in 1945: “In retrospect, his presence in San Francisco can be seen as the start of a precipitous political decline, a process highlighted by his failure to comprehend fully the democratising environment of postwar internationalism, or the narrowing context of nationalism at home. Just as the rest of the world renounced colonialism and racism, South Africa tightened its segregationist strictures under the new banner of apartheid” (Dubow, 2008 cited in Vahed, 2008).

While the world has undoubtedly changed significantly since 1945, the UN’s founding principles: peace, human rights, justice, and global well-being—remain vital, if not even more essential today. Notwithstanding failures, the UN remains the only multilateral institution available to address international challenges. We must therefore critically engage with its shortcomings—not to discard the organisation, but rather to update, upgrade, and transform it. Deepening our critique of the organisation allows us to collectively assess the root causes of failures and consequent dysfunctionalities. Reform therefore remains essential and includes democratising the Security Council through ensuring equitable rep-

resentation, we must also consider strengthening the UN's capacity to mobilise resources for collective security and developmental purposes.

For us who constitute the world majority, the UN has always been a site of struggle. From the initial pleadings of India against discrimination in South Africa in 1946; through the official condemnation of apartheid by the UN General Assembly in 1952; across the establishment of UN Special Committee Against Apartheid in 1962; to the determination that Apartheid constituted a crime against humanity in 1973; and the eventual suspension of the representative of racist minority regime in 1974, the UN served an important role in realising the breakthrough of 1994 which inaugurated a united, non-racist, non-sexist and democratic dispensation for South Africa. Today, the UN must confront contemporary injustices whilst advancing human rights and defending social progress which enables a better life for all within a context of polycrises and ecological precarities.

As we commemorate the 77th anniversary of the adoption by the United Nations of the Human Rights Charter in 2025, it is imperative that our appreciation of article 26 derives from a materialist rendition of history and a critical understanding of our contemporary conjuncture within polycrises that characterises our international political economy, its division of labour, and the changing dynamics of labour processes through which value is created. The three component sub-clauses of article 26 are in serious need to be updated and reframed within our current circumstances and the international balance of class forces. Advocacy of a revitalised transnational solidarity should foreground the aspirations of the world majority, redress the epistemicide of colonial and corporate state capture, and promote the praxis of decoloniality. Pluripolarity is emergent in our times of polycrises and the threat of ecological extinction. Rethinking the form, function, and content of education and training provides the possibilities of progressive intergenerational learning and teaching. A better world for all must arise against the genocidal tendencies of late-stage capitalism and the extinction-orientated hubris of furthering capital accumulation through the commodification of all life and living systems. Other world

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systems are possible in thoughts and deeds. As argued by Steven Bantu Biko: “The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed” (Biko, 1978). Transforming article 26 of the UN’s Human Rights Charter should also empower us all towards defending the global knowledge commons and reclaiming a people’s science and technology from further capitalist enclosure and appropriation through intellectual property regimes.

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**Article 26:**

- *Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.*
- *Education shall 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.*
- *Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.*

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<sup>1</sup> This Chapter is a revised iteration of an original input delivered at the Democratisation and Decolonisation of Education Symposium, Continental Conference in Africa on the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Johannesburg. The framework has been retained whilst the empirical data has been updated with the most recent available data.



# HUMAN AND EDUCATION RIGHTS OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

The right to education is fundamental for the empowerment and integration of refugee and asylum-seeking children globally. In South Africa, access to education for these groups remains a critical issue due to complex legal, bureaucratic, and social barriers. This paper explores the challenges that refugee and asylum-seeking children face in accessing education within the South African context, focusing on legislative shortcomings, human rights violations, and the impact of xenophobia. A qualitative research approach was adopted to analyze policy documents, interviews with stakeholders, and case studies of affected children. The findings reveal substantial gaps between the legal framework and its practical implementation, resulting in systematic exclusion and discrimination against these children. The paper concludes by offering targeted recommendations to improve the educational landscape for refugee and asylum-seeking children, emphasizing the need for policy reform and cross-sector collaboration.

**Keywords:** Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Education, South Africa, Policy Implementation, Xenophobia, Human Rights

## **Introduction**

Access to education is recognized as a fundamental human right, enshrined in both national and international legal frameworks. For refugee and asylum-seeking children, edu-

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cation is not only critical for individual development but also a pathway to integration and social cohesion in host countries. In South Africa, despite the constitutional commitment to the right to basic education for all children, regardless of nationality or legal status, refugees and asylum seekers often face significant challenges in accessing this right. Bureaucratic delays, xenophobia, and misinterpretation of laws are among the key obstacles hindering their access to education. This paper examines the barriers faced by refugee and asylum-seeking children in accessing education in South Africa. Drawing on qualitative data from interviews, policy analysis, and case studies, this research highlights the systemic gaps in the legal framework and the practical challenges that prevent effective implementation of educational policies for this vulnerable population. The analysis is anchored in human rights principles and seeks to provide evidence-based recommendations for improving the situation.

### **Literature Review**

The right to education for refugees and asylum seekers is protected under international law, including the **1951 Refugee Convention** and the **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**, to which South Africa is a signatory. Nationally, Section 29(1) of the **South African Constitution** guarantees the right to basic education for all, and the **South African Schools Act of 1996** mandates that every child has the right to be admitted to a public school and receive education without discrimination.

However, studies reveal that these legal provisions are often not realized in practice. According to Spaul (2013), the South African education system is characterized by deep inequalities, with disadvantaged groups such as refugees and asylum seekers being disproportionately affected. Letseka (2014) further notes that these inequalities are exacerbated by xenophobic attitudes, particularly in poor communities where competition for resources is intense.

### **Challenges in Access to Education for Refugees and Asylum Seekers**

#### **1. Documentation and Bureaucratic Barriers**

One of the most significant challenges faced by refugee and asylum-seeking children in South Africa is the issue of documentation. The Department of Home Affairs, responsi-

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ble for processing asylum claims and issuing relevant documents, is often plagued by inefficiencies and backlogs. This results in long delays in processing asylum seeker permits, leaving children in a legal limbo and preventing them from enrolling in schools (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

Without proper documentation, many schools refuse to admit refugee and asylum-seeking children, despite the South African Schools Act mandating non-discriminatory access. Furthermore, school principals and administrators often lack clarity on the legal requirements for admitting undocumented children, leading to inconsistent practices across schools (Yamauchi, 2011).

## 2. Xenophobia and Discrimination

Xenophobia remains a pervasive issue in South Africa, with refugees and asylum seekers being frequent targets of violence and discrimination. **The Operation Dudula** movement, which seeks to forcibly remove foreigners from communities, has heightened tensions and created an environment of fear for refugee families. In schools, xenophobic attitudes manifest in the form of bullying, exclusion, and unfair treatment by both peers and educators.

Research by the **African Centre for Migration & Society (ACMS)** (2020) shows that xenophobia not only affects children's access to education but also their well-being and academic performance. Refugee children are often stigmatized as outsiders, which undermines their ability to integrate socially and succeed academically.

## 3. Policy Implementation Gaps

Although South Africa has progressive policies on paper, their implementation is often lacking. There is a disconnection between national policy and local-level execution, particularly in rural and under-resourced areas. This is evident in the inconsistent enforcement of the **South African Schools Act**, with many schools setting their own admission criteria that effectively exclude refugee and asylum-seeking children.

Moreover, the **Department of Basic Education** and the **Department of Home Affairs** do not always coordinate effectively, resulting in confusion over the legal status of refugee children and their eligibility for school enrollment. The lack of

training for school principals and teachers on the rights of refugees exacerbates the situation, as many are unaware of their obligations under national and international law (Letseka, 2014).

### **Findings**

The qualitative data collected for this study highlights several key themes:

“Documentation as a Barrier”: Many refugee children are denied admission to schools due to lack of proper documentation, despite the legal provisions allowing for their inclusion.

- **Xenophobia and Its Impact on Education:** Xenophobic attitudes, both within schools and in the broader community, significantly hinder the educational experiences of refugee children, leading to social isolation and emotional distress.

- **Inconsistent Policy Implementation:** The gap between policy and practice is a major contributor to the educational exclusion of refugee and asylum-seeking children.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study align with existing literature on the challenges faced by refugee and asylum-seeking children in accessing education. The systemic barriers identified – documentation issues, xenophobia, and policy gaps – are interrelated and contribute to a cycle of exclusion that perpetuates inequality.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach. First, there must be greater coordination between the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Home Affairs to streamline the process of issuing documentation and ensuring that all children, regardless of their legal status, can access education. Second, targeted anti-xenophobia campaigns are needed within schools to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for refugee children. Finally, school principals and educators must be trained on the rights of refugee and asylum-seeking children to prevent discriminatory practices.

### **Recommendations**

To address the challenges identified, this paper offers the following recommendations:

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### 1. Policy Reform

Amend the South African Schools Act to include explicit provisions for the admission of undocumented refugee and asylum-seeking children, with clear guidelines for school administrators.

### 2. Departmental Coordination

Improve coordination between the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Home Affairs to ensure that refugee children are issued the necessary documentation in a timely manner.

### 3. Anti-Xenophobia Campaigns

Launch national campaigns within schools to raise awareness about the rights of refugees and asylum seekers, with a focus on promoting social inclusion and tolerance.

### 4. Training for Educators

Provide mandatory training for school principals and teachers on the legal rights of refugee children and the importance of inclusive education.

## Conclusion

The challenges faced by refugee and asylum-seeking children in accessing education in South Africa are multifaceted and require a concerted effort from both government and civil society to resolve. By addressing the barriers of documentation, xenophobia, and policy implementation, South Africa can move closer to fulfilling its constitutional commitment to providing basic education for all children, regardless of their nationality or legal status.

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## **CHAPTER II**

### **STUDENTS' VIEWS ON THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN TIMES OF POLYCRISES**



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## THE NEW EDUCATIONAL REALITY: THE PROCESS OF ADAPTATION TO THE PANDEMIC FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE STUDENTS

### **Introduction**

Education in Spain. An evolutionary look at the right to education.

With the Declaration of the Rights of human and of the Citizen (1789), as explained by Gantiva (1989), the ideological principles that guided educational renewal were embodied and opened the historical possibilities for public school: “ignorance, oblivion or the disregard for the rights of human are the only causes of public calamities and government corruption”.

The principle of equality guided educational thought and action: right to education, universalization and appreciation of knowledge as the only argument of reason (Gantiva, 1989, p.27).

To historically contextualize, despite the fact that Spain was at the tail end of European illiteracy, it was not until 1857 that the Madrid Gazette published the Public Instruction Law (Moyano Law) where public and private education was made official, giving access free to primary education, along with the equality of texts interprovincially and the preparation of teachers with the certification of their knowledge, in addition to subsidizing schools in small towns to guarantee access to all. For the first time, the compulsory nature of education was established in the state as a General Law, [...] this obligation was not new as an idea, but as a policy of a state and it

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also introduced the figure of parents, as people involved and forced to send their children to school (Gantiva, 1989, p.24).

In 1948, the Declaration of Human Rights was published, along with its article 26 which cites:

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education should be free, at least with regard to elementary and fundamental instruction. Elementary instruction will be mandatory. Technical and professional instruction must be generalized; access to higher education will be the same for all, depending on the respective merits.
2. Education shall aim at the full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; it will promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all ethnic or religious groups; and promote the development of United Nations peacekeeping activities.
3. Parents will have a preferential right to choose the type of education that will be given to their children.

This right, “gives education a purpose: the full development of the personality, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” [...], therefore, “the right to education permeates across all human rights and their usage supposes an elevation in the quality of the enjoyment of these” (Bolívar, 2010, p.2)

On the other hand, it is a right with a civil and political component, since it aims at the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms. It has an economic component, insofar as it contributes to raising the quality of life. It encompasses a social dimension, insofar as its object includes essential elements for life in society. And finally, it includes an unquestionable cultural content, as a vehicle for the development of the recognition of collective identity. (Ibidem, p.2)

In 1970, during the Franco regime, the General Education Law (Law 14/1970, of August 4, General of Education and Financing of the Educational Reform) was promulgated, due to social and political changes in the country, where it was required to the same, in order to unify and encompass the national educational system. In this way, not only is a fairer educational system provided, but a more efficient one; applying, among other issues, the free and compulsory nature of

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basic general education (Pozo, 2013, p.6), defining education as the integral human formation, both of the personality and of social and cultural development; in addition to the acquisition of habits.

The compulsory nature of basic education, together with the free compulsory education and granting the principle of equal opportunities in the post-compulsory period; in addition to introducing Vocational Training, the scholarship system, the dignity of the figure of the teacher when creating it as a university career, among others.

In this way, Spanish education was regulated for the first time since the Moyano Law.

This law, as Pozo (2013) explains, played a fundamental role in the configuration and modernization “up to down” of the educational system but, also, other social agents contributed educational currents and democratizing policies: the teachers’ movements, which promoted actions collectives around two main areas: pedagogical renewal and union struggle; questioned the General Education Law, especially their suspicion of the consequences of industrial modernization and their attachment to scientific knowledge, giving rise to great importance in environmental education, “proposing as an alternative a global planning of learning, which would break with the compartmentalization in subjects” (Manzano, 1980, p.10 in Pozo, 2013, p. 10).

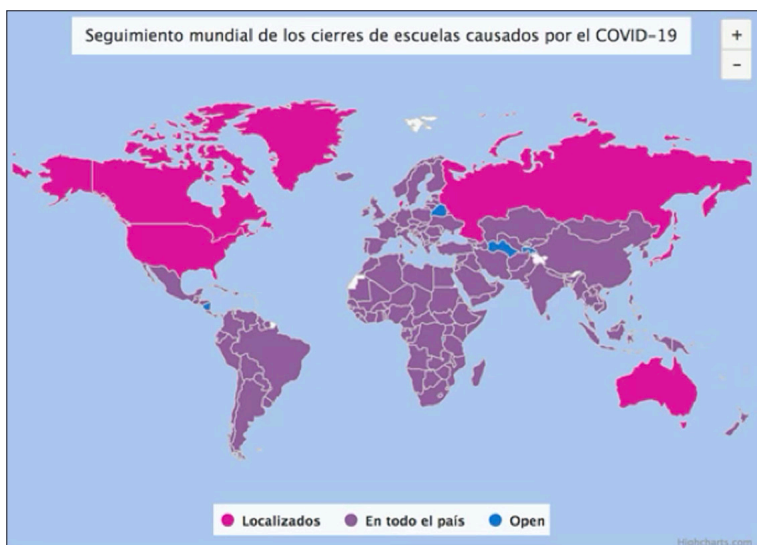
A few years later, when democracy arrived in the country, the Spanish Constitution (1978) was drafted, dedicating to education, and following the doctrine of the Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Article 27, where it not only grants by law the right to education, but the freedom of education, the compulsory nature and the gratuitousness of the same; in addition to the involvement of all parties to achieve this goal.

The final objective of this article was and is to facilitate to any Spaniard and resident of the territory, the subjective right (faculty and authority) to education and therefore, the recognition and benefit of it; as it is a protected legal asset, forming part of the fundamental rights (Barroso, 2020).

What has happened to the right to education as a result of the confinement and restrictions caused by Covid-19?



world student population” (UNESCO, 2020), which translates into “1,575,270,054” (ibidem) people, as can be seen in the following map:



Source: UNESCO, 2020

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation, what was previously something specific: online and virtual education, is now a daily and essential fact from that day in young people studying any type and academic course, making it essential that all types student had at his disposal an electronic device with which to access his education. The emergency situation, “uncovered the great inequality that prevails in the students” (Cañadell, 2021, in PoliTeknik, 2021, p.16) and altered the daily life of the students, leaving, for a long time their school education at the mercy of the mothers and fathers, a fact that has corroborated “the great importance of face-to-face education” (ibidem).

Also, the way how to evaluate the students was questioned, proposing a “general pass” that was not carried out but was relaxing the ways of evaluating -as it is explained in the Journal- “establishing measures of global evaluation to assess the progress (...) or the delays and the deficit that may

have occurred in each of the students “, the Minister of Education Isabel Celaá highlighted on April 15, 2020 that” the third quarter will have to be computed in a positive way and that “it should not be a disadvantage for any student” considering the repetition of the course as “an exceptional measure”, which will have to be “solidly argued and accompanied by a precise recovery plan”.

### **Access to education during the times of pandemic**

Therefore, access to education from the beginning of the state of alarm in Spain, faced inequality in access to technological resources by students: with “300 thousand children and young people who do not have a computer, and 85% that they have only one for the whole family” (Cañadasll, 2021, in Politeknik, 2021, p.16); as well as difficulties in the operation of the classes due to technical problems or the inability of the tutors to adapt properly to the situation.

Given this situation, and “in a short-term solution, and from a global perspective, schools and teachers needed collaboration with multiple partners to teach students to mitigate inclusion and equity problems during the pandemic” (Douce et al ., 2020 in Muñoz and Lluch, 2020, p.1) but, in the long run, it has been found that “learning in non-adult stages cannot be achieved in front of a screen with the same depth as interacting with classmates and with the teaching staff”(Cañadasll, 2021, in Politeknik, 2021, p.16).

All students faced different situations and limitations, as explained by students in the PoliTeknik magazine: poor access to the Internet, a complex adaptation of teachers and students to the virtual typology, difficulty in understanding and learning; as well as the lack of socialization caused feelings of loneliness and isolation up to psychological and physical problems. Other students have seen its advantages: saving time and money for transportation and, consequently, more time can be spent on studying.

### **The impact on education and the agents involved**

The home confinement caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has represented the greatest challenge of adaptation and transformation of the Spanish educational system registered to date, affecting the education methodology, location and

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evaluation methodology (Hernández and Álvarez, 2021). It has implied a significant change in the organization and management of the academic year in the short term.

On the one hand, there has been an interruption in learning for some students, given the technological difficulty of being able to continue with the distance education system and the difficulty of access to it for some families (thus generating inequality of access and education in the same situation).

On the other hand, there have been shortcomings of the teaching staff, both at the level of digital conversion and control of the platforms and new communication channels that have emerged, generating in some cases, educational absences.

As a short-term solution, from the perspective of both schools and teachers, so that students could continue with the educational process, the involvement of various agents was essential. Consequently, “students and families have been obliged to equip themselves with tools and instruments that allow students to continue with the syllabus and homework from home” (Muñoz and Lluch, 2020, p.1), having a role “determining factor to ensure the Right to Education and the achievement of educational goals” (ibidem, p.2).

It is at this point, where according to Hernández and Álvarez (2021), the economic, human and effective differences between students, families and educational centers have increased: not only has there been a lack of knowledge of the distance educational methodology, imposed by the situation. Rather, its follow-up has been supervised by the main interaction agents in the home environment; in most cases, the most direct relatives.

Mothers and fathers thus became the backbone of communication between teachers and students, both in early childhood education and in primary school according to a study carried out by Vicente, Vinader and Puebla (2020), causing very different consequences depending on the class position and where they come from (Herrero, 2020 in ibidem, p.2), whether they were endowed or not, with sufficient training, material, technological or temporary means (Hernández and Álvarez, 2021).

In this way, the learning of each student has not only been affected by the imminent change in methodology, but has

also been affected by the adaptation skills of each center and teachers, the technological knowledge of each family as well as access to the same, the economic capacity and the time available for the supervision of the student and the level of training of the agents responsible for the training supervision; thus generating situations of inequality much more accentuated than before the health crisis (Hernández and Álvarez, 2021).

### **Inequality in education**

*“Educating, paraphrasing Durkheim, is the way in which the old generation transmits to the new one a set of information, skills, values, traditions and knowledge, with the purpose of guaranteeing the permanence of society.” (Jiménez, 2017, p.50).*

According to Fonseca, J., Hoyos, JP, & Ruiz-Narezo, M. (2021), the challenge faced by all professions of social intervention, and especially those professionals who work with the community of the Childhood and Adolescence, it was immense; since infinite doubts, fears, insecurities were generated among all the agents involved in education. The professionals in the sector had a higher labor requirement, an increase in working hours and an extension of functions.

On the other hand, the students not only had to deal with educational change, but also with new emotions (both positive and negative), routines and technological barriers.

In this new educational reality, a new learning gap has been generated (Montenegro, S., Raya, E., & Navaridas, F., 2020), being much more significant in population sectors with more exclusion and vulnerability factors; and thus generating great situations of inequality of opportunities and lack of equity in the same educational sector. It is at this point, where the educational center is given relevance, being a generator of equal opportunities and educational opportunities, as well as a relational point for the student's personal growth.

### **The new opportunities**

Beltrán et al. (2020), point out some paradoxes in education, which has led to the pandemic and the imposition of technology: on the one hand, it has led to a multiplication of time of use, digital work and educational gaps, and on the

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other, it has led to a new form of relationships and sociability. The private space of the home has been open to the “public” through virtual windows, as well as knowing how to be in front of a camera and being able to act normally.

As Muñoz and Lluch (2020) cite, the moment of uncertainty and exceptionality experienced may serve to rethink and expand the concepts of education, teaching and learning, as well as to improve the human quality of people, access to education inclusive and equitable to develop innovative solutions to problems that may arise in the world.

What is clear, as Cifuentes (2020) remarks, is that “the change from face-to-face activity to online activity should not simply consist of digitizing the content, but rather the subjects should be rethought, requiring a paradigm shift in teaching and stimulate the student to work remotely” and “one of the challenges is mastery or development in the world of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)”.

### **Education at the Public University of Barcelona in the Context of the Pandemic**

It is understood that the educational field as a multisystem of opportunities and as a protective agent of that individual who, of schooling age and depending on their sociodemographic context, must be able to grow and enhance all their areas. That is why the word “education” encompasses multiple processes, organization and functions of all the agents that coexist in an educational community and that with their work contribute to the social and community commitment to society (ODS, 2020). Taking this reflection into account, different competencies and capacities are put on the table that the teaching and management team cannot leave in a state of lethargy, taking into account the changing, uncertain and flexible society that future generations will have to face, including ours.

It is not the intention to incline this responsibility to the adult in question, but rather to change the perspective of education as a discipline that creates and makes possible reciprocal social relationships and where each agent is constantly growing towards its purposes.

Going into the question of this article and taking into account the current and future challenges of education (OECD,



2019), the purpose of it is to share the opinion on the management of the fundamental pillars for an effective, inclusive, competent and decisive education taking into account the impact of the social and health crisis caused by COVID-19 that has shaken all spheres of personal, academic and professional development in the educational world.

In the first place, for the teaching/learning process to be effective and meaningful, students must put into practice interpsychological, cognitive and affective processes that will be involved in the predisposition to learn and, with it, in their motivation (Ortega and Sánchez-Queija, 2014). Here we specify that there are two types of motivation: extrinsic, by which students behave in a certain way and get involved in order to obtain a qualification and pass a subject; and the intrinsic, which broadens and emphasizes emotion, relevance and self-knowledge at the time of learning and which is related to goals oriented from the interests of the students themselves (Ruiz, 2020) In this sense,

The impact of COVID-19 on the motivation of university students has been reflected in the criticism and overlap of the legal and organizational framework, since it has prioritized instructional learning instead of taking into account the personal and social dimension of the students. In addition, teachers' strategies and the uncertainty of changing pedagogical programs have been reflected, which in some cases can leave open spaces for "improvisation".

### **Communication between teachers and students**

As a result of the pandemic, the importance of communication and the obstacles that it brings with it have become more visible and clear given the current situation. The definition that is considered suitable to refer to the concept of communication is the one proposed by Delgado, I. (2021), which sustains that " [...] it is a process that consists of the transmission and exchange of messages between an issuer and a receiver. " For the effect of the message to make sense, different elements must participate, such as the code (language that is used), the channel (the medium through which the message is emitted), the context, the noise and the feedback. These last three are considered essential to be able to establish a greater fluency in what the conversation will be.

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It has been mentioned on several occasions, how the education sector has addressed the adversities produced by the pandemic and it is not very risky to praise the proposed solution of keeping classes virtually in order to guarantee the health of students, as well as the teachers of the center.

It is there when the delivery of computers in public centers begins to be proposed to ensure the participation of the class in the matter, but also at the same time leads to the risk of losing that participation that is being sought. According to the article written by Augusto Giraldo Cabrera (2020):

*“The teacher is considered as the possessor of knowledge, using the different languages and communication processes, but there is no feedback or feedback or return communication so that between the teacher and the student there is an exchange of gestures, skills, attitudes in the process of making knowledge a horizontal and not a vertical act; The blackboard, board, billboards or other audiovisual medium are essential, with these pedagogical materials learning is more colloquial, and not informal.”*

On the other hand, in Education 3.0 (2020), it talks about the importance of the bond that is created between a teacher and a student, it cannot be established without direct contact, in other words, the relationship between the two is based on a space that unites them. With online classes, communication between the two has become much more accentuated, and it may be one-sided-or a monologue-.

It is at this point where the question arises whether it really is a complete learning or a fluid relationship the fact that a student during his theoretical classes, does not turn on his webcam (so he does not let himself be seen by his peer group or by your tutor), or do not participate in class or with the teacher when raising debates. Without forgetting, of course, all the possible connection problems during the course of the session.

### **Organization and management of the academic year**

Educational institutions, including universities, due to the global need to adapt academic content to the virtual format, the teaching model that was already being implemented in

distance education universities has been used as a teaching model.

To begin with, we have these systems already existing and with a certain background, but it is possible to think that they are specific systems aimed at people with also special needs, that is, that due to their work situation, age, personal situations or disabilities of any other type, they end up choosing this training modality that allows access to this activity continuously throughout life.

Data from the INE (2021), indicate that the evolution with respect to 2017 is generally positive, with a significant increase compared to previous years, 28.3% of people had taken an online course, 12, 2 points higher than in 2019. Regarding gender, the percentage of people who take an online training course has increased for both women and men, exceeding 0.8 points in favor of women those who take courses in 2020.

This specific operation had been more aimed at adults, especially due to the requirement of a high level of autonomy and involvement in learning. The multiple inputs that a student receives in traditional teaching not only from the teacher and their peers, but also from other different perspectives, help the student in such a way that the exposed topics are understood. This means that there is a greater wealth of content received than online teaching that today cannot generate.

Delving into the Protocol of action of the University of Barcelona before the activation of the health alert for COVID-19 (2020), the organization and management of the course was subject to the guidelines of the rector Joan Elias, rector and the Crisis Committee. These competent bodies followed some guidelines, which include the various actions that the university itself required and adopted in the face of the pandemic. Some guides that were in permanent revision based on the evolution and the new information available. Consecutively, the classes were taught through the Zoom Virtual Campus and the BB Collaborate, the latter being a real-time videoconferencing tool.

The planning of teaching at the UB had different models according to the faculties, each one being particular cases, but moderately guided by the general guidelines of the Academic Committee of the Governing Council (2020). Following the Guidelines for the planning of teaching for the 2020-21

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academic year, both the thematic blocks, such as the methodology, training activities and the accrediting evaluation of learning, which contemplated adjusting to the limitations and opportunities that were occurring in the various contexts Learning.

### **Conclusion**

The unpredictability of the pandemic, on the one hand, has prevented the possibility of a more orderly and adequate adaptation to the needs that have emerged after this short school period. However, it has given us the opportunity to reflect and organize a system adhering to the teaching of this model, since it has made us see that the traditional educational system is based exclusively on the transmission of direct knowledge.

On the other hand, the concept of the digital divide was not only visible among students, but also focused attention on the facilities and resources of the Universities. We could say that private education had a faster response capacity in the context of the pandemic, while public schools, despite having more resources, at the same time had to deal with more bureaucratic processes and a greater number of students.

One point to consider is that communication is a tool that few take into account when using it at the most precise moments, and it is that this communication gap that exists, or should be, between teachers and students.

For there to be a relationship between the teacher and the students, it is vital that there is good communication to create an environment in which both are comfortable to fulfill their functions. In the current case, attendance gives students and families a much more affective and welcoming relationship with the teaching staff, which should include: space, verbal and body language, and the willingness of the teaching staff to accompany the students. Returning to the thought of Paulo Freire (1921-1997), Brazilian philosopher and pedagogue, the student is conceived not as a simple content repository, but as a producer of knowledge in the teaching / learning relationship.

Starting from the basis that, as human beings, we do not like to stand out because it symbolizes for us to become “an easy target for criticism” according to the contribution you

give and the number of times you do it, that said, it is also a factor that influences communication between teachers.

Finally, we have to understand much better the framework of education in aspects of which we are not yet aware. This new way of learning and teaching will generate an evident change in the educational, relational, social, economic, ecological paradigm, etc. What more specific implications, what general consequences they bring with them and how we should organize education based on this situation, are matters that are beyond our present objectives. Yes, it is in our interest to raise questions that arise as a result of this situation that affects all areas of our activity worldwide.

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**W.M.S.S. KUMARASINGHA**

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# ECONOMIC CRISIS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION, DURING COVID PANDEMIC

## **Abstract**

Economic status of a country is directly correlated with the literacy rate of a country. Normally developed and moderately developed countries „are showing the higher literacy rate than developing countries. An economic crisis can be defined as a severe and prolonged disruption in the economy. According to structural functional theory, education is very important to the stability of a particular society. Simply, education can be considered as a one of the fundamental human rights. One of the significance reasons for the existing economic crisis is the COVID-19 pandemic situation which was started during 2020. Because of the pandemic and the economic crisis that happened during the period, education is affected all over the world. There were several reasons for decreasing the education during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic situation, online learning systems and lots of new teaching methods were introduced to maintain the education in schools, universities and other educational places. Global education system is revised by the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the areas in the world are lock downed by governments to protect their people and ensure to avoid of spreading the virus. All most all the students were affected by those decisions; hence their normal education system is changed.

Keywords: COVID-19, online learning, structural functional theory, economic crisis

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Economic status of a country is one of the major and important factors, which elaborates the educational level of a country. Therefore, it is clear that, the prevailing economic crisis in several regions of the world, due to many reasons, has a great influence on the performances of the educational system. One of the significance reasons for the existing economic crisis is the COVID-19 pandemic situation which was started during 2020. Other than that, even before the pandemic situation, the global debt had been emerging due the bad policies taken by the political leaders of worldwide.

This research paper is published in July 2020. Therefore, the primary purpose of this report is to furnish a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of economic crisis, in order to grasp the key elements and the root causes of deprivation of right to education.

Consequently, this report will examine the economic crisis and its implications on the right to education.

An economic crisis can be defined as a severe and prolonged disruption in the economy. It can be related to local or global status. The situation “economic crisis” closely associated with the terms such as diminution of economic activity, increased inflation rate, worsening unemployment rate, declining in industrial production, declining real GDP, declining income and thereby the reduction of consumer spending on basic necessities. COVID-19 pandemic situation can be considered as one of the predominant and most significant threat to global economy which occurred in current history. The pandemic was initiated at Wuhan, China, around December 2019. Since the causative agent was a virus, the disease spread throughout the world rapidly. The patients were experiencing a severe pneumonia condition with fever, and lung infiltrates on imaging and dry cough. After analyzing a swab of the throat taken on 7th January 2020, Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CCDC) identified the disease condition as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 and this disease was classified as COVID-19. It greatly influenced to human lives in losing their jobs. The industrial sector completely collapsed and thereby production stagnated for a long period of time. As well as agricultural sector, food industry tourism industry and service providing

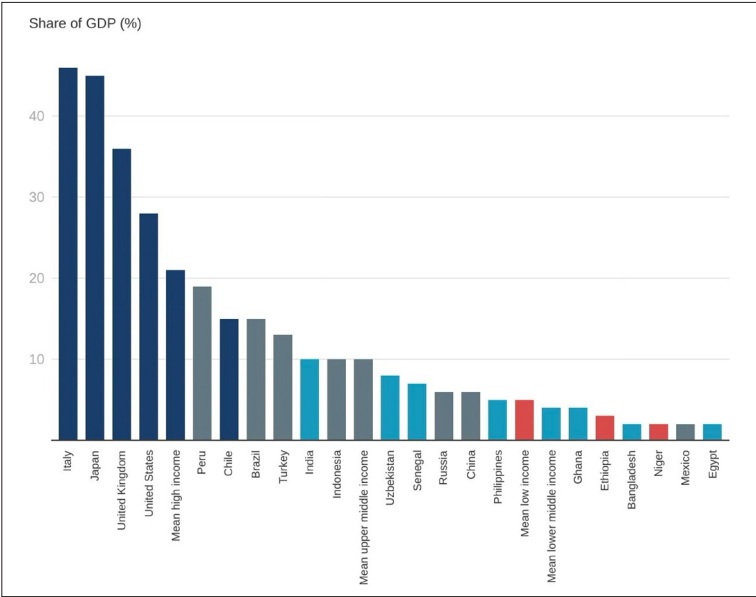
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sectors were thoroughly deteriorated. Crucially, educational level was adversely influenced worldwide.

When concerning about the economic downturn which aroused due to the pandemic situation, most of the regions of the earth, completely stagnated for several months owing to the great lockdown. Some countries were partially lockdown while several other countries were completely lockdown. Lockdown was practiced for keep the social distance, by preventing public gatherings to avoid disease spreading further. However, complete lockdown involved severe restrictions in business activities, schooling and in non-essential services. Specifically, the countries which are reliant on tourism industry, travel, hospitality and entertainment, were experiencing great disruptions. The emerging economies were highly influenced by the pandemic. According to the world-bank data 50% of households in emerging and advanced economies were not able to sustain basic necessities for more than three months due to the drastic income losses. Income losses were higher among young population, women, self-employed and casual workers with lower level of education. Significantly, self-employed people were adversely affected by the pandemic as they were unable to engage in business activities and related operations, the demand for their services were drastically reduced. Their situation was almost different from the people who are engage in government sector. The crisis greatly impacted on the global poverty and inequality. According to the world-bank survey data, temporary unemployment was higher in 70 percent in 2020 in all the countries for workers who had completed only the primary education.

According to the data obtained from International Labor Organization, (ILO), 2021, comparatively large proportion of women were dropped out from the labor market, and it was predominantly higher amount when comparing with the proportion of male labors, who were dropped out. Global working hours were diminished in 3.8 percent than the pre-pandemic situation (ILO, 2022). When concerning about different types of businesses, smaller firms, informal businesses and enterprises with limited access to formal credit were adversely affected. During the pandemic situation, most of the low- in-

come countries were struggling, to enter to the credit market. The share of GDP of high- income countries, which was used as the response to the crisis were higher when compared to low-income countries.



Source: WDR 2022 team, based on IMF (2021). Data from International Monetary Fund, "Fiscal Monitor · Update," <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/FM/Issues/2021/01/20/fiscal-monitor-update-january-2021>

For the first time in the 21st century, global poverty increased drastically due to the Corona out-break. More than 77 million people were living under extreme poverty in 2021 compared to 2019 (United Nations, InterAgency Task Force on Financing for Development, 2022). Most of the statistics data is taken considering the reference pandemic situation from January 2020 to February/March of 2022. The severity of the downturn of the global trade during the crisis was almost close to the global financial crisis of 2008/09. There were several cross-border restrictions, port closures and other logistic disruptions that support the great reduction in international market.

### **What is Right to Education, and why it is important?**

Simply, education can be considered as a one of the fundamental human rights. Basically, development of human personality happened based on the education. Therefore, people have a right to be educated for the well-being of their lives as well as for the societal progress. An individual development is the vital need for the societal progress. The way individuals think, how they behave and how they make decisions, directly impact on the social systems.

For the development of a country the stability of the social system is extremely important. The stability of a particular society is depended on the combination of five social institutes, such as, family, religion, education, government and economy (Emile Durkheim 1858-1917-Structural functional theory). Education is the central tool which foster the social progress by fulfilling four different interrelated purposes such as, humanistic, through the development of individual and collective human virtues to their full extent, civic, by the enhancement of public life and active participation in a democratic society; economic, by providing individuals with intellectual and practical skills that make them productive and enhance their and society's living conditions and through fostering social equity and justice. In addition, development of productive skills through the proper education is directly linked with the best performances of the labors and it has a great impact on the prosperity of the society. That means, education basically unleashes the human capabilities to a greater extent. Therefore, education should be considered as a vital human right as it empowers individuals with, knowledge, skills and opportunities. Thereby, strengthen them to make wise choices through the active participation in both social and economic sectors.

Concerning all these individual and social impacts, education has been recognized in a number of international and regional legal instruments. They may be conventions, covenants, charters, or soft laws such as general comments, recommendations, declarations and frameworks for action. The universal declaration of "Human Rights" was adopted in 1948. It is comprised with several articles and the 26th one states that, "Everyone, has the right to education". Accordingly, the right to education has been reaffirmed in several

international treaties. EX: UNESCO convention against Discrimination in Education (1960). When considering about other treaties which address the right to education, they all guarantee the education for specific groups in the social system as, children, women, refugees, disabilities so on. Though according to the UNESCO, treaty recognizes the right to education as a right of all the people without limitations.

### **Impact on Education**

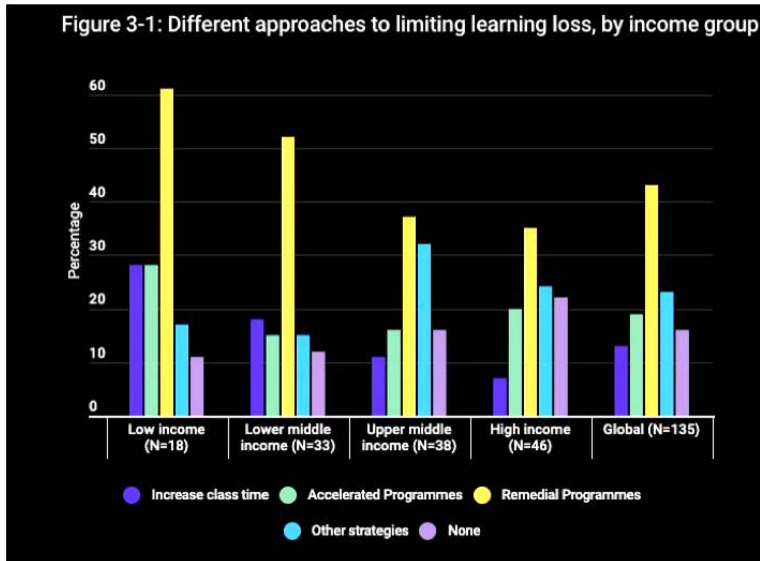
An economic crisis leads to the reduction of, hourly wage rates, number of people worked, and thereby for the reduction of private and public funds for the schools and for the other educational institutes. The adverse influence of insufficient fund is that it discourages the enrolment, attainment, attendance and performances of students. According to the results taken from the several economic studies done so far and, existing economic studies, there are several negative effects that effect on children due to economic crisis in related with their education.

- The reduction of parents income makes them unable to bear up the cost for educational materials such as books, uniforms so on and school fees, thereby schooling become something harder to continue.
- The reduction of adults income may also force parents to depend on child labor. As a result of that the child who was studying prior to the crisis, may become to a labor and this would physically and emotionally drain the child with reducing the hours for education.
- As well as with the reduction of daily/ hourly wages of parents they may tend to work more and more hours to earn more money in order to fulfil their basic needs. It diminishes the time available for parents to commit for their children to do homework, reading and other educational activities.
- The overall impact of weaker labor market is the reduction of educational quality as parents may withdraw their children from schools or less supportive to educational stuff.

In addition, existing economic studies have shown that there can be few positive influences as well, with regard to the economic crisis. One of them is, with the reduction of hourly wages of labors, Parents may tend to understand more

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about the value of education and may encourage their children to be educated at any circumstances. However, a large share of empirical research indicates that, the negative impact is several times higher on children's education.

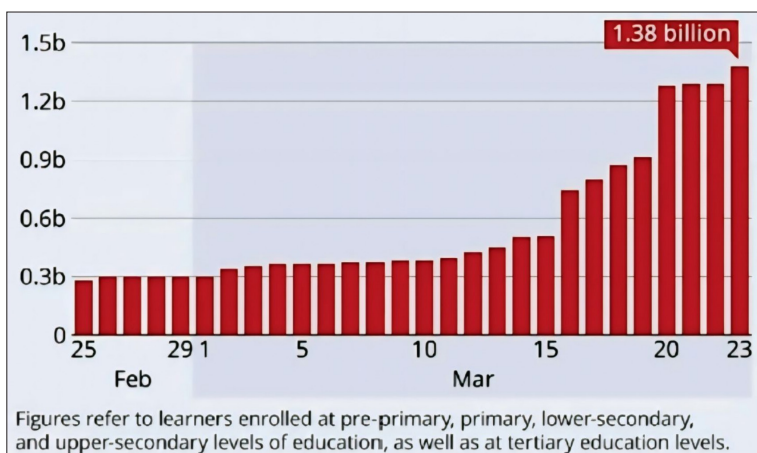


Source – UNESCO (survey on national educational responses to COVID 19 school closures)

### COVID-19 Pandemic on Education

Pandemic situation, affected on global educational system. Including schools, most of the colleges, universities and other educational institutes were closed to prevent the spreading of the virus further. Some countries took initial action to keep a lockdown status, as soon as the few patients were recognized as infected ones. However, some countries were late to take the immediate actions, and those countries suffered a lot with the loss of thousands of people. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) data, on March 11, 2020, it has officially announced that Corona virus is a pandemic, after it covers over 114 countries in 3 months and infects more than 118,000 people in world-wide. The first pandemic case was reported by Wuhan Municipal Health Commission, on 31st December 2019, in the Hubei Province. However, the educa-

tion system was facing several severe challenges due to the widespread of the pandemic disease. The UNESCO reports (UNESCO, 2020) reports elaborate that, 87 % of the world's student population is affected by COVID-19 school closures. Specifically, most of the developing countries, elaborated greater economic shock other than developed countries and those countries suffered a lot in regard with education and transportation. When it comes to primary education, most of the schools had to be closed immediately, as young students were in a great risk. Most of the time, secondary schools were transitioned to online-learning, and it was included video conferences as well as e learning platforms. With regarded to online education, many of the main exams were postponed. Specifically, when considering about Sri Lankan context, General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary level and Advanced level examinations (two of the most significant examinations in Sri Lanka) were postponed. Postponing of examinations were highly impacted on the deterioration of students' future. Thousands of students had to stay in the same grade for long period of time, only dreaming about university admissions/ higher education and career.



Source: UNESCO

Tertiary education was also adversely affected due to the closure of universities and colleges. Students were deprived

with important practical sessions, laboratory activities and research at the correct time and they were also postponed. With regard to that, graduations were cancelled off and several students had wait for a long period, staying their homes without a job. Some universities in developed countries, used online platforms to conduct the examinations at the relevant time periods, while most of the developing countries were suffered due to the poor technology infrastructure. In addition, it was clearly elaborated that students from less advantaged background, suffered a lot from the pandemic than advantaged students. (Di Pietro et al., 2020).

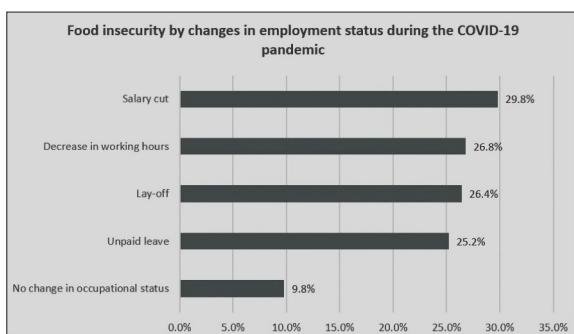
As mentioned before, due to the great lockdown which existed all over the world for a long period of time, the concept of “distance learning” was empowered. Thereby education was delivered, utilizing various digital platforms. In addition, rather than expecting teacher guide education, the self-learning through the use of digital platforms were enhanced to a greater extent. Distance learning was a solution to continue the education, but it was again a problematic to developing countries, due to the poor technology infrastructure. Access to computers and access to internet were basic necessities for the distance learning. When it comes to countries like America, is having significantly higher digital readiness, compared to Asian countries. As an example, Basonym, Egypt’s capital city found that only around 13.9% of the students experienced issues with their internet connection. Whereas more than two thirds of the students in rural Indonesia reported issues of unstable internet, insufficient internet data, and incompatible learning device (Agung et al., 2020). Further, the accessibility to the appropriate online learning device, was a kind of significant problem. Even in higher education, around 76% of students reported having incompatible devices for online learning and only 15% of students used laptop for online learning, whereas 85% of them used smart phones (Agung et al.2020)

Most of the students in rural areas where infrastructure facilities are at a lower level, were adversely affected by the decision of online education, due to the lack of technological literacy, lack of suitable devices and poor internet connections. The student populations in lower income countries were significantly influenced by above factors. In addition,



the most important factor which affected, particularly on students who belong to poor and low-income families, were lacking money to spend on data requirements. Financial issues, which were greatly aroused during great lockdown was a significant barrier for proper education. Interruptions to education can have long-term implications, beyond mere losses of learning, including increased dropout rates, loss of nutrition, and reduction of future earnings like effects would disproportionately be experienced, by the students in their future, if there is no appropriate procedure to be followed.

In this situation, some countries followed specific system, called “Early Warning system” (EWS), to prevent school dropouts. Under this, the red flags which can be caused by school dropouts were identified early and immediate actions were taken according to different levels needed. Therefore, a major function of EWS was to identify risks at early stages and to competent staff to implement the appropriate support to educational continuity, by addressing particular problems accordingly. This EWS was initially introduced in Latin America and the Caribbean.



Source-FAO

The economic losses will be mostly felt by the disadvantaged students.

### **Food Security was highly threatened by the economic crisis and its impact on right to education.**

According to several research conducted, during pandemic time period, it has been identified that the salary cuts or sudden income loss is strongly co-related with food insecurity.

This graph illustrates that, how different changes in employment have impacted on food insecurity. The important factor is that, the food insecurity is directly linked with several behavioral changes in students.

Such as sleeping disorders, eating disorders, physical violence, anxiety attacks and alcohol consumption so on.

According to research conducted by Loyola university Chicago, change in respondent for food insecurity status during pandemic was associated with greater reduction of household income, loss or family loss of employment due to pandemic. The research has been conducted considering college students of United States of America. One study was conducted in April 2020, found that 17% of students reported experiencing food insecurity, at the initial stage of the pandemic, exceeding the general population average. Another study was conducted May to June, and it illustrated 34.5% of students which were surveyed indicated that they were in food insecure. In addition, food insecure status varied across colleges and universities. With the lack of adequate foods, several consequential effects were reported, such as low nutritional status and thereby poor physical health, higher rates of mental health issues, Addiction to alcohol (Bruening et al.,16) lower GPA, difficulties in building meaningful social relationships, problems in understanding and continuous illnesses so on. However, according to the results of the research, the percentage of students reporting, decrease in food security, during the pandemic was highest for those who themselves or their family's loss employment (as a percentage 62.96%) and those receiving financial aids from the university (15.08%). As well as students <\$20,000 income, reported the highest decrease in food security. According to the journal of Agriculture, food systems, and community development, the COVID19 pandemic had been adversely affected on the marginalized groups, who was already experiencing the food insecurity status due to poverty, unemployment and structural racism. Food security worsened during the pandemic. The

major factor for this was the existed financial issues, including household income, financial aids, deprivation of employment due to great lockdown so on. It has been found that the food security of students is depended on income and receiving financial support from parents.

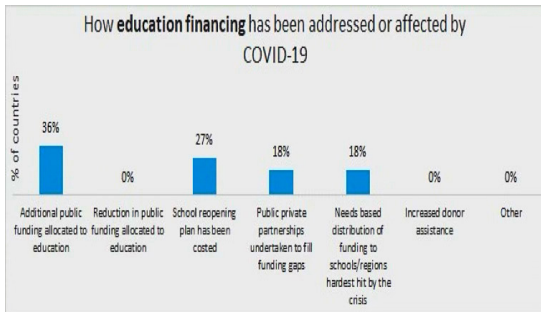
According to the research conducted by Loyola University Chicago, they have been found that, the level of food security directly impacts on the academic success of the students.

### **Government Responses**

Some countries took several actions to reduce the adverse impact on education even up to some extent. As an example, Brazil was conducting a campaign, to protect the right to education by creating public awareness, and in there, several recommendations were identified under a few categories, such as about quarantine period, reopening of schools rebuilding the scholar calendar so on. When considering the quarantine period, the economic crisis badly affected on the right to education, in several areas. The inequalities in education were considerably increased, as students from lower-income families faced greater challenges accessing and participating in remote learning due to a lack of essential resources such as devices and technology infrastructure. Other than that, economic hardships forced some families to prioritize immediate financial needs over education. This led to an increase in dropout rates, specifically among students in economically disadvantaged households who needed to work or support their families during the pandemic. Reduced access to quality education was another major problem. The public education system faced budget cuts and reduced funding due to economic constraints. This affected the quality of education, with the struggle of schools to maintain educational standards, hire and retain qualified teachers, and provide necessary resources for effective learning. When it comes to remote education initiatives, it involves infrastructure and socio-economic issues and with that it is essential to consider serious problems of security and privacy of teachers and students, when accessing the internet, digital technologies and online services. In addition, it is necessary to ensure the containment of all, ensuring the provision of appropriate platforms, internet provision, training for educational profes-

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sionals as well as adoption of workloads and other teaching structures to a different format, but the major and foremost issue regarding that is, lack of adequate financial support for the students, specifically in developing countries. On the other hand, use of digital platforms needs to be ensured the quality and equal education for all, but the major problem was that, unavailability of free data, particular software and required devices lead so many students to pause their education during and even after the pandemic. As mentioned before some countries took necessary actions to overcome this severe problem even up to some extent (Eg; Brazil). According to the campaign carried out by Brazil, it has been identified that, it is vital to provide, adequate investment of financial resources/support for educational policies and measures focused at re-adaptation to schooling and to raise the quality of schools, since a reopening that does not offer risks of contamination and guarantee the right to education for all also depends on funding.



Source: UNICEF LACRO EDUCATION SECTION, 22nd July 2020

This graph illustrates the financial allocation on several sectors which has a impact on education, as a result of world-wide measures. According to the graph, most of the countries have been allocated their additional public funding for the enhancement of education. According to the report prepared by the UNICEF lacro education section, there was a significant awakening in education sector, specifically in Latin America and the Caribbean, compared to other countries

such as Argentina, Panama, Anguilla, New Brazil, Colombia, Cuba and Chile so on.

### **Conclusion**

In examining the nexus between the economic crisis and the right to education during the COVID-19 pandemic season, a stark reality emerges. The economic downturn has not only disrupted traditional educational systems but has also widened existing disparities, leaving vulnerable populations particularly susceptible to the drastic effects. As my report details, the confluence of economic challenges and the pandemic has turned to a scenario where access to quality education becomes a casualty. The inequalities among students, especially concerning access to online learning, have been glaring, further widening the educational divide. As well as the economic crisis has compounded the issue of food insecurity among students, creating a dual challenge that significantly hampers the realization of the right to education.

It is essential and important to note that while some of the governments took immediate actions to mitigate these challenges, countries with low economic status faced substantial limitations in implementing effective measures. This disparity in responses further underscores the intricate relationship between economic capacity and the ability to protect the right to education during times of crisis. Navigating this complex terrain calls for a nuanced and comprehensive approach, one that not only addresses immediate disruptions but also advocates for international collaboration and support to ensure that all students, regardless of economic levels, have equitable access to education.

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**JEAN EUDES AGATHE**REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS (RODRIGUES ISLAND)

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# COVID-19 PANDEMIC: HEALTH CRISIS AND ITS IMPACTION ON EDUCATION

## EXPLORING THE LONG-LASTING EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON PUBLIC HEALTH CARE AND THE EDUCATIONAL SECTOR IN THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

### **Abstract**

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic had emerged as a global socio-economic hindrance in most countries, including the Republic of Mauritius. Core sectors such as healthcare and education have had impacts yet to be addressed to this day. This article studies the causal relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic, the educational and healthcare sectors, focusing on the devastating effects on a long-term basis. The emphasis is on the strain on healthcare infrastructures and the challenges Mauritius and Rodrigues islands encountered in their education system during the pandemic. The robust and relatively healthcare system in the Republic of Mauritius suffered a major health crisis overwhelmed with the rapid widespread of the disease and successive lockdowns, lacking digital innovations and workforce resilience. On the other hand, the disparities in education in the Republic of Mauritius were exacerbated, was forced to adapt to remote learning and digital education revealing inequity in the process, Rodrigues being affected the most. This paper also focuses on the long-term implications of forced vaccination drives, socio-economic impact and offers recommendations for strengthening both sectors post-COVID-19 era. The key findings include investments in the digital world: digital health technologies and innovations, enhancing the healthcare infrastructure; ensuring equitable access to education,

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and providing support for educators and healthcare workers. By focusing on these challenges, the Republic of Mauritius can hope to build a more resilient system overall capable of withstanding future medical crises.

### **Introduction**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant and far-reaching implications, taking the third spot as one of the most lethal health crises of the 21st century as a proof of its socio-economic hindrance to the world. The Director-General of the *World Health Organisation (WHO)* stated that the outbreak was the greatest health crisis of our time, revealing vulnerabilities and the interconnectedness of global health systems. The virus would spread far and fast, limiting countries in effective decision makings. Even when the first cases were detected in China, the world was closely monitoring the virus, hoping to find a cure.

Nations worldwide were facing, as primary data suggested, a lethal yet mostly unknown virus. Ongoing research and studies were limited to have an overview of the impact of the novel coronavirus, and the foreshadowing of the impact and its consequences were analysed. Despite the application of strict restrictive measures, it was urgent to find an equilibrium to safeguard the population and to respect their fundamental human rights. Although the pandemic was later contained to a certain extent, the full scope of the SARs-coV-2 virus disorganised fundamental sectors for societal development and equilibrium.

The focus of this article is on the long-lasting effects of COVID-19 on the public health and education in Mauritius and Rodrigues Islands. The case study is of national context and exposes how remote independent islands are faring against the impact of COVID-19. Mauritius and Rodrigues are about 1200 miles east-southeast of the Eastern African Coast, with Rodrigues forming part of the Republic of Mauritius. Moreover, the paper will be divided into four main sections, the first one will be an overview of the novel coronavirus as a health crisis and its scope since its official status as a pandemic. The second and third sections will focus on national data, i.e. the repercussions of COVID-19 on the Mauritian public health and education sectors. The article will end by

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exploring future implications and recommendations for improvements in the sectors in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

### **Covid-19 as Health Crisis**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) officially declared the coronavirus as a pandemic on March 2020 (WHO, 2020a). It took only a matter of a few months for the virus to spread to almost every country on the planet. Statistics have shown the staggering increase in active cases in less than a year globally, an increase that brought the number of active cases to more than 70 million in 2024 (Worldometer, 2020). Moreover, COVID-19 was an equal opportunity pathogen, leaving immunity to racial and social groups out of the equation. (Alsan et al., 2021.) The health crisis caused by COVID-19 brought to light the need for innovations in major societal sectors.

### **Pandemic Scope**

The pandemic had major repercussions on daily and professional routines. The economic toll set aback both individuals and corporates, and it proved to be a massive obstacle to overcome. The fast geographical spread of the novel coronavirus was a major reason for the ineffectiveness of early measures established to fight the disease. The pathogen started infecting people mostly in Asian countries, China being the first major country where it started. However, it propagated swiftly to Europe and the United States (Sparke & Angelow, 2020; Fredericks, 2020). Amid a few days, the first cases in Washington, Paris and Bordeaux were reported on January 2020. COVID-19 was reported as a very infectious disease and open international borders facilitated its widespread. It resulted in African countries reporting their first cases, one month before the declaration of the virus as a pathogen (WHO, 2020); the transit between Europe and Africa being the main reason (WHO, 2020; Maclean, 2020).

Since its outbreak in early 2020, COVID-19 has caused significant disruptions to daily routines and socio-economic statuses, affecting people regardless of age or gender. Countries resorted to emergency national lockdowns, and millions of people worldwide were forced out of jobs for months besides limited to no-time with friends and family. Repeated waves of COVID-19 even caused some countries to impose

multiple lockdowns in a single year (Zhou and Kan, 2021). The population impact of COVID-19 will be discussed later in terms of statistics based on active cases, hospitalisations and deaths, and how the public have been reacting to COVID-19 and related measures put in place.

Media coverage of the coronavirus often downplayed its risks, comparing COVID-19 to historical health crises to mitigate global psychological strain (Bourdelaïs 2021). The larger part of the population heeded this warning, but it had minimal impact on others. It was difficult to grasp the concept of the Blague Plague killing 33% of Europe's population when one has not experienced it. Moreover, more people were on the lookout for real-time data, which during 2020 looks alarming. Statistics from Worldometer showed a ten thousand percentage increases in the number of active cases from January 20 to April 24, 2020 (from 971 to 1,160,663). Below is a table that shows the statistics of reported active cases and deaths in the regions of Africa, North America, South America, Europe and Asia excluding China for the period of mid-March 2020 to April 30, 2020. These data were reported to WHO and John Hopkins University, but the World Health Organization suspected the situation to be worse. Some countries were struggling to report cases due to low medical facilities, thus inaccurate data.

REGIONS	Number of active cases		Number of deaths	
	March 23, 2020	April 30, 2020	March 23, 2020	April 30, 2020
Africa	1,337	31,332	27	1,765
Asia (exclu.	39,302	373,029	1,844	12,280
Europe	178,100	1,001,000	10,370	131,051
North America	33,860	1,001,000	403	59,521
South America	3,190	122,681	66	8,057

Table 1: Active Cases and deaths COVID-19 (source: <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/cumulative-covid-deaths-region?facet=entity>)

Per region, the death rate ranged from 1 to 5% in March 2020, with a slight increase from 3 to a high 15% in Europe. These reported data, the CDC and the WHO suspected even higher numbers. However, when we look back at February 2020, statistics show an unprecedented peak of 43% in death per reported active cases worldwide, gradually reducing to 16% then to a new low of <1% during the vaccination campaigns. As from 2024, recovery rates from active cases are about 98%.

The impact of COVID-19 on health still depends on age, gender, race and health issues of the virus carriers. Studies showed that Asian, Black and Hispanic racial groups have a higher contamination rate, while patients with health diseases like diabetes and chronic diseases have a higher risk of death. As of July 14, 2024, there has been a cumulative of 775.65 million and 7.05 million deaths.

During the pandemic, the preventing measures such as national lockdowns, social and physical distancing and updated hygiene rules (World Health Organization, 2021) changed the behaviour of the population. It started with the reduction of in-country mobility. Studies reported that the rise in mental health issues, mild anxiety and PTSD had a significant rise during the first lockdowns (Bourmistrova et al., 2022). It took several months before governments implemented measures for people to go out and exercises or buy groceries. A minority around the world was sceptical to security measures implemented, fearing for their freedom to which Bourdelais (2021) emphasised that there is also a historical trend during the outbreak of epidemics or pandemics, from political manipulation to scepticism and the spread of rumours. Altogether, these external factors have even increased the difficulty of controlling the disease.

With countries operating at reduced speeds due to enforced lockdowns, it had major repercussions on social and professional lives. The aim was to reduce the number of active cases and the death associated with the novel coronavirus. There is still an ongoing impact on the world's economy to this date. The halt to intra-mobility was not the only issue caused by COVID-19. It affected international commercial flights, forced border closures between countries as well. The restrictions to international mobility affected businesses and

international supply chains. As the pandemic swept around the globe, major suppliers could not meet demands, resulting in 'panic buying' further lowering the supply of goods in neighbourhoods.

The restrictions on the Import/Export business saw China reduced exports to Africa to 90%. The economic strain had consequent alterations on the price of goods. Businesses and consumers had to face an unprecedented uncontrollable situation. Although larger corporate businesses had contingency plans to mitigate the effect of the economic strain, smaller businesses were struggling to meet both ends. The aids allocated by governing bodies further increased debts. The inflation rate rose to a record 8% in 2022, the highest since the early 1980s (Orszag, Brooks and Murdock, 2024). The emergence of the COVID-19 threat led to rearrangements in the way countries manned their resources. The impact on the economic side was the first of many related disruptions in how countries would operate during and eventually after the pandemic. The public health sector was the most affected during the pandemic, followed by the educational sector. Two fundamental pillars of societal development and evolution were at risk of falling. The first when the shortcomings of poor prior plannings were brought to light, the latter much of the same. Hospitals were overcrowded and severely understaffed during the time of the pandemic. The number of hospitalisations and ICU admissions had a consequent rise, further putting strain on the medical health (OurWorldin-Data). Statistics showed that due to the number of hospitalisations, 94% of medical institutions reported that they were understaffed, mostly in the number of nurses (Pandemic Oversight). Consequently, doctors and nurses had to work back-to-back shifts, where some of them joined the patient's room due to the highly infectious nature of the Sars-Cov-2 virus. Developed and underdeveloped countries faced the same issue, showing the relatedness of medical-approved decisions worldwide.

In parallel, the educational sector followed in disaster the public health sector. Due to forced lockdowns, all educational and vocational institutions were closed. However, to accommodate the situation, online teaching and learning were introduced. Learners and students had to manage with

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incorporating their academic and professional lives into the safety of their home. It was a short-term proceeding; however, it proved to be the solution to adopt, in practice it was harder than expected. Disparities around the world for access to education has already proven to be an issue, with African countries having a higher rate of out-of-school children and adolescents compared to Europe or North America. Same applies to schools in warzones. Internet connectivity is unavailable to many people and online classrooms were not a good fit for everyone, widening the disparities even further. While most countries were in lockdown for months and months, it was hard to balance between face to face and online professional practice.

### **Case Study (Mauritius and Rodrigues islands)**

Mauritius and Rodrigues Islands form part of the Republic of Mauritius, along with remote islands Agaléga and St Brandon. Mauritius Island is about 1200 miles south-east of the Eastern African Coast, with Rodrigues a further 310 miles east. The latter is an autonomous island with its government working directly under the main island (Mauritius) official government. Despite its remoteness, the 1,302,098 citizens of Mauritius and the 43, 538 of Rodrigues were affected by the coronavirus. (Worldometer, 2024; Government Direction, republic of Mauritius, 2019.) The case study will reflect upon the direct consequences of COVID-19 on both the public health and education sectors, ensuring a national context overview on the public response to undertake measures.

### **Impact on the Healthcare System**

First, despite Mauritius rapid growth and improving infrastructures and lifestyle, the Republic in general still has room for improvement. The focus, of course, will be only on the two sectors (education and public health care). However, the economic impact of the pandemic cannot be overlooked as an explanation as to how the public health was affected. The initial response to the first reported cases were swift in the Republic of Mauritius. International and national borders were closed, followed by a national lockdown. When the news for vaccines broke out, it was readily available for the Mauritian population. Mauritius and Rodrigues have now

a 76% double-dosed vaccination rate (WHO | Regional Office for Africa, n.d.). On the long run, COVID-19 was a battle which Mauritius won, dulled only by the number of deaths associated with the pandemic at that time.

Mauritius has a well-structured healthcare infrastructure, comprising of 56 hospitals, clinics, and health centres. When COVID-19 reached Mauritius, these facilities were quickly repurposed as testing centres and quarantine zones for active and suspected cases. Despite the number of hospitals, the healthcare system was overwhelmed. The WHO statistics reported 315,100 confirmed cases in Mauritius ([www.who.int](http://www.who.int), n.d.), so about 5600 patients per hospital. While the three hundred thousand cases were not all recorded on the same day, it left the healthcare staff to be constantly overwhelmed with new patients. Trainees dropped their medical studies to bolster the ranks of staff in hospitals. In Rodrigues, the situation was more dire. With only a registered regional hospital, and 15 health centres, the larger one was serving as a quarantine zone. The medical facilities are insufficient relative to its population. In 2020–2021, the island had only two functional artificial respirators. Hotels were quarantined for active cases and contact tracing, the same happened in Mauritius. The impact of the healthcare system was in the split resources, accumulated fatigue amongst staff. Adding to the fear through the population, the jobs of medical staff were harder than usual.

COVID-19 brought an unprecedented loss in revenue in the healthcare system around the world, with the US suffering billions of dollars in revenue lost (Kaye, 2020). Low- and middle-income countries had to fund a way to respond to both the pathological crises but the economic crisis as well. COVID-19 caused several disruptions to international supply chains (CRU Report, 2021) such as delays in shipping and border closures. The government had to buy more supplies, but it took more time to reach the island. Both Mauritius and Rodrigues are remote islands, far from major supplier countries, and with international mobility restrained, it took longer to reach the Republic. Delayed arrival of essential goods took the headlines, but the acquisition of medical supplies was also an issue. Some inexperienced medical staff found it hard to treat patients without adequate supplies. Artificial respira-

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tors were lacking, and staff had to allocate the available ones to patients based on medical records, age and gender. Respirators are more than a hundred thousand dollars, but the cost was higher during the pandemic, and restocking was not an easy task without affecting the economy even more.

The next issue could be seen as an impact on the population, i.e. based on gender, age, race and social status. However, the underlying effect reached to the healthcare sector. There has been a noted impact on marginalised groups and communities during COVID-19. The healthcare system in Mauritius, less in Rodrigues, has historical cases of disparities amongst minority groups. Health inequities are exacerbated by social determinants such as poverty and subtle racism. People of black origins are viewed as lesser individuals in the Republic and suffer major discriminations. Racial discrimination posed a significant threat to the public healthcare (Agarwal et al., 2021). The patients with high socio-economic or political status were allowed for private home care, further reducing medical staff from hospitals and climates.

Moreover, the distrust of the population towards healthcare and political leaders proved to be a major challenge to control COVID-19. A legitimate claim with which many would agree, because people were forced to get vaccines or risk losing privileges (job terminations, no access to state buildings and airports). Front liners like medical staff, law enforcers and educational staff had to have their double dosed of vaccines to be able to operate their jobs. In Mauritius and Rodrigues, medical staff were verbally abused due to these changes. Seventy-six percent of the population complied, still not making it for nurses and doctors to do their job with minimum sleep hours with rooms with agitated patients.

### **Impact on the Educational Sector**

The healthcare system is still being affected to this day. Nurses and doctors have seen their importance during a major world crisis, and they are still waiting for recognition for their hardware. However, in the Republic of Mauritius, cholera, dengue fever and rat-related diseases followed just after COVID-19. The strain on the healthcare system is not lessening. Some hotels have reprised their original roles, other repurposed buildings are still marked as Quarantine build-



ings in case of a harsher or mutated COVID-19 outbreak. It is to be noted that now COVID-19 is no more considered as a pandemic but as an epidemic, sharing the same status as AIDS and common flu.

Educational activities in formal Mauritian educational institutions have resumed normally since the outbreak of COVID-19. There are still implications and setbacks due to the pandemic that needs to be properly managed to ensure smooth running of the educational system of the country. Some schools (mostly pre-primary and primary schools) have had an increased in the number of admissions due to major changes in how the system works in the Republic of Mauritius. Before delving into the repercussions of the coronavirus, it is important to understand the Mauritian education system first.

The Mauritian Education System is a free education system since 1976 for primary schools, 1998 for secondary schools and free since 2019 for any learner that starts his first undergraduate course at any tertiary institution in the Republic of Mauritius. Free education allows more students with economic difficulties to attend school and higher education and pursue their dreams. The need for continuous improvements has been noted and the last educational reform, the Nine-Year Schooling, is a way to ensure quality and holistic development of Mauritian learners. Except for private schools and tertiary institutions in the Republic, the school calendar starts at January and ends November of the same year, with three sets of holidays between national and international examinations. Before COVID-19, children who would be six years old were permitted to attend primary schools prior to two years in kindergarten, while the age limit of learners at secondary schools were sixteen and twenty-one before national and international Cambridge examinations based on some established conditions. Before the pandemic, the number of learners enrolled in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools was of a combined 225, 917, excluding private schools. (MUEC, 2021.)

Schools were closed when the first COVID-19 case was detected in Mauritius. As a start, we would look at how the virus spread affected the pre-primary schools and primary schools. In most regions in Mauritius, the pre-primary schools and

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primary schools operate together whilst not always operating physically in the same building. Each year, there is an approximate data about the number of admissions into primary schools that the school management receives. However, schools in Mauritius had to close for 6–8 weeks during the pandemic. The school calendar was disrupted, and like a domino effect, the repercussions are still being felt. Children must go to school earlier, three years old instead of four for kindergarten and five years old instead of six years old for primary schools. Some learners had to cut short their time at kindergarten being now out-of-age, having lesser time to develop being taking the big leap. This change happened because school calendars were now starting in June until April of the following year, meaning children would lose an entire year if they waited. The following school year in 2021 witnessed children aged five being admitted schools. It mainly affected the educators as they had no prior training to manage learners aged below six. It has been scientifically proven that children of different ages need different cognitive stimulations and strategies to be able to manage their behaviours. Educators were lacking motivations having to deal with this situation. Moreover, Grade 6 learners could not be promoted to college since high school leavers were unable to take part in their examinations. As a result, in 2022, they had to repeat a grade, doing the same thing over again. In Rodrigues Island, students were not motivated to pursue higher education after the end of secondary education. The strain brought by COVID-19 has had a psychological impact on them. The pandemic instilled an ‘it could be our last day’ mentality in most teenagers. Focusing on school was not a top priority. Social media gained much notoriety during that time. More trends were invented to help distract the younger audience in a dire time. Besides this, primary schools had to deal with pre-teenagers. The latter were eager to experience college, and they already outgrew primary schools. Behaviours were changing, and it proved a challenge for educators to cope with children. They waited more than twelve months to attend secondary schools, and their frustration was being felt.

Eventually, the school was reset to a more traditional one. This led to learners repeating another grade, but this is a problem that should be seen again. However, some measures

taken by the government had some vulnerabilities when executed. Firstly, during the last year, the idea of an accelerated Grade 1 was introduced in schools. These learners were one year too old for Grade 1, meaning that should have been in Grade 2, second year of primary school. The Grade 1 accelerated would skip a grade and go straight to Grade 3 after a year. The hope was that they could complete a two-year syllabus in a single year. It proved to be catastrophic. Primary schools across the Republic reported cases of poor academic achievements. These young learners were being rushed into the system without proper nurturing, and the basics were not mastered. The decrease in performance resulted in the uproar of parents against educators. While some learners could take the leap, the majority had to repeat a grade. The same idea was applied for older primary school learners. In 2017, Mauritius introduced national modular examinations for grades 5 and 6 students. Post-COVID-19, they allowed students of Grade 5 to take part in final year examinations upon authorisation by responsible parties. The envisioned plan was for these learners to make for the lost year. However, the learner would need to take private tuitions to complete the Grade 6 syllabus in addition to coming to classes. These disruptions were not easy to deal with, eventually. Education is already a sensitive matter in most countries and adding more constraints and rules did impact every stakeholder.

The tertiary educational institutions suffered the impact of COVID-19. Most countries take pride in their tertiary education and the opportunities it provides to the citizens. Vocational institutions or academic ones only work conjointly to give the best education for a functional society. During the pandemic, classes were brought to online, face to face being very limited. This was very criticised by the population. Examinations could not be held face to face, stakeholders had to find new measures to test students' knowledge. Either it was continuous assessments or web-based examinations, none proved to be satisfactory enough. For some departments, science mainly, students were exploited as well. Students were given assignments to test and analyse COVID-19 virus and devise experiments or potential vaccines for the virus. In a time of chaotic mayhem, some institutions took advantage without crediting their students. Nevertheless, the institu-

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tions offering hands-on practical knowledge suffered more. Barber schools, mechanic workshops had to lay off staff and students because business was not optimal. It concerns education as the Republic did face a lack of skilled labour force. Hopefully, the situation did find an equilibrium.

### **Future Implications and Recommendations**

The POST-COVID era has already begun. Since the World Health Organisation declared it as an epidemic, the alert threat level has been taken down a notch. Most countries have stopped reporting active cases, and the world-leading data analyst sites during the pandemic have ceased updating. However, despite its <1% death rate, COVID-19 is still a lethal virus, solely for the reasons mentioned. Hygiene precautions are advised to be followed to avoid any risks of death. After a few years of induced-anxiety situations globally, it is time to rethink the proceedings of a world post-pandemic era. With new diseases being reported, like the mpox in 2024 reaching Europe, there is a high risk of potential pandemics. So, what are the future implications, and what recommendations can the world offer? Of course, the focus is still on healthcare and education, the article main talking point.

### **Implications and Recommendations for Healthcare**

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted consequent weaknesses within global healthcare systems. In the Republic of Mauritius, the healthcare sector was put under significant pressure, pushing forward for a more resilient system that can withstand medical emergencies. The far-reaching applications for remote islands like Rodrigues could prove disastrous if it experiences another pandemic outbreak; the island having limited resources and facilities that could be easily overwhelmed (Singh, 2021). The world is still recovering from COVID-19 effects and is not yet ready for another pandemic. Thus, vulnerable areas must be considered and strengthen for resilience in the future. To counter potential risks of an overused medical infrastructure, scaling up investments in health infrastructures and ensuring they are properly equipped and manned. This implies having reserve for equipment and developing a supply chain of critical resources. The focus of future efforts should be on enhancing

workforce resilience by ensuring ongoing training, mental health support, and proper equipment (WHO, 2021).

### **Digital Health Innovations**

Artificial Intelligence has had a breakthrough in recent years. During a pandemic, the rapid scale of adoption of digital health tech has demonstrated the possibilities these tools in providing patient access to and reception of health services. These modern technologies can reduce the gap between healthcare professionals to patients by creating avenues for consultations, diagnostics, and monitoring remotely, critical for community areas that are geographically isolated (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020). In the Republic of Mauritius, moving towards digital innovative health practices will eventually require subsequent assets. Moreover, medical staff must receive training to ensure they can provide high-quality care through these platforms (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020). Governing bodies worldwide should emphasise coordinated and collaborative work in response to tangible negative health event. The second is that besides international supply chains and bilateral agreements, countries such as Mauritius and Rodrigues need more linkages with other countries and with other global health organisations. The partnership is crucial for guaranteeing access to critical resources, including vaccines and medical supplies, and for disseminating knowledge and optimal practices in the management of health emergencies (Heymann & Shindo, 2020).

### **Infrastructure Investment in Digital Education**

When analysing POST-COVID-19, it was observed that not only in Mauritius but worldwide, the inequalities to access digital education was huge. Some areas or communities where digital infrastructures were non-existent, students Mauritius and Rodrigues faced problems in continuing their education, primarily due to an overall inadequate provision of technology and reliable internet services. Investment in digital infrastructure needs to take effects as the learning landscape keeps changing to ensure that all learners are well equipped with the right tools for effective learning, either within the classroom environment or virtually (Frenk et al., 2022). The investment should include provision of devices

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for tablets, upgrading of internet access, and equipping the institutions with requisite digital tools and resources. Educators should be trained to deliver effectively digital pedagogy, to support online and blended learning systems. The development of a complete digital educational infrastructure will ensure the Republic of Mauritius have a robust education system and able to cope with future disruptions (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020).

### **Recommendations for Mental Health**

Most schools in the Republic of Mauritius have a social worker or a psychologist to manage various mental cases. However, it has been reported that headmasters often overlook the psychological cell of their schools and make assumptions on learners' behaviours. Although their experience is undeniable, these trained professionals were contracted to do a specific job. A future recommendation is to have active psychological cells operating more often at schools. Children go to school for socialisation and lockdowns cut down this privilege. The toll the coronavirus took on the younger minds was not addressed properly. Having a reflexible and adaptive school curriculum to implement mental health education, psychological and counselling services at school, and assurance of a friendly environment where all will thrive (Bourmistrova et al., 2022). Furthermore, Bourmistrova (2022) even adds on building resilience through supportive and nurturing environments as COVID-19 has proven to be a serious threat to physically and mental health.

### **Conclusion**

The seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic makes it imperative to self-reflect on the lessons learned. It is also important to implement strategies that will fortify the economic, which in turn should have a beneficial impact on healthcare and education systems against future disruptions. While professional and relevant training are offered to medical staff, the pandemic underscored the need for a resilient and adaptive healthcare sector to adapt promptly to emergencies. Mauritius should prioritise investments in healthcare facilities, digital health tech, and workforce resilience to ensure a better preparedness for upcoming medical crises.

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The swift and abrupt shifting to remote learning in the education sector during the pandemic exposed consequent gaps in digital infrastructure and educational equity. It is more of the same when dealing with education. Moving forward investments should be aimed towards strengthening digital education systems and make them accessible to support all students. With inclusivity a strong topic, any learners, regardless of their geographic location or socio-economic status should be able to study at his ease. This includes providing necessary tools and training for educators to deliver effectively blended learning in and out of schools. Furthermore, the pandemic highlighted the need for mental health experts in schools. Caring for staff and students' mental state, ensuring they have access to psychological services is critical to foster a support educational environment.

Eventually, the pandemic has brought unique opportunities to reinstate, rethink and reform a faulty healthcare and education systems in The Republic of Mauritius. By addressing the weaknesses exposed during the pandemic, and implementing the recommendations outlined in this paper, these sectors could emerge stronger and more capable of facing upcoming challenges. These reforms, if implemented, ought to go hand in glove with the needs and demands of the public but respond to new medical emergencies. Improvements in quality of life and a stronger methodology must be a major talking point, since both also contribute to overall societal development and stability. We need to continue impressing upon the systems that they are adaptive, fair, and resilient for the trials that we may still be up against in this post-pandemic period.

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# THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE DIGITAL WORLD AND THE LEARNING PROCESS: THE BRAZILIAN EXPERIENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

## **Abstract**

This article aims to critically analyze Brazil's experience of the COVID-19 pandemic in education from the perspective of the democratization of the digital world. Based on data obtained from research by the National Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the article seeks to compare the situation of access to the digital world in the country before and after the pandemic period and how this affected the learning process of students in public and private schools. In addition, it presents some measures taken by Brazilian universities, city halls and state governments in an attempt to overcome the situation. Thus, it is possible to see that the issues raised throughout the pandemic are even deeper than just the health crisis faced.

## **Introduction**

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a pandemic situation of the spread of Covid-19 (McNeil Jr., 2020), leading countries around the world to take even more serious measures regarding the issue. Due to the different speed and intensity with which the virus reached countries around the world, what was observed was a diversity of pandemics within a single one, depending on the way the virus acted and the measures adopted to combat it by each representative.

**Keywords:** Digital inclusion; Democratization of the digital world; Covid-19 pandemic; Digital education; Access to education

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In Brazil, due to its size and the federalist form of organization of the State, this difference was even greater. The Federative Units began to implement the first distancing measures throughout the first two weeks of March, in addition to the total or partial economic shutdowns some time later.

The governments of the states, districts and municipalities were granted considerable independence by the Federal Supreme Court (STF) in adopting and maintaining restrictive measures during the pandemic through the Claim of Non-Compliance with a Fundamental Precept (ADPF) 672 proposed by the National Council of the Brazilian Lawyers Association (OAB) against acts of commission and omission practiced by the Federal Executive Branch (Ministro assegura..., 2020).

Political biases often overrode public health concerns, and the Federal Government was harshly criticized by health experts and entities. In the states, districts and municipalities, political alignment or not with the President of the Republic dictated the preventive measures that would be adopted, causing a huge disparity in epidemiological data from different regions of the country.

Among the activities that were interrupted were Universities and Schools, which had to rely on the resilience of their professionals to ensure that the impact on student learning was as minimal as possible, which was not always possible due to several reasons, including the socioeconomic diversity of the states, access to technologies and expertise in their use by teachers, students and guardians, and the political ideologies adopted by each political representative.

Nevertheless, the resumption of in-person activities brought even greater challenges, such as the different treatment due to each student due to their different health situations, the difficulty with hybrid teaching, the gap in studies caused by the pandemic, the difficult and slow vaccination campaign in the country, among others.

The great balance of the Brazilian educational process throughout its experience of the Covid-19 pandemic is that, in this period of crisis, socioeconomic precariousness was intensely exposed and in many cases proved insurmountable in the time required by the emergency situation, greatly impacting the lives of students in the country.

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### **Democratization of the digital world in Brazil**

According to a survey by the National Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in the last quarter of 2019, 12.646 million families still did not have access to the internet at home. Furthermore, 39.8 million Brazilians aged 10 or over did not use the internet and another 34.9 million people in the same age group did not have a cell phone. The average per capita income of households with internet was R\$1,527, while those that did not use the internet was R\$728, less than half (Estadão Conteúdo, 2021). Also according to the same survey, of the students who began to depend on remote classes, 4.3 million did not access the internet, of which 95.9% were from the public school system. In the private system, only 174 thousand students were disconnected from the internet, a terribly revealing proportion.

Undoubtedly, the adoption of remote learning in Brazil was a major challenge from the perspective of digital inclusion, since a significant number of students did not have access to social networks and, therefore, would not be able to participate in online activities. With the suspension of in-person classes, these children and adolescents would therefore be excluded from exercising their constitutionally protected right to education for an indefinite period until in-person activities could be resumed.

This problem is further aggravated when the situation is observed from the perspective of Brazil's commitment to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the 2030 Agenda, more specifically SDG 4, which refers to Quality Education, and SDG 10, on Reducing Inequalities. The pandemic reality has shown how much the country's leaders were uncommitted to their own Federal Constitution and the objectives of their International Agreements, exposing millions of children and adolescents to a situation of digital vulnerability that culminated in enormous harm to their education.

According to a similar survey by IBGE in 2021 (Estadão Conteúdo, 2022), two years after the one mentioned above, the pandemic forced the inclusion of 5.362 million families. The main reasons given for digital exclusion were "not knowing how to use the Internet" (42.2%), "lack of interest" (27.7%)

and “financial reasons” (20%, 14% because access was too expensive and 6.2% because the equipment was expensive). Once again, the problem of digital democratization is seen to be primarily socioeconomic in nature. Low levels of access to the digital world are directly linked to financial reasons and lack of adequate information.

Compared to the rest of the world, Brazil ranks 42nd in digital education, according to a 2021 survey by the Cyber Risk Literacy and Education Index (Brasil está..., 2021). The criteria analyzed were the general population’s motivation in terms of good cybersecurity practices, public policies to improve knowledge about cyber risks, how education systems address the topic, companies’ strategies to improve their employees’ cyber skills, and the digital inclusion of the population, especially those most vulnerable to these risks. The ranking is behind countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Lithuania, Kuwait, and Cyprus.

As the 9th largest economy in the world, Brazil’s difficulty in raising awareness among its population and investing in measures that can solve this problem is clear. Even with the decrease in exclusion rates throughout the pandemic, the number of excluded people is still very significant, and Brazil’s position in the world ranking, compared to the country’s proportion, is shameful.

### **The learning process and the brazilian experience during the Covid-19 pandemic**

Faced with such difficulties, governments and education institutions had to take measures that could eliminate or mitigate the digital differences between students. Thus, a wide variety of initiatives emerged throughout the pandemic, to a certain extent, ending up further exacerbating inequality.

Some city governments, for example, decided to print handouts for students who could not participate in remote classes. This was the case in some cities in the state of Rio de Janeiro (Departamento de jornalismo - ASCOM, 2020). The initiative ended up requiring much greater support from family members who, if they belonged to the class of essential workers, those who did not stop working in person throughout the pandemic, made this home education unfeasible. In the absence of this family support, the remaining alternatives for

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the student would be to follow the material on their own or continue not studying.

In other cities, radio stations were used to reach students who were digitally excluded. This was the case in some cities in the states of Maranhão and Minas Gerais (Terra, Bertolotto, 2020). Although the equipment is currently very marginalized, it is still present in many homes in the interior of the country and was able to provide explanations to these students. However, social interaction, which is also a target of the educational process, and the resolution of doubts were still compromised.

In the case of cities in the Federal District, TV Justiça, a state-owned broadcaster, and some local broadcasters began broadcasting teleclasses for students who could not access online education. In the same vein as radio, access to instruction was guaranteed, but not to the complete educational process, as it should be (Aguar, Souza, 2020).

Another initiative worth mentioning was from the Federal University of Ouro Preto, in the state of Minas Gerais, which created a Digital Inclusion Grant so that digitally excluded students could access remote classes (Auxílio inclusão digital). The grant was provided through 3G and 4G packages with the granting of a chip to the students. The grant was provided between August 2020 and August 2021. However, it is important to note that the university's in-person activities only resumed in March 2022.

It is possible to see the countless efforts of Brazilian entities and governments to face the challenge of digital exclusion throughout the country's pandemic experience. In addition, it is also important to highlight the dedication of education professionals, who had to replan and readapt to the new reality. Together, students, teachers, and entities had to build an entirely new educational world in the face of the uncertainties experienced at the time.

As a result, Brazil was one of the countries in the world that expended the biggest time with schools with no in person activities. Therefore, it has faced decreasing results in math and portuguese in 2nd and 9th grade and High School. The rates of disapproval and drop out were also high in public schools, which wasn't seen in private schools (Seabra, 2023). Other studies shows that the students who finished High School

during the pandemic could have a loss of 20 to 40 thousand reais of income throughout life (Barros *et al*, 2021). It can be seen that the post-pandemic period will require a lot of work from all the involved in education to recover from the social disaster that accompanied the health one.

### **Final Considerations**

The research aimed to critically analyze the Brazilian progress in education during the pandemic of Covid-19. First, it was seen that students already started in a bad position, due to low rates of digital inclusion. In addition, political ideologies made the process even slower, in a denial of the real difficulty of the situation.

However, teachers, schools, universities and students tirelessly tried to overcome the challenges using the technologies available, rather using handouts, radio signal, governmental TV, or even giving internet packages.

In spite of this, devastation marked not only the health data, but also education. The rates were the lowest expected, mostly in public schools, impacting innumerable lives. These people - teachers, students, family - will have to deal with this inheritance and recover what was lost for a long time yet to come. Hope is that government embrace this fight with them, making this path easier.

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**GENERAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENTS OF THE  
IVORY COAST (AGEECI)**

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**THE SANITARY CRISIS OF COVID-19:  
CASE OF AGEECI****Summary**

At the end of the year 2019 in Yuhuan, China, appeared the pandemic of Corona Virus Disease named COVID-19. Then, this pandemic quickly spread out Worldwide and has been proclaimed worldwide sanitary emergency. The first case in Côte d'Ivoire occurred in March 13, 2021. Due to this first case and the alarming situation in western countries, the ivoirien authorities took drastic measures such as stopping classes in schools and universities to prevent this pandemic. Unfortunately, these measures negatively impacted the students. So, ivoirien's students associations contributed to the fight against this pandemic with solutions.

The following paper will focus on the role played by the student's associations in the fight against Corona pandemic, mainly AGEECI.

**Keywords:** Pandemic, Ivoirien's students associations, COVID-19, AGEECI

**Introduction**

Corona virus pandemic known as COVID-19 makes devastation and negatively impacted all services all over the World since it occurs in China in 2019. So, living and working conditions of the populations have been adapted to this pandemic. This pandemic revealed the impotency of both scientists and all political authorities, mainly of those of powerful countries. In the fight against this pandemic, African countries mainly Côte d'Ivoire promptly reacted and made control

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about the pandemic despite all the cataclysm presaged by all health expert for Africa. Côte d'Ivoire is a west African country with French as official language, superficies of 342,622 km<sup>2</sup> and population around 26,000,000. This pandemic impacted all the sectors especially school. Student's syndicate associations<sup>1</sup>, whose role is to defend moral and materiel interests of their mates joined with governmental authorities in the fight against this pandemic by either denouncing weaknesses of educational system either making suggestions to avoid any contamination among students. How ivoirian's educational system can be showed out during the outbreak of Corona? What are the concretes actions Undertaken by students' associations in the fight against this pandemic ? The answers to the following questions will be of an interest for the readers to understand the role played by students' associations, mainly syndicalists ones. First, we will talk about the history and origin of ivoirian's students associations. Next, the impact of the pandemic on the education in Côte d'Ivoire. Finally tackle the stake of engagement of students' associations in the fight against the Corona virus.

### **I/Brief Presentation of Ivorian Students' Movement**

Students's movement can be defined as students organisations (associations) which aim at defending moral and material interest of students. We deal with several student's associations in Côte d'Ivoire acting like a syndicate because pursuing the same purpose and aim with a syndicate. This assertion can cope with the definition of the word syndicalism on wikipedia website.

*Trade unionism is a movement that aims to unite workers within organisations so as to defend their common interests, to ensure that their rights are respected, and to promote justice among different social classes. It also refers to the militant action carried out to pursue the objectives of a union. In its most common and widely accepted sense, the term "trade unionism" applies mainly to professional unions and, to a lesser extent, to student and pupil unions.*

What is the history of ivoirian's students movement (association)? What can we say about the students' association that is the interest in our study? What about the corpus of our analysis?

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## I - Generalities

The origin of the ivoirian associations acting as syndicates appeared before independence days with ivoirian's students in Senegal and France for higher education when their rights have been violated. So, they decided to claim for better living and study conditions acting like a syndicate.

Two associations simultaneously have been created in both Senegal and France to defend their common demands - General Association of students of Côte d'Ivoire, AGECI (Association Générale des étudiants de Côte d'Ivoire) in Senegal in 1946 and Association of ivoirian's students in France, AECIF (Association des Étudiants de Côte d'Ivoire en France):

*"AGECI was the first student organisation created in Côte d'Ivoire during the colonial era. It was founded in 1946. After ten years of existence, it was dissolved in 1956. The organisation was structured into two sections: a local section based in Côte d'Ivoire and an international section established in France"*<sup>2</sup>

In 1956, AGECI and AECIF joined to create UGECI, General Union of students of Côte d'Ivoire due to the fact that some of their members had to go back in their country. Students in Senegal and France, by their actions actively contributed to the awakening of the conscience in the country. So, in 1961 Felix Houphouët Boigny recommended to the government of France to create a university in Côte d'Ivoire in order to have a control on ivoirian's students in foreign countries who are more embarrassing. That is the reason of the creation of University of Abidjan. Meanwhile, in order to make their association an international one, UGECI incorporated with UGEAO (General Union of students from West Africa.) In 1963, UGECI initiated some revolts movements that led to the detention of some of their leaders and the condition from the government to free them was to ask for the dissolution of their movement UGECI. So did, the government created another association, UNEECI, to replace the latest one.

*But just like the General Association of Students, it underwent political manipulation and eventually broke into two blocs. The first bloc consisted of supporters aligned with the single ruling party while the second bloc's supporters demanded autonomy from that party. The confrontation between these two factions within UNEECI contributed to its dissolution in*

*1968 by the Ivorian authorities who subsequently encouraged the creation of the Movement of Pupils and Students of Côte d'Ivoire (MEECI).<sup>3</sup>*

After two decades of existence, MEECI created in 1963 will face with the trial by the mob of students who considered it as a lever used by the government of PDCI<sup>4</sup> to sabotage students demands.

*This is how spontaneous strike movements beyond the control of MEECI began to emerge from 1988 onwards, initiated by clandestine student groups such as the National Organisation of Pupils and Students of Côte d'Ivoire (ONEECI), the Union of Pupils and Students of Côte d'Ivoire (UEECI), the Student and School Consciousness of Côte d'Ivoire (CESCOCI), and the Union of Pupils and Students of Côte d'Ivoire (SEECI), who sought to break free from the path set by their predecessors.<sup>5</sup>*

So, the above associations, ONEECI, UEECI, CESCOCI and SEECI, associations of the period from 1988 to 1990 combined to create students federation of Côte d'Ivoire (FESCI). At the beginning, FESCI really acted as the defender of students of Côte d'Ivoire. It faced with antagonist relationships from the power till the year 2000 due to its closeness with the political opposition. Supported by FPI (Ivorian Popular Front), the most important political party of opposition to the power of Felix Houphouët Boigny, FESCI took away from their initial aim once FPI took the power in 2000. They started defending the power of Gbagbo instead of defending the students as did MEECI for PDCI. Observing the renouncement of this association in the fight for students well being, a group of students decided to create a new association, AGEECI, General Association of primary and higher education students of Côte d'Ivoire). This citation justify our said:

*With the 2002 military-political crisis, which split Côte d'Ivoire into two territories (a government-controlled zone and a zone under the control of the Forces Nouvelles), the territorial presence of FESCI was essentially limited to the government-controlled area. This branch, aligned with the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI), was unable to control the schools and universities located in the zone held by the Forces Nouvelles. During this period of FESCI's dominance, several student movements were created, in-*

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cluding the General Association of Pupils and Students of Côte d'Ivoire (AGEECI), the Student and School Union of Côte d'Ivoire (UNESCO), and the Committee of Pupils and Students of Côte d'Ivoire (CEECI)<sup>6</sup>

## 2 - Presentation of AGEECI and corpus study

AGEECI stands for Association Générale des Élèves et Étudiants de Côte d'Ivoire (General Association of students of Côte d'Ivoire) created on June 20, 2004 to fight for better living and study conditions of students of Côte d'Ivoire. So, contestation syndicalism that aims at impacting positively the society is chosen as leitmotiv. In the year 2004, school in Côte d'Ivoire was undermined by political and social difficulties such as the lack of freedom and democracy, great poverty, incapacity of the power to find solutions to the problems of the population, mainly students. This context favors the creation of AGEECI. Our words can be justified with the following quotation taken from the preamble of rules and regulations of our association.

*The situation of the Ivorian school system reflects the political and social conditions of Côte d'Ivoire — marked, on the political level, by the absence of freedom and democracy, and on the social level, by widespread poverty and a complete withdrawal of public authorities from the problems affecting the population in general, and the school and student youth in particular. This situation calls for the effective mobilisation of all those who are committed to democracy, freedom, and the social well-being of the people. This struggle is a collective one. Consequently, everyone must take part with determination, convinced that the emancipation of the people is the work of the people themselves. Youth, especially in its student component, must also contribute within its sector to this struggle — one aimed at renewing the Ivorian school system, now sunk in distress, corruption, and political intimidation. The ultimate objective pursued by our organisation is the defence of a school environment that is conducive to learning, where young people consciously prepare themselves to serve the interests of the wider population.*

The creation of this association is due to the bravery of some former members of FESCI who didn't appreciate the politicization of their association with the abandonment of their

leitmotiv fight for better living and study conditions of students. So, they created a new one with a strict aim of defending moral and material interest of students of Côte d'Ivoire.

*"Today, the public school system is in agony; trade union freedoms and freedoms throughout the entire education system are dangerously threatened. Students no longer have a union to defend their material and moral interests. Corruption and moral decay have overshadowed integrity, dignity, quality work, civic-mindedness – in short, ethical values. This is why we must once again come together to take our destiny into our own hands and fight for the renewal of the Ivorian school system".<sup>7</sup>*

AGEECI was created within a context of weak educational system and the violation of fundamental liberties. This can be justified with the assassination of one of its founder just three days after its creation on June 23, 2004. From its creation till 2012, AGEECI existed secretly because seen by the government of Laurent Gbagbo as closer to the rebellion in the north and conversely seen by rebels as spy of the government of Gbagbo. This justified its existence secretly during all this period.

After the electoral crisis of 2011, the new power decides to close universities for rehabilitation. This situation put an end to the period of secrecy of AGEECI.

2012 was the starting year of the effective activities of the association, fighting against immoral situations of students and for the well-being of students in different universities by promoting democracy, freedom of association, freedom of expression and thought. AGEECI was present in most of the cities of Côte d'Ivoire. This year is the seventeen year of existence of the association since June 23. The first National General Secretary was Gnelbin Innocent elected on June 20, 2004 at the founding congress of the association. He run the association from 2004 to 2007. The following General Secretaries run the association after him.

- Seka Jules, elected at the first ordinary congress in 2007. He run the association till 2011.

- Momine Roland during the second ordinary congress. He run the association from 2011 to 2015.

- Kone Fanzin, elected in 2015. He run the association just one year. So, Seydou Berte was elected as the next General

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Secretary on 2016 during an extraordinary congress to end the term of Fanzin. He run the association from 2016 to 2020.

- Yves Doh, elected General Secretary at the fourth ordinary congress on March 13-14, 2020.

In the running of AGEECI, we have committees, sections, federations, National Executive Committee, Control committee and auditorship. A committee of AGEECI is composed of 8 posts and 24 members with 3 members per post. Those posts are: Secretary Generalship, Secretariat to organisation and mobilisation, secretariat to information and communication, Secretariat to management and training, Secretariat to finances and gender promotion, Secretariat to pedagogical affairs, Secretariat to socio-cultural and professional affairs and Secretariat to the environment and sustainable development.

Speeches pronounced by the association since the appearance of Corona Virus in Côte d'Ivoire will be the corpus to analyse. That corpus is composed of 4 declarations posted on Facebook page of the association (Ageeci Bureau Exécutif). The first declaration has been pronounced on April 9, 2020 about the situation of the school in Côte d'Ivoire during the appearance of COVID-19 and the last one at the end of the year 2020.

How does AGEECI present school in Côte d'Ivoire during the Corona pandemic period through its declarations ? Answer to this question will be to enlighten people on the impact of this pandemic on the educational system in Côte d'Ivoire.

## **II - Covid-19 in Côte d'Ivoire: Impact on the Educational System**

First, the situation of the educational system during the Corona pandemic will be addressed. Next, will follow measures and decisions taken by the authorities in charge of the education in order to make control about the pandemic in school.

### **1- Situation of the schooling during the pandemic period.**

Schooling as well as all services slowed down and suffered more from this pandemic. This situation is mentioned in the first public declaration of the association during the appearance of the pandemic as follow:

*"Ladies and Gentlemen, fellow pupils and students, it has now been nearly a month that everything has slowed down in our*



*country. This is due, as we all see and know, to the COVID-19 pandemic, declared a global health emergency by the World Health Organization (WHO). And unfortunately, the Ivorian school system has not been spared from the slowdown affecting all sectors of activity.”*

The outbreak of the pandemic that negatively impacted all the services made student's associations to reflect about the situation of schooling. This can be checked with the problematic addressed in its declaration as follow : What is the situation of the schooling in Côte d'Ivoire since the first Corona confirmed case from March 11, 2020 to April 8, 2020?

AGEECI which aims at defending the rights and duties of students of Côte d'Ivoire answered to that problematic by questioning the situation of school during the first month of the appearance of the pandemic. AGEECI announced that an extraordinary National Security Council led by the president of the republic held on March 16, 2020 with one issue to address “the situation of Corona pandemic in Côte d'Ivoire”. Several drastic measures and decisions have been taken to combat the spread of the pandemic. Among these measures, the following can be listed closing to all the schools from preschool to universities during a period of 30 days as from March 16 at midnight. So did, schools closed with the hope to restart after 30 days.(Declaration 1)

So, we all see that this association that aims at fighting for the well-being of its members kept abreast the political since the appearance of the pandemic. This can be justified with the reliability of the date given and the context in which these measures have been taken. AGEECI asserted that : ‘Indeed the Corona pandemic exposed the alarming and weakness of the educational system of Côte d'Ivoire. This sanitary crisis revealed the weakness of this system worldwide as well as to ivorians.” (speech 4). This section of the speech showed us the weakening of the educational system in Côte d'Ivoire. AGEECI thinks that this situation is observable at social and academic level

First, at academic level, we mentioned this in one of our speech

At social level, AGEECI observed that

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*COVID-19 has exposed the poor quality of services provided by the Regional Centres for University Works (CROU). The living and studying conditions of students worsened because, following the announcement of school closures on March 16, 2020, the CROU hurriedly shut down university restaurants, and in some cases even released students from accommodation. Only later did the centres in Abidjan and Bouaké reopen, but with limited services. While Abidjan and Bouaké reopened, those in other university towns remained closed without any support measures for students.*

*In addition to all these difficulties faced by students, there has been, to this day, a delay in the payment of scholarships and the disappearance of financial aid at a time when having even this minimum support is more than necessary for students. One must also not forget the impunity surrounding crimes in university settings, exemplified by the killings of students in Korhogo and Daloa during 2020.*

We can assert after this description that the situation of the educational system in Côte d'Ivoire is really alarming during Corona virus pandemic. To combat this pandemic, all the partners of education engaged in this fight. Measures taken to fight against the pandemic will be reminded in the lines below.

2- Measures taken to fight against COVID-19 in the education area.

Remind that classes have been closed for one month to combat the pandemic. After this period, classes started opening progressively in the countryside first.

*Fellow pupils and students, dear AGEECI comrades, warriors of the noble cause, ladies and gentlemen, We have followed with particular attention the address to the nation by the Head of State on May 7. We were greatly pleased to learn of the lifting of the closure of all educational institutions—preschool, primary, secondary, and higher education—starting May 8, 2020, for the interior of the country. (Speech 2)*

After inland schools opening, followed those of Abidjan. This is mentioned in one of our declaration - "As we all see, classes opened in all the country since Monday, May 25th 2020." We all have to know that most of students in our

universities received cash and in kind donations. This can be proved with the following assertion extracted from the speech 2 - ‘Indeed as we notice since the first confirmed Corona case on March 11, 2020 the government actively engaged in the fight against the pandemic by providing students in universities of Abidjan, Bouaké and Daloa with donations. This ensure our association of the interest of our authorities to support students of our country.’

As another measure taken to combat COVID-19 in schools, the department in charge of education initiated the distance learning for primary and secondary schools. AGEECI tackled this issue in its speech about education in COVID-19 period.

*Launched on April 3, 2020, at the premises of the Ministry of Security and Civil Protection by Minister Kandia Camara, the distance learning program currently targets exam classes in primary and secondary schools, namely CM2, 3e, and Terminale. It consists of delivering lessons via the television channels RTI 1 and 2, radio CI, Fréquence 2, and various websites, including that of the Ministry. According to the Minister, this initiative will ensure the continuity of the courses that students were following before COVID-19.*

E-learning has been initiated for higher education students. Unfortunately this measure didn’t obey to the pedagogical standards. So AGEECI denounced that measure in the speech of the end of the year as follow - “e-learning classes in higher education that do not obey the pedagogical standards”.

As mentioned, various measures have been taken by the government to combat this pandemic. The most important one was the closing of schools. This revealed to us the negative impact of COVID-19 on both schools and all the country. This can be observed in these words taken from the speech 1 as followed - “in short, the situation of the educational system in less one month is comparable to that of a lost person impacted by the throes of the life.”

So, what is the stake for AGEECI to fight against Corona virus with the measures taken by the government to protect the population?

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### III - Campaign Against Corona Pandemic - What stake for Ageeci?

With the millions of death deaths in Asia, Europa and America due to the COVID-19, AGEECI, an association concerned with the well being of students had to fight against this pandemic. What actions have been taken by AGEECI to fight against the pandemic ? What are the perspectives to get out of schools that pandemic ? Answering the above questions will be the focus of the coming analysis.

#### 1- Actions initiated by AGEECI to fight against COVID-19

Various measures have been taken by AGEECI to fight against the Corona virus just after the closing of classes in order to provide authorities in charge of education, mainly the government with our solutions. This has been mentioned in the speech below:

*While waiting for schools to reopen, all actors in the education system mobilized to support the State in the fight against COVID-19 and to slow its spread. AGEECI, for its part, launched, immediately following the decision to close educational institutions, a sensitization campaign called "CoronaAttitude" (Speech 1).*

This campaign, first started with a sensitization campaign as mentioned in the speech below:

*This campaign began with an awareness initiative, as mentioned in the speech below, aimed at instructing and urging all pupils and students in our country to adopt the proper behavior by respecting barrier measures on a daily basis through communication via social networks. The campaign also involved reaching out to students, pupils, and the general public to explain the rationale behind these measures, liaising with administrative authorities to offer support in sensitization efforts, and seeking assistance for pupils and students, among other actions.*

Furthermore, various speeches with COVID-19 as theme have been pronounced. Obey to and respect barrier measures to COVID-19 was the focus of the different speeches as said in the following one

*Indeed, when the decision to close schools was made on March 16, 2020, there were six confirmed cases and zero deaths. However, by the end of the first week of this general reopening, unfortunately, we had 2,750 confirmed cases, 1,370 recoveries, and 32 deaths. This means that with this general reopening, we must all exercise even greater vigilance, because while COVID-19 is widespread, health is, above all, personal.*

Even though we can see in this speech that AGEECI was happy with the opening of the classes, sensitization to increase students' vigilance regard to the spread of the pandemic remained the focus. That is why, before to pronounce the following speech, it noticed that the pandemic was spreading out despite all the actions undertaken. Let's see it in the following speech.

*With such commitment from actors within the education system, as well as from the State as a whole, we certainly hoped to stop the spread of COVID-19. Unfortunately, that was not the case! The coronavirus continues to advance steadily in our country, reaching, as of April 8, 2020, three deaths, 384 confirmed cases, and 48 recoveries. It is therefore once again time for AGEECI to call on pupils and students in Côte d'Ivoire, as well as all other segments of the population living in the country, to respect the barrier measures. (Speech 1)*

Provide students of the universities of Korhogo and Man with donations from the authorities was also one of the leitmotiv. Indeed, those students were not taken into account in the providing of donations. AGEECI defended this idea in the following speech

*Indeed, with the emergence of COVID-19, AGEECI carried out awareness-raising activities to fight the pandemic in the university towns of Korhogo, Daloa, and Man during the peak of the disease in Côte d'Ivoire. Furthermore, the organization continuously appealed for assistance for both resident and non-resident students in these three towns during the pandemic, as they were overlooked by the State and donors, unlike students in Abidjan and Bouaké.*

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Apart from these speeches pronounced, AGEECI continued denouncing some actions threatening students' material and moral interests. The following speech tackled this issue.

*It condemned the killings of students in Korhogo and Daloa and demanded truth and justice from the security authorities. Following rumors that the doctoral program fees could rise to 590,000 F instead of 60,000 F, and delays in the allocation of university housing in Abidjan, AGEECI took the initiative to approach the competent authorities to obtain more information and also to make proposals. During the 2020-2021 school year, observing an unusual increase in additional fees and those set by school management committees (Coges), AGEECI, through its federations in Tonkpi and Poro, as well as the higher education section in Cocody, deemed it necessary to seek information from the institutions concerned and request justification for these increases.*

## 2- Perspectives from AGEECI to eradicate the pandemic of COVID-19 in schools

The perspectives from AGEECI to eradicate COVID-19 in schools can be observed through observations and recommendations made. The increase in the transportation fees after the opening of classes is one of these observations. Inland students really suffered from this situation to go back in their schools. Moreover face masks which were supposed to be free of charge were unfortunately embezzled to be sold at black markets. This can be attested with the following speech:

*However, on the ground, we observe the following:*

*- The sale of face masks at 500 F in certain schools in the interior of the country.*

*- A sharp increase in transportation costs between Abidjan and other cities. For example, the fare between Abidjan and Korhogo or Abidjan and Man, which was 8,100 F, has risen to around 13,000 F; Abidjan-Bouaké and Abidjan-Daloa, previously 5,000 F, are now around 10,000 F, etc.*

*What is surprising is that even the supervising ministries organize convoys at these same high prices. (Speech 3)*

AGEECI expressed a disapproval towards those kind of actions. Let's see it in the following paragraph - 'AGEECI, an association with leitmotiv of fighting for the well being of the

students of côte d'ivoire strongly disapproves those actions from people and transportation carriers that make profits to the detriment of students'. The aim of those denunciations from AGEECI was to provide their support to students after the opening of classes. Suggestions from AGEECI in favor of the well being of students after the resumption of classes have been made as follow:

*Example 1*

*Furthermore, AGEECI urges and encourages the State to establish multiple testing centers across the country, especially in Abidjan, as it is the epicenter of the pandemic. The experience of countries where the number of confirmed cases has grown rapidly—such as France, Italy, or China—shows that only early testing of the population has helped slow the spread of the pandemic. (Speech 1)*

- Free distribution of masks and hand sanitizer to pupils and students, particularly those at the universities of Man and Korhogo, as they were completely overlooked during the distribution of sanitary kits to students in the country.*
- Installation of handwashing stations at the entrance of every secondary school and in front of each lecture hall, tutorial room, and laboratory, for mandatory handwashing.*
- Mandatory wearing of face masks during classes.*
- Construction of COVID-19 testing and treatment centers in health districts in the interior of the country. (Speech 3)*

In the above example, AGEECI showed that the healthier well being of the students is the main focus. As perspectives to eradicate the pandemic in schools, suggestions have been made towards the government of côte d'ivoire as follow:

*Example 2*

*For its part, AGEECI wishes that, in the interest of safeguarding the 2019-2020 school year and given the current health situation, the MENETFP could extend the initial school calendar set out in Decision No. 4308/MENETFP/CAB of August 5, 2019, which outlined the 2019-2020 school year schedule. (Speech 1)*

*The resumption of programs in primary and secondary schools should occur where conditions were favorable before the pandemic, as distance learning has limited the education of the country's children.*

- For proper pedagogical continuity, resumption should first*
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*focus on faculties or levels with small student numbers in our public universities. (Speech 3)*

Through the above example we see an association that firmly fight for an outstanding educational system after the pandemic by making suggestions to avoid a year without classes. So, the major suggestion made was to extend the academic year.

*Example 3*

*Since a single twig cannot sweep the entire house, we call on the ministries in charge of the Ivorian school system to genuinely involve all stakeholders (associations of pupils and students, teachers' unions, civil society NGOs, etc.) so that together we can safeguard the 2019–2020 school year, as was done last year following the nationwide teachers' strike. (Speech 1)*

- *The involvement of all actors in the education sector (associations of pupils and students, teachers' unions, civil society NGOs, etc.) is essential so that together we can identify and implement practical measures for reopening schools while strictly respecting the COVID-19 barrier measures. (Speech 3)*

Through this example, we notice the strong wish of the association to suggest to the authorities to take into account all the partners of the educational system in the search of solutions against the pandemic. By doing so, this will enable the authorities to provide efficient solutions to chase Corona out of schools. In addition to those perspectives, some suggestions in favor of the improvement of the social conditions of students after the opening of the classes have been made as follow:

*Example 4*

*Thus, our recommendations are:*

- *That the State impose sanctions on all companies that increase transportation fees, including ministerial or university administrators who organize convoys at above-normal prices.*

- *That the State grant a 50% reduction in standard transportation fees for all pupils and students traveling to or from Abidjan, or simply organize free convoys for pupils and students.*

- *That, during this resumption, the various Regional Centres...*

However, the perspective that reveals the stake in the fight against the pandemic in schools is asserted as follow - "AGEE-



CI, through the National General Secretary named Yves Doh calls upon all the students to strongly respect barrier measures against COVID-19.”

### Conclusion

At the end of this analysis about the role of student's associations in the fight against this pandemic, let's mention the following facts. First of all, the choice of AGEECI among the various student's associations in our study is due to its contribution with several declarations to an efficient educational system. These declarations led to an analysis. The analysis of this corpus enlightened us about the prominent role played by students's associations in the fight against the Corona pandemic in schools and universities. Many sensitizations towards students have been initiated as a support to the measures taken by the authorities in charge of the education. AGEECI showed that the Corona pandemic negatively impacted the educational system and revealed the vulnerability of living and study conditions of students of Côte d'Ivoire. So the main stake of its commitment in the fight against the pandemic was to attest its support to the well-being of students in order to be their ideal defender by authorities and public opinion. Sensitize students to respect barrier measures in order to chase out the pandemic from schools was also another stake.

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<sup>1</sup> In Cote d'Ivoire we have many king of student's associations. There are some which have a socio-cultural end and others protesting end. These have mission to defend student material and moral interest at the country and apart from. So it is these organization which name syndicate.

<sup>2</sup> GUEDE One Enoc et al., Mouvements estudiantins et enjeux territoriaux à l'échelle de l'espace universitaire de Bouake et de Daloa, *Revue Ivoirienne de Géographie des Savanes*, Numéro 1, Janvier 2017

<sup>3</sup> Idem

<sup>4</sup> Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire, PDCI it is President Félix Houphouët Boigny party. This party was the only until multiparty times at the country 1990

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem

<sup>6</sup> Id

<sup>7</sup> Extradite to AGEECI statute and house rules, P.2

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**FERNANDA DE MELO · BEATRIZE FIRMINO · MADDIE LIMA**  
MOVIMENTO CORRENTEZA - BRAZIL

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## SOCIAL MOVEMENTS SPEARHEAD CHANGES IN THE BRAZILIAN SCENARIO

“Social movement” was a concept that appeared in 1850, with the German sociologist Lorenz von Stein in the book “History of the French social movement from 1789 to the present”. The author used Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels as a reference when those authors elaborated in “The Communist Manifesto” (1849) expressions such as “historical movements” and “proletarian movement”.

For Karl Marx, social movements have the utility of transforming capitalist production relations of exploitation and allowing workers to organize themselves. That is, in a Marxist perspective, every conflict shows a social contradiction: the inefficiency of the State to comply with the demands of certain categories and social groups in conditions of political, economic and legal need.

Given this, social movements would start from collective conflicts. That is, the basis for the mobilization of movements is collective. With that in mind, its solution is, therefore, dependent on a dynamic organization of actions and tasks.

Social movements would therefore be a group of individuals who act collectively to alter some aspect of society. Extremely relevant when it comes to guaranteeing rights, social movements also make politicians articulate in their political campaigns to incorporate what the demands of today’s society are. American philosopher Nancy Fraser says there are two

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types of social struggles: the struggle for redistribution; and the struggle for recognition. The workers' movement would, in this sense, be a struggle for redistribution; the LGBT movement (Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transsexuals) would be a recognition movement, going against the oppression policies of the State, such as civil marriage and the right to a social name. The bivalent movements, for Fraser, are those that fight on both fronts: demanding redistribution and recognition, like the feminist movement and the black and indigenous movement.

In this text, we will portray the protagonism of student movements in social movements in Brazilian historiography. For this, it is essential to carry out a rescue of the claims made over the years, of student organizations and their political achievements.

Brazil's history is deeply marked by inequality, exploitation and political instability. In an attempt to conquer new markets, Portugal and other European powers launch themselves into the Atlantic Ocean in the hope of expanding the wealth of the metropolises. By invading the territory that would later become the Federative Republic of Brazil, Portugal implemented a sugar economy, a basic model for the colonization of Portuguese America, characterized by large rural properties, slave labor and monoculture production.

In the meantime, dissatisfied with the scenario and working conditions to which they were subjected, indigenous, enslaved Africans and quilombolas mobilized themselves in the Spanish, French and Portuguese America in revolts and even revolutions to achieve the breaking of the slave and landowner logic. The abolition of slavery, the independence of Brazil and the fall of Dom Pedro II, however, were not enough to avoid historical marks that would perpetuate until the 21st century. It can be observed, in this way, that the social movements started from the dominated masses against the perpetuation of the dominant action around social, political, economic and cultural issues.

In Brazil, most of these issues arise at the expense of poverty and injustice widespread by the government itself. This is confirmed by examining the first signs of the Brazilian workers' movement.

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In a country where the rural area was the main work and market environment, Brazilian industrial development in the early 20th century changed the country's social situation with the emergence of the working class. Conditions were precarious, with the presence of unhealthy work, long hours, low wages, and the absence of paid rest and labor regulations. Unhappy, the workers organized themselves into class associations, organizing strikes and protests, demanding better working conditions.

As stated earlier, slavery had not been properly abolished, because the latifundium was not abolished, and with that, its structures and practices moved to work in the field. In this context, in 1954, Peasant Leagues originated. Beginning in Pernambuco, they organized and spread throughout Brazilian territory. Demanding agrarian reform and the distribution of land, the movements still remain active until today. Under the strong influence of the requests they made, President João Goulart (1961 - 1964) was willing to debate the agrarian reform guidelines, but suffered a political blow that instituted the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964-1985).

The military regime in the second half of the twentieth century instituted measures of repression, censorship, persecution and policies that went against civil rights. One of the objectives, but also motivations, of the military and civilians who supported them, as large landowners, bankers and businessmen, was to prevent the movement, whether in rural or urban areas, of social movements that required changes in the country. Financed by the Washington administration for its concern with the advancement of the socialist ideal in Latin America, the Brazilian military used violence to institute this atrocious period.

In "The Tasks of the Revolutionary Youth", Vladimir Lenin, Bolshevik leader of the Russian Revolution (1917), reminds us of Karl Marx's words in the preface to "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy", in which he says: "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.". Subsequently, Lenin says that it is with this aspect that the tasks that fall to the youths committed to the emancipation of workers are highlighted.

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It is by drinking from this theoretical source that the parties and youths organize themselves in revolutionary movements, aiming at the overthrow of the military government and the restoration of democracy.

From that organization, an episode shakes the structure of the dictatorial regime. In Rio de Janeiro, a command composed of militants from National Liberation Action (ALN) and the October 8 Revolutionary Movement (MR-8) kidnapped Charles Elbrick, US ambassador to Brazil. In exchange for the diplomat's release, the hijackers demanded the release of more than ten political prisoners and the dissemination, in all media, of a manifesto against the dictatorship. The military government, with no options, gave in to the demands of the movement, articulated mainly by student movements.

In the coming years, the dictatorship would face new waves of mobilizations by the working class, with generalized strikes and, in 1983, the first movements of *Diretas Já*, the largest Brazilian social movement, demanding the return of democracy, broke out across the country. Popular forces gathered among ever-increasing crowds to eradicate censorship times.

Contemporary social movements have spread very easily across Latin America, both on environmental issues and on social political issues. The Movement of Struggle in Neighborhoods, Villages and Favelas (MLB, in Portuguese) is a vivid example of this. A national social movement that fights for urban reform and the human right to live in dignity, the MLB is a movement formed by thousands of homeless families across the country, victims of the predatory action of land and real estate speculation. For the MLB, the struggle for housing is the main engine of the struggle for urban reform, because through it they managed to mobilize thousands of people, put pressure on governments and draw attention to the problems faced by the people in large cities.

The participation of youth and students was a strong component in all initiatives for effective change in society. Vivid with knowledge, willpower and leadership, young people became the main responsible for the socio-political conquests obtained in the course of the formation of social movements. These were essential to demand recognition of rights from the State.

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### **The first signs of the Brazilian student movement as a social transformer**

Permeated by a vast history of social mobilizations as a result of the multiple coups it suffered, Latin America had, in the last century, student movements as protagonists in the resistance against the bourgeois and neoliberal tyranny that affected the continent. In Brazil, the first student body, the Santos Student Center, appeared in the coastal region of the state of São Paulo, in 1932, in the context of the Constitutionalist Revolution, dated the same year, in opposition to the regime imposed by the dictator Getúlio Vargas; however, student revolts in the country date back much earlier.

In the 18th century, inspired by the Enlightenment ideals imported from Europe by workers and proletarian immigrants from there, the university students mobilized, together with other social classes, against the high taxes charged by the Portuguese Crown in the so-called *Inconfidência Mineira*. It is important to emphasize, however, that it was not usual having a popular character in these revolutions, since access to education was a resource for a few. Despite this, the potential of the Brazilian people to fight against transgressions of their rights was already shown.

Still in the Vargas Era, after the Constitutionalist Revolution, the performance of the student movement did not cease; with the qualitative increase of students, the need to organize themselves collectively and centrally became clearer, so in August 1937, the National Union of Students (UNE, in Portuguese) was founded in the middle of the *Estado Novo* period, one of the most bleeding in the history of Brazil - there are historiographical contradictions in relation to the year, with sources pointing to 1938 as the year of UNE promulgation, although the I National Congress of Students took place on the date mentioned first - and, in 1939, at the III National Congress of Students, the student card was created, an achievement that has been under attack and systematic attempts to dismantle 81 years later.

In the 1940s, UNE, now regarded as the largest representation of students across the country, is advancing in a fight against an even greater enemy: the rise of Nazifascism in Brazilian territory. With the Second World War erupting around the world, the institution is mobilizing in favor of the split

of Brazil with the countries of the Axis - Germany, Italy and Japan - and, when it comes to the foreign policy, they begin to ask for the end of the Dictatorship of the Estado Novo, where in response they receive police repression from the same law enforcement officers who were supposed to protect them. At the end of the decade, UNE joins workers and unions in the struggle to improve the quality of life for Brazilians and for the state monopoly of Brazil's oil reserves, in a campaign that became known as "The oil is ours" and which resulted in the creation of Petrobras, in 1953.

It is essential to highlight the clashes between the ideological poles that started to occur even in the mid-1940s due to the desire of both to control the influence of the UNE. These dichotomous shocks put an end to the predominance of socialist thought and remained hegemonic until the beginning of the following decade.

Despite the growth of UNE and the student movement as a whole since the 1st Congress, it was in the 1960s that the boom took place; after the resignation of President Jânio Quadros, in 1961, the Brazilian Army presses for the impediment of the inauguration of the vice-president, João Goulart, in favor of a military intervention. As a result, UNE adheres to the Legality Campaign, led by, until then, the governor of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Leonel Brizola, in favor of the possession of Jango and the maintenance of democracy - albeit in the bourgeois molds -, the that succeeds. However, in 1964, after several previous attempts to co-opt power, the military took over the country through a coup. There begins the period of greatest austerity in Brazil.

There were many losses of the student movement during this historic moment, from the placing of the UNE, state unions, youths and communist parties in illegality, through the imposition of censorship and the loss of professorship in classrooms, to a even more irreparable loss: the lives of more than 400 Brazilian students and militants murdered by the military regime, some of whom have disappeared until the present moment.

Resisting illegality, UNE suffered a coup in 1968, when the Ibiúna Congress - where the main leaders of the movement from across the country were gathered - was discovered and invaded by the Army. More than 700 students were arrested,

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in what was considered the biggest dismantling of the student movement in the country. As a result, UNE continues to breathe through devices until the following decade, in 1976, when the movement began to be rebuilt, still in illegality, until it was hit again in the same year, leading several students to be arrested again.

Only in 1979, the organization was able to bring together students without the intervention of the military, but as it had not been previously disclosed, the participation of most students was compromised.

In the first half of the 1980s, in 1984, UNE joined the “Diretas Já” movement, in search of new elections with active civil participation - it is decided, therefore, that the elections, from 1989, would have participation by the mass of the country - and then support Tancredo Neves and José Sarney, who wins in Congress. At the end of the decade, in 1988, the student organization and movement participated, but in a less intense way, in the process of construction of the Federal Constitution, through student protests and demonstrations with less impetus.

Until then, most of the activists in the student movements were university students; in the impeachment of president Collor, in 1992, however, the role of university students in the student movement gives way to that of high school students, due to their indignation due to the lack of investment in public education and the exorbitant monthly fees in private schools. In addition, in the following decade, after the UNE took a stand in favor of the University Reform (UR) designed and implemented in the administration of President Lula, which contributed to the capitalization of public education, a split occurs between some members and the movement.

Currently, with UNE suffering attacks from all sides in the face of its lack of transparency in relation to the money raised by the organization and support for contradictory agendas, such as the University Reform itself, the student movement is discredited. However, movements like Correnteza seek to restore the confidence of students from all spheres in popular mobilization for free, quality, and, above all, universal education.

In view of what was exposed, it is clear that student leadership has always been historically present in movements



dealing with political and social issues in facing a problematic Brazilian reality. In order to understand the importance of students in building this change, it is necessary to make a historical recovery of their struggles and achievements.

It was only from the republican period, in 1901, that the first national student entity was founded: the Federation of Brazilian Students (today known as UBES), which, although it had only a short time in operation, represented the beginning of what would mark the country's history. From the creation of UBES, in 1902, in the state of São Paulo, the first Student Guild was created, responsible for representing the interests of students within the school, and this was aimed at encouraging sports, culture and leisure. Not long after, in the 30's Revolution, students became more active in important organizations, like Communist Youth; and it was from this political activism that the requirement for primary education across the country could be guaranteed.

In addition, student movements also played a key role in fighting the 1964 Coup, which culminated in the Military Dictatorship. Despite being in a period of censorship of any political activity, the students maintained their position at the head of the Hundred Thousand March, manifested against the Brazilian military dictatorship. With the country's re-democratization process between 1983 and 1984, they participated in the Diretas Já demonstration in support of the presidential candidate Tancredo Neves. Years later, in 1989, President Fernando Collor de Mello's neoliberal policy led students to create "Caras Pintadas" movement to defend their impeachment.

The struggle was not limited to the 80s and 90s. From the beginning of the 21st century to the present, students continued to carry out major demonstrations: in 2007, the UBES caravan in several states to defend the student free pass; in 2012, the achievement of democratization to access to higher education with the approval of Law No. 12,711, guaranteeing 50% of places in universities and federal institutes for public school students; in 2010, the defense by the Youth PEC for policies focused on youth; in 2013, against the abusive increase in the bus fare; in 2014, the approval of the National Education Plan, guaranteeing 10% of GDP to be invested in public education; in 2016, opposing the political coup against

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ex-president Dilma Rousseff and PEC 241, which aimed at freezing spending on health and education; and in 2019, with the wave of protests by the “Education Tsunami” against the dismantling of education by former Education Minister Abraham Weintraub, and the pension reform prepared by the government of Jair Bolsonaro.

In times of a pandemic, this organization remains crucial when it comes to education. According to data released by the World Bank, due to the social isolation recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO), at the end of April 85% of students worldwide were without class. In Brazil, the alternative to avoid delaying the school year was to adapt to remote education, but in practice it did not work properly because it did not cover the reality of all Brazilian students. The National Household Sample Survey (PNAD) points out that Brazil still had 14.9 million households without internet access in 2018 alone (about 20% of the 71.7 million households). Of this statistic, the majority disconnected is concentrated in the Northeast region: 5.7 million homes (referring to 30.9% of households across the region). From this research it can be inferred the lack of structure to access the internet necessary for remote education during the pandemic.

With the creation of the “Reduza Já” campaign, the Correnteza student movement achieved a reduction in tuition at private universities during quarantine in several states in Brazil. The movement was at the forefront of protests in favor of the postponement of the National High School Examination (ENEM, in Portuguese), denouncing the lack of material resources of students in situations of social and psychological vulnerability; in the struggle for the approval of quotas for transgender people at the Federal University of ABC (UFABC); guaranteeing a free pass in Rio de Janeiro; in the re-enrollment of 500 students unfairly rejected at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). Correnteza also led the protests that culminated in the departure of former Minister of Education, Abraham Weintraub. Together with the other student movements, the renewal of the Basic Education Maintenance and Development Fund (FUNDEB), responsible for the redistribution of resources for public education, was permanently approved.

Therefore, student leadership and its achievements reaffirm the importance of democratic centralization and the collectivity of these movements in the struggle for structural and qualitative

change in the social, political and economic fields. The historical recovery of these conquests exposes not only the revolutionary character of the student movement in the face of the dictatorial period suffered by Brazil in 1964, but also the influence of US imperialism that plagues Latin America - which can clearly be seen in the creation of the 1968 University Reform project, consulted by the creator of the Atcon Plan (1965), Rudolph Atcon, who defended mainly the modernization of universities through a “business” administration, that is, a way of “americanizing” Brazilian universities. The student movement that emerged in Brasil also points to the State’s negligence in preserving the basic rights of the population, so that a majority is alienated and harmed so that a minority remains in power. In this sense, student mobilization, such as Movimento Correnteza is crucial to strengthen the autonomy and criticality of those who represent the future, fighting for the autonomy of student entities and universities themselves, as well as for their quality and gratuity.

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JUSTIN GEIBLER

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## ASSESSMENT FROM A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE – EDUCATION HAS LOST

What if:

- all the colleges and universities would close? A short entry would only be possible for important reasons and the lectures would only be accessible through the internet.
- due to a restriction of the labor market, more and more students are plagued by material worries? They have to get into more and more debt in order to cover their living expenses during their studies.
- some students have poor access to the Internet due to their geographical and material situation? A situation that can hardly be changed. The use of the internet in public spaces and at colleges and universities would not be accessible to those students.
- contact with fellow students was not advisable in person and could only be developed via the Internet? Students without reliable internet are not able to develop contacts with their peers.

How would students that experience this challenging situation - restricted access to money, internet and personal connection - evaluate their experience in regards to higher education? What feelings would the following sentence provoke in them: “higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit” (UDHR)?

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**What is the state of affairs?**

We are not mistaken when we say that there are students who have an extremely limited access to higher education at this time. This is due to their economic possibilities and the availability of the available Internet. Is that ethical? Of course not! It will become clear that at present the “basis of merit” is no longer a precursor for a successful course of study, instead the environment of the students determines the access and outcome of their higher education experience. It is therefore necessary to take another look at the environment and the demands placed on it. What are the increased requirements that higher education places on students?

- A stable internet connection is required to follow the lecture content. Also, to participate in the discussions and learning groups.
- A suitable place within one’s own four walls is a prerequisite for adequately dealing with the contents of the studies. This means peace and quiet and access to necessary materials. For instance, do parents with children have the necessary quiet time to study, if their children cannot be taken care off outside the home? In addition, students may not be able to afford the same quality equipment than their peers.

These are changing demands that students, enrolled on campus, could not have expected to this extent. It may therefore not be surprising that the current living environment of students have a great impact on the accessibility of higher education. Institutions of higher education, universities and colleges should have a regulating effect on such environmentally induced unequal access (in the sense of the human right to education). In other words, they should provide all students with spaces and opportunities that enable and support them to pursue an individual and successful course of study. Before the pandemic, it was possible for them to visit the colleges and universities and find rooms and materials to study according to their needs. At the moment there is a lack of alternatives. The students have to rely solely on their own resources provided through their environment. Consequently, unequal chances to obtain higher education can be note and this is the subject of this statement from a student’s perspective.

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These inequalities have intensified in this period. This is to be understood as a qualitative step backwards in relation to the ideal of the human right to education. This is a situation that needs to be addressed and improved on. Because we see potential in improving the organization of university-politics in regards to teaching! It must and is possible to make teaching more open, accessible and considerate of all students. This is something that needs constant and unconditional reflection. It is too easy to habitually use teaching methods employed before Corona – thing of the danger of transferring the schemes of face-to-face teaching to digital teaching. So, at this point I would like to end with an image: *This chair I'm sitting on has become my new living space, the body is bored, only the head is just working - I'm out of balance.*

### **Informal learning:**

When we discuss the human right to education, the aspect of free self-determined education (apart from school education) must never be overlooked. Because even the minimized public life has consequences for the individual informal educational processes of all people. Participation in public events, visiting cultural sites (museums, libraries, cinemas, memorials, etc.) was for a long time and is now again not possible or severely restricted. Exploration in the surrounding area was/ is hardly possible. Places of gathering and exchange were/are not freely usable. Unfortunately, it becomes clear, how much is partially denied to people during this time, especially opportunities for personal development.

### **Understanding in dialogue:**

My explanations about everyday life and the demands on students during this time will be deepened through getting in a dialog with other students. In the following the "I" will expand to "You". Nine students responded to my inquiry about their experiences and feelings about being a student during this time. Looking at the students' written statements should give us a glimpse of understanding.<sup>1</sup>

"For me there is no big difference between studying online and studying at the university. Both have its own benefits and disadvantages and none of them are better or worse than the other. Corona has not that big impact on my study life. The

only difference is, of course, that you can't meet your fellow students or professors in person. But by studying at home, I can plan my time better than before and in general there is more time left, because I don't need to drive to the university anymore. Group projects are no big deal, too, because you can meet and talk online to each other. A big advantage is, that many courses and practices are uploaded as videos, so if you're for example ill or you have other important appointments you can decide when you are watching the videos. For people who began studying when Corona already started it's very hard, you hardly get to know other students, but I started my study before the pandemic, so this problem doesn't apply on me. I would like a combination of online studying and studying at the university as soon as Corona is over. It would be very useful, if most of the courses had online access after the pandemic." (Luisa)

"In addition, things got more stressful because some professors are not well organized themselves. Some forgot that they had online lectures, forgot to send links, or prerecorded the lectures and we did not talk to the professor the whole semester. Also, some add more assignments as the semester goes on, or incorporate the online forums into their format and they expect that we check these often and to respond to other students' comments. It is therefore a lot more difficult to plan out when to work on assignments and to stay organized. Another challenge that the pandemic provides us with is that the library has been partially closed completely or that the times when books can be preordered and picked up are very inconvenient for ppl that work, live out of town, or have to rely on public transportation. Some faculty members do take this into account and have eased their requirements on the literature we can use for our assignments, essays etc. However, it is not satisfying and hampers the overall learning experience. Overall, there are a lot of disadvantages to have to study during this pandemic however, I am grateful for the professors that are trying to do their best and to support us so we can finish our studies on time. One advantage I do see, is that in the future I will be able to incorporate online formats in my work with more ease and be more accepting of them. Also, I have had to learn to be more creative and flexible with situations we all have been thrown into." (Nadja)

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For me, the question often arises, should I not rather have stayed in my training profession and studied part-time. Because the reasons why I decided to study full-time are simply gone. Not meeting new people, no new experiences and certainly no year abroad. It's just so sad to sit at home and just watch the year pass you by without experiencing anything. Of course, the situation allows you something, you have much more time to concentrate on your studies and try new things. Nevertheless, one wishes that more would be tried to make a little university life possible for us. Because psych meetings of small study groups or the possibility to study in the library would be great when the numbers hopefully go down again in spring." (Julia)

"I must honestly say that I have been very lucky so far and have hardly experienced any restrictions from Corona during my studies. In the spring I was in my practical semester. This was completed by me in a mother-child group, which remained open without further restrictions. I was also able to work my usual holiday job during the semester break. So far everything went normally. Then came the start of the 5th semester and no one really knew how it will go on now. Will the lectures be held in online format or in hybrid classes? The answer to these questions was very important for me, because I come from the Saarland and live in a room in a shared flat in Koblenz for rent. If the lectures take place online, I might be able to cancel the room and not have to continue paying the rent. Here I would have wished earlier feedback from the university, in order to be able to plan, when I must be again in Koblenz. In addition, I was insecure because I did not know what to expect, since I was in the previous semester in the practical semester and did not know how the online lectures run. Also, from the professor's lecturers I would have liked earlier information about the course of the seminar. We only received partial information from them and sometimes no information at all. So, I needed some time to organize myself and to receive feedback from the professors and lecturers regarding the course of the seminar. [...] In conclusion, I would like to say that the start of the semester was a bit bumpy for me, but the professors and lecturers are trying very hard to make it as pleasant as possible for us students. I am a little sad that I miss the time with my friends. The "student feel-



ing” is just not there at home with the family. I hope that the next semester will be normal again and that I can spend a nice remaining time in Koblenz.” (Maria)

“Now to the experiences of a full digital semester in teaching. First of all, I would like to take the perspective on the university. The teaching in the digital format has been implemented extensively and in a variety of way. Each lecturer had his own methodical-didactic approach. Some of the tasks involved were not carried out in the time allotted. However, the exchange with the lecturers in the digital context was very positive. From a personal perspective, I have to say that there has been a distortion of the areas of life of work (university), leisure and housing. The area of work was so important that the leisure sector in particular suffered. The lack of a commute between home and university contributed to this. This resulted in an imbalance between work and leisure, which again had an impact on everyday life. At the same time, I learned to restore and maintain balance during this digital semester.” (Christian)

“The digital semester - now in its second round - is a lonely semester. If you talk to students who have deliberately chosen a face-to-face course, you can see a lot of resentment: “That’s enough!” and “It’s not the same!”- most students are pretty much in agreement about that. Children need sensual experiences to learn well - grasping, touching, being touched, this is something that developmental psychology agrees on. Does “distance learning” and contact via the computer screen replace the personal exchange with fellow students and professors and this in the same quality? Is quality teaching still guaranteed in these times, or does it depend on how teachers are digitally positioned? The university has become a cold place. A socially deprived everyday study life - even if the measures are necessary, it is worth looking beyond one’s own nose and self-reflection, because even at the university, material inequality is becoming more visible due to the pandemic. This can also be seen as an opportunity to grow as an institution from the pandemic situation and emerge stronger, with new methods, ideas & concepts (and hopefully a larger selection of e-books and professional literature in the library).” (Sarah)

From my experiences in dialogue with students, I would like to draw the following conclusion: Between optimistic

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pragmatism and the unanswered inquiries of normalcy and happiness, between the dispassionate weighing of things and the sense of a lost time, between praise and criticism of study, there are the voices of students. Relations with higher education were and still are ambivalent.

This attempt to take a look at the everyday challenges of students at the beginning of the first online semesters is updated today in the question of how a return to face-to-face teaching is perceived by students. This question will be explored last.

### **The return to the new old life:**

If the students at the beginning of the discussions had been asked about the return of face-to-face teaching, “do you want to have classes at the university again, or would you rather stay with online teaching?” The answer may be ambivalent. Online teaching has definitely allowed students more flexibility as to how to use their time. Mainly because they did not have to travel to and from places of study. Time between courses did not have to be spent at university. The time gained was mainly used for other private matters. Today, it is noticeable that some students are reluctant to part with this freedom. On the other hand, the opportunities for social interaction with the teaching staff and other students; the use of the university libraries; the use of the benefits offered by the campuses, such as inexpensive lunches and other student services represent a different form of freedom. This freedom is based on the human right of education referred to at the outset. This observation is exciting in that it raises the question: are we students not being too thoughtless with our right to education?

The path to analogue study has been taken. This is to be welcomed in the sense of freedom and enabling education, if everybody has the same access to the online resources. For many students this means another change in their private and economic lives. The daily routine that students chose for themselves during the Corona pandemic must give way to the new normal. Normal, in the sense that colleges and universities are once again places of exchange and contact. What is new about this normality are the prevailing access restrictions and new cultural norms. Students are only allowed to

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attend local courses if they can show that they have been vaccinated, recovered or tested negative for Covid-19. The political decision has been made that those people who are unvaccinated will have to pay for the tests for Covid-19 themselves. This fact will directly affect the economic life of some students or provoke an increase in the incidence of Covid-19 infections if they refuse to be vaccinated and to forego testing, because they can't afford to do so. This development dims the joy of students who have wished for the reopening of colleges and universities. This question of the pandemic-related difficulty of participation in education must not be answered too easily. Many inequalities exist in terms of the right to education and economic conditions, which have a large impact on higher education access. The so-called new cultural norms that determine contact and the form of contact with distances and mimic protective walls of mouth-and-nose masks have become an everyday reality for us.

Such conditions are infused in many cultural events or work stations. Over the period of the pandemic, such defusing and renewed tightening of these measures have become the norm. Without describing these political rationalities in more detail here, it is fair to agree with the perception that the management of the pandemic situation has caused an asymmetrical strain on civic solidarity. The right of education has taken a hit, and education has lost out.

This realization should spur us to sustainably sharpen our passion for ensuring and enabling education, so that we are now ready not only to recover what has been lost, but also to move on and understand the importance of education in addressing societal challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> These written excerpts from the statements were written during the period December 2020 – March 2021.

**CHAPTER III**  
**PROJECT ARTICLE 26**  
**LECTURE SERIES · 2022-24**

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## HUMAN RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND THE WORLD OF WORK: IMPLEMENTATION AND EXTENSION

Depending on the understanding of education, educational rights and human rights in general, the perspectives on those affected are also shaped, as will be shown below. First, a few stations on the way to today's human right to education will be presented. Then it comes to the central content of and influencing factors on education. This leads to the socially specific participation in (formal) educational opportunities. Finally, moments of educational structures remote from education, so to speak, are shown and contextualized. It is emphasized that the human right to education must first be implemented, which, however, does not rule out that it should also be expanded.

The inviolability of human dignity is part of Article 1 of the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany. Stéphane Hessel, the son of German-French parents, resisted the Nazi occupation in France and was deported to the Buchenwald concentration camp. In 2010 he wrote the book "Indignez-vous!" (Indignate yourself!) about the necessity of solidarity and internationalist resistance against injustice, oppression, social cuts, war development and exploitation in the world. - Many social movements, such as the "Indignados" (the Spanish forerunner of PODEMOS) have named themselves after Hessel's writing and demand. Dignity or its violation are an important impulse for people to stand up for human rights and to promote corresponding changes. At the same time, their

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worst abuse must also be acknowledged, e.g. through the terrible violation of human dignity under the alias “Colonia Dignidad” (so-called colony of dignity). This German-fascist torture camp during the military dictatorship in Chile, which also served as a place for mass child rape at the same time, is still used today as a Happy Bavarian beer tent celebration location - a terrible humiliation for the surviving torture victims and their descendants (cf .Wikipedia.de). Meanwhile, Jean Ziegler, the Swiss sociologist, politician, part-time UN Ambassador for the Right to Food and collaborator at the UN Human Rights Council, points to Immanuel Kant’s understanding of enlightenment. In doing so, he not only quotes the “man’s emergence from his self-inflicted immaturity”, but also emphasizes Kant’s demand in connection with Kant’s imperative: “The inhumanity that is done to another destroys the humanity in me.” (Quoted from: ZEIT.de of 22.11.2011) In other words, one could say that I feel injured in my dignity by the violation of the human dignity of my neighbours. In this sense, the promotion of indignation, i.e. outrage, is an indispensable driver for the implementation and expansion of the human right to education. Two understandings of education in particular have developed over the course of the history of class societies. On the one hand, education (the right to) was and is understood to mean a more functional (training) for decent or sufficient usability (cf. the idea of the “human capital child”), in accordance with rulership. On the other hand, (the right to) education can also be understood critically against power as liberation from ignorance and immaturity as well as the (right to) personal development. While the 31 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 did not yet contain any (binding) legal norms, but instead declared (non-binding) legal requirements, the following UN Conventions and the so-called Civil Pact and the so-called Social Pact (1966/1973) are already different: This is binding multilateral international law with the character of a federal law. The basic rights and freedoms for every human being (without distinction according to origin, skin color, gender, religion, property, etc.) include: the right of peoples to self-determination and development, the right to work and fair working conditions, to the formation and activity of trade unions, the right to strike, social security, the right to protect families,

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mothers, children and young people, an adequate standard of living, health protection, education “which must be directed towards the full development of the human personality and the awareness of its dignity and strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms”. Participation in cultural life, sharing in the benefits of scientific progress, right to life, liberty and security of person, freedom from slavery, Serfdom and torture, dignified treatment of prisoners and convicts, freedom of movement and emigration, presumption of innocence in criminal proceedings, fair treatment in court, right to freedom of thought, expression, assembly, association, conscience and religion, right to participate in public affairs , minority protection. The rights mentioned correspond to duties that everyone has towards the community and may not be exercised in contradiction to the goals and principles of the UNO. Accordingly, there is no human right to racism, no right to racial hatred, no right to war propaganda and no right to (neo-)Nazi activities and statements. But what is the need for a UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN-CRC) when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been in existence since 1948? With the UN-CRC, the child was placed in the foreground as the bearer of their own rights, whose interests must always be taken into account. Children are people, but not little adults. They develop, but as the Polish educator Janusz Korczak said: “The child does not first become a human being, it is already one.” Children’s rights are therefore human rights for children. The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was signed by over 192 countries. In 1992, Germany also ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which deals with protection, promotion and participation rights, e.g. in the areas of education, health, leisure and culture. However, the ratification was with reservations. Right from the start, Germany found it difficult to fully recognize and implement the UN CRC. The governments of the federal states believe(d) that they are entitled to take refugee minors into detention pending deportation, deprive them of compulsory schooling or deny them the right to health care or legal advice suitable for children simply because of the reservations made about the agreement under immigration law that were in force until 2010. Since the unconditional recognition of the UN-CRC, for

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example, in almost all federal states it has been a question of whether refugee children have a right to education from day one or only after their refugee status has been clarified. Since the latter can often drag on for many months, the children are deprived of their right to education until then, in violation of international law. A related issue concerns the violation of the best interests of the child by temporarily suspending the right to family reunification for certain unaccompanied refugee children. This is another reason why the political and civil society debate about the introduction of children's rights into the constitution can be understood as a fight for a signal for the implementation of children's rights to protection, promotion and participation in the political, legal, scientific, school and media public. Many millions of children and adults around the world have been involved in the implementation of children's rights in recent decades, making written laws more than just printed paper. In the meantime, the CRC has also received an additional protocol that gives children the opportunity to sue for their rights. From the point of view of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, it is now necessary to create child-friendly ombudsman complaints offices at municipal and state level, which enable children to actually obtain their rights. Since the right to education is also one of the children's rights, a new dynamic of understanding and expanding the human right to education could emerge here. The roots of today's education and human rights debates will be outlined below.

### **Origin of educational rights**

The various phases of the French Revolution from 1789 to 1799 are also expressed in their respective declarations and draft constitutions. With the "Declaration of Human and Civil Rights" passed and promulgated by the French National Assembly on August 26, 1789, the first explicit declaration of human rights in Europe is available. Despite all the enlightenment and progressiveness, it is still conceived entirely in the spirit of the constitutional-monarchical order, whereby women, slaves and colonial peoples as well as non-owners of goods and assets remain excluded. The preamble and the following 17 paragraphs of the declaration of 1789 also do not yet have an explicit right to education. The Republican

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constitution of June 24, 1793, on the other hand, looks quite different: It not only proclaimed in article one that “the goal of society is general happiness”, but also subsequently confirmed social rights such as the right to work, support and on education. For example, Article 22 said: “Education is a need for everyone. Society should use all its power to promote progress in public education and make education accessible to all citizens.” In contrast to the declaration of 1789, the constitution of 1793 not only recognized the population’s right to resist oppression (Article 33), but also laid down the right and duty (!; M.K.) to revolution under Article 35: “When the government violates the rights of the people, revolution is the most sacred of rights and the most indispensable of duties for the people and every section of the people” (cf Markov/Soboul 1989, pp. 285f.). Since then, the demand for education as part of human rights has become an integral part of human history - even if many people were and are kept away from it for a long time.

### **Working children and their right to education 180 years ago**

Even at the time of capitalist industrialization in the 19th century, working girls and boys stood up for their rights and demanded outrageously not only to be exploited, but also to have a right to rest and play and to learn to read and write. “We respect our masters and are willing to work to support ourselves and our parents, but we want more time to rest, play a little and learn to read and write. We don’t think it’s right that we only have to work and suffer from Monday morning to Saturday night to make others rich. Dear gentlemen, inform yourself carefully about our situation!” (Children’s petition to the English Parliament, 1836; quoted from: Liebel 2007, p. 15). Since the 19th century, the movement of workers that has emerged with the rise of capitalism has also dealt intensively with the right to education because this right was denied to most workers. In his lecture “Knowledge is power - power is knowledge”, held at the foundation festival of the Dresden workers’ education association on February 5, 1872 and at the foundation festival of the Leipzig workers’ education association on February 24, 1872, one of the great fathers of German social democracy, Wilhelm Liebknecht, reports on the structural functionality of education and school: “School

is the most powerful means of liberation, and school is the most powerful means of enslavement - depending on the nature and purpose of the state. (...) The school as it is and the school as it should be are related to one another in exactly the same way as the state as it is and the state as it should be." (Liebknecht 1872; quoted from: Schröder 1976, Chapter 3). It was therefore clear to him that education, school and knowledge must always be questioned about their respective social context. According to Thomas H. Marshall's model, roughly three phases of the struggle for human rights can be identified over the past three centuries. From the struggles over liberal rights of defense and liberty against the state since the 18th century (first phase: American and French revolutions 1776/1789) to the disputes over equal political participation rights for all citizens (regardless of social origin) since the 19th century (second phase: Revolution of 1848 and Paris Commune of 1871) to struggles for basic social and human rights for all (e.g. to work, education and health care) since the Russian October Revolution of 1917 and the German November Revolution of 1918 as the third Phase (expressed in the Weimar Imperial Constitution and in some state constitutions - e.g. Hessen, NRW - after 1945; cf. Deppe 2009, p. 6).]

As a human right, the right to education is part of the "catalogue of human rights and fundamental freedoms that are binding under international law, such as freedom of opinion and assembly, the right to life and physical integrity, or the right to found trade unions and to organize oneself in them," writes Heiner Fechner. But, he also adds, "this fact is largely unknown in Germany - when human rights violations are discussed, neither the right to education nor the right to work, to adequate housing or standard of living is regularly reported" (Fechner 2009, p. 11).

This is all the more depressing as the human right to education in principle creates the conditions for other human rights to be able to be exercised at all. "Thus, without the acquisition of basic socio-economic and political knowledge, the political rights to freedom of opinion (Art. 19 Civil Pact), assembly (Art. 21 Civil Pact) and association (Art. 22 Civil Pact) as well as participation in public affairs including holding public offices (Art. 25 Civil Pact) largely meaningless, the right to work (Art. 6f Social Pact) and the right to participate

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in cultural life or to the achievements of scientific progress (Art. 15 Social Pact) are difficult to guarantee.” (Fechner 2009, p. 11)

### **Education between human rights and manipulation**

Actually, every person (from infants to adults) has a strong urge to decode and understand themselves and their environment, thus to actively and participatively appropriate the world in order to act in it in a co-determining and self-determined manner. Such an understanding of education as a human right to personality development and participation in the world is diametrically opposed to views that regard education and training as the preparation and training of future, usable human capital. For the business newspaper “*Industriekurier*” of October 7, 1965, for example, the “democratization of the economy (...) was as nonsensical as the democratization of schools, barracks and prisons.” This authoritarian standpoint stood against demands for co-determination by workers councils and trade unions. The quote also revealed something about the understanding of education and school at that time.

They were more likely to be located between barracks and prison discipline than in the area of enlightenment, emancipation, self-development and maturity. The Ex-SPD politician Thilo Sarrazin views education in a similarly instrumental manner when he sees the preparation and training of animals as a model for the school system and thus once again clarifies his extremely authoritarian understanding of education. That’s how he writes. “Every hunter knows from his dog and every rider from his horse that he cannot demand anything from his animal friend who expects his guidance if he does not give him some attention. But he also knows that the horse does not train itself and the dog does not fetch by itself. The rules that apply to human education are not very different” (Sarrazin 2010, p. 201). One notices immediately that the omniscient educator is speaking here and despite all the polemics, it is at least visible that there are fundamentally different understandings of education (and upbringing). The 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states in Article 26, paragraph 1 on education: “Everyone has the right to education. Education is free of charge,

at least primary school and basic education.” The UN then formulated the following educational goals in paragraph 2: “Education must be aimed at the full development of the human personality and at strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It must contribute to understanding, tolerance and friendship between all nations and all racial or religious groups and be conducive to the work of the United Nations in maintaining peace.” Reflections on education as a human right in Germany should be particularly guided by this standard ( cf. Klundt 2017a, p. 114ff.). Education can thus be described as an individual and collective human process of deciphering self-perception and worldview. It is characterized not only by the accumulation of a lot of knowledge, but also by thinking in context. Education means understanding occurrences of natural, political, social, scientific and spiritual-cultural life in their causality, interaction and contradiction, in their origin and development – including change. Education also implies the development of reason-guided autonomy and individual, all-round personality development. Accordingly, the goals of humanistic education are maturity (cf. Kant), a holistic approach (cf. Pestalozzi), humanity (cf. Humboldt), enlightenment, co-determination and self-determination, the ability to criticize, responsibility and community spirit (cf. Demirovic 2015, p. 221ff.).

### **Commercialization**

But enlightenment, understood as education committed to human dignity and reason, was and is always endangered by influential ruling groups who see their privileges threatened by the dissemination of knowledge critical of rulers in the population. If the many private sector lobby groups that influence educational processes, schools and textbooks have their way, education should almost exclusively be equated with the formation of so-called human capital. The organization “Lobbycontrol” points out that Daimler AG now produces school workbooks on “Design and Aerodynamics” for classes in NRW, INSM (“Initiative New Social Market Economy”), which is financed by the metal industry, or Europe’s largest media group, the tax saving model “Bertelsmann Foundation” and other neoliberal “think tanks” now (partly) determine what is taught and learned in Germany’s schools about the

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financial system, the economy and the welfare state. Energy oligopolies teach how to save electricity, agrochemical and seed multinationals like Bayer support student laboratories and secretly propagate genetic engineering for agriculture, Volkswagen teaches climate protection, energy companies propagate deep dumping of carbon dioxide with CCS high-risk technology, financial industry groups explain how to deal with money, the INSM teaches dangers and problems of excessive welfare state for competitiveness, Bertelsmann and Nixdorf Foundation have their own school textbooks written, in which the excessive welfare state is castigated and which are used in schools in Saxony, Thuringia and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (cf. Kamella 2013 ). In doing so, an attempt is made to establish an understanding of education that takes little account to Article 26 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, Article 13 of the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Articles 28 and 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Instead, one can rather speak of indoctrination and structural impairment of the child's well-being (cf. Dimmelmeier 2015).

### **Militarization**

Already the 2013 coalition agreement between the CDU/CSU and SPD of the Federal Government also contains a special understanding of education. It contains the explicit decision to deploy more Bundeswehr forces in schools and other educational institutions. It says: "The youth officers do an important job in providing information about the Bundeswehr's mission. We welcome it if as many educational institutions as possible make use of this offer. Access for the Bundeswehr to schools, universities, training fairs and similar forums is a matter of course for us" (Coalition Agreement 2013, p. 177). However, advertising for the Bundeswehr often amounts to advertising "action", "fun" and "cool tank rides", as in BRAVO, so that 10 to 16-year-olds "learn" what the military is (cf. SPIEGEL online v. 18.9.2012). The German population still has a relatively divided relationship to shooting and killing (cf. Körber Foundation 2014, p. 4). According to some politicians, this urgently needs to change. Anyone who clearly writes about deadly and harmful products for adults (such

as cigarettes or alcohol) that they are deadly and hazardous to health, but does not tell children and young people how many soldiers can expect injuries, trauma, experiences of killing or even their own death in war operations are acting against children's rights. The military in educational institutions and minors on murder weapons are therefore less education than a form of structural child welfare endangerment (cf. Cremer 2013, p. 19f.).

### **Anti-Educational education?**

So-called educationally disadvantaged people can also be found in places where they would not have been immediately suspected. Let's imagine an entire high school class in a federal state being given the task of explaining the location advantages of Japanese nuclear power plants on the coasts of the earthquake-prone country for the geography subject. The specific task is as follows: "As part of the expansion of energy production from nuclear power, it was decided to build the Japanese nuclear power plants on the coast, but at a distance from the large conurbations. Justify this decision and present positive effects for the development of the spatial structures at these locations!" ("The sea is an easy way to dispose of waste" 2011).

What is asked of young people here? First of all, nuclear power plants and their construction are fundamentally unquestionable. Secondly, installing them on coasts should not be a problem. Strictly speaking, both would not be in the sense of the Abitur task and would therefore have to remain irrelevant to the grades or even mean deductions from the grades, since the topic or the task would have been missed. If they want to pass their Abitur, the students are therefore forced to emphasize and justify the positive effects of nuclear power plants and their construction on the coasts of Japan. That's what most of them do, pointing to the absolute safety of the big cities in Japan, to the good possibility of dumping radioactive waste straight into the sea, the improbability of tsunamis and earthquakes bordering on certainty, and the basic, absolute safety of the reactor systems. Despite clearly violating the task specified by the Ministry of Education, some students raise the issue of the fundamental safety risk of nuclear power plants, the question of nuclear waste, the

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danger of earthquakes and the possibility of tsunamis. In this Abitur task from 2010 - i.e. one year before the Fukushima catastrophe - not only demagoguery and paternalism were exercised, since formally only reasons for the defense of nuclear reactors and their construction on coasts were given, but no criticism, not even pro/ Contra-discussions were planned. At the same time, opportunism and conformism were also encouraged; In no case, however, are the goals of humanistic education in the direction of maturity, enlightenment, co-determination and self-determination, the ability to criticize, responsibility and community ability. It would therefore have to be stated that the poor graduates of this school system are incapacitated with such an Abitur task, are kept away from real education - also in the sense of all-round personal development - and can be described as poorly trained in terms of their social responsibility. In this respect, they could be described as “uneducated” and “socially weak”.

At the same time, however, the education system of this federal state and its high school graduates appear annually as the apparently most intelligent and clever students in almost all competitive national and international performance tests for educational skills (cf. PISA etc.). How does that fit together? From the point of view of the standards of comprehensive and humanistic education - let alone from that of reason-guided autonomy and individual, all-round personality development - the various comparative learning performance tests are miles away from education, since they usually only test the accumulated and spat out knowledge. It also fits in with the fact that creativity and productive imagination are not (cannot be) tested, even though they are the prerequisites for many kind of economic innovation and product development. The various competitive benchmark tests are also evidently an understanding of education that confronts to Article 26 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, Articles 28 and 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and Article 13 of the UN Covenant on Economic, social and cultural rights.

### **Socially unequal rights to education**

Meanwhile, it is often claimed that the old social question has been overcome and, replaced by a “new educational ques-



tion" (cf. Deggerich 2002). It is therefore important to take a close look at the real poor-rich relationships and how they are perceived by politicians, because many studies in recent years have been able to underpin the fact that the risk of poverty in Germany is distributed according to social origin (cf. Klundt 2017b, p. 43ff.). Poverty not only means that disadvantaged living conditions have a negative impact on health and educational skills, since a lower social background also means less educational support and thus lower results. In addition, even with the same performance, the family background of the students usually determines their educational opportunities. In this way, educational and thus career and participation opportunities are literally "inherited". Elite researcher Michael Hartmann reports similarly about the central determinants of the transition to secondary school after primary school. Not only the better performance of the children from the higher social classes is noticeable, according to Hartmann, "also the strongly differing assessments of the teachers depending on the social background. For example according to a survey among all fifth-graders in Hamburg, a child whose father has graduated from high school (Abitur) needs to have a third fewer points for a high school recommendation than a child whose father has not completed school. The same mechanisms can be observed in transfer decisions." (Hartmann 2005, p. 45)

A special evaluation of the microcensus on the socio-economic status of students in the Federal Statistical Office confirms something similar. The author Daniela Nold points out that, according to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone should have access to education, regardless of age, gender and social background. But she has to confirm PISA and IGLU comparative studies, according to which educational success and participation in education depend on the social background of the children. According to this, children from so-called educationally disadvantaged, low-income and migrant families are disproportionately often in secondary schools and special schools and disproportionately less in grammar schools, regardless of their performance. The exact opposite applies to children from socially privileged families. "The analyzes carried out clearly show that the type of school attended depends on the socio-eco-

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nostic background and the migration background of the pupils and that the social composition of the pupils differs significantly between the different types of school. While socially better off families with good education and families without a migration background make full use of their children's potential, educationally disadvantaged, socially disadvantaged families and families with a migration background often have unused talent reserves. Social inequalities are reproduced over generations and society's human resources are not developed and used in an optimal way. This is a major problem, especially given the increasing risk of children and demographic developments" (Nold 2010, p. 149). Although an OECD study from 2015 indicates that the expansion of early childhood education and the chances of a training place after school have improved significantly in Germany, it cannot hide the fact that educational opportunities are still too often inherited and the poor Schoolchildren from such circumstances too often remain there (cf. Osel 2015/Peter 2015).

In one of the most recent evaluations from the PISA study 2012 on so-called low-performing students, this is again underlined: "For students from socially disadvantaged families, the risk of ending up as under-performing is much higher than for children from wealthier backgrounds", sums up Sabine Müller from the Berlin ARD capital studio (Müller 2016). Now it could actually be assumed that schools in so-called social hotspots and with a particularly large number of children with a migration background will also receive particularly high additional support in relation to other schools, based on their additional needs. But this is obviously very often not the case in Germany. A study by the Expert Council of German Foundations for Integration and Migration (SVR) entitled "Treat unequal unequally!" by the author Simon Morris-Lange instead came to the following sobering conclusion: "The poorer educational opportunities of students with a migration background are the reason for the financing - and secondary schools have so far only been insufficiently considered. The result: Schools with a high proportion of immigrants and schools in socially difficult situations sometimes receive as many subsidies as the 'average school' or even less, despite the increased need - much to the disadvantage of pupils with a migration background" (Morris-Lange 2016, p. 4).

In its 2015 study “Education at a Glance”, the OECD also examined educational mobility between generations. With regard to the proportion of 25 to 64-year-olds whose educational qualifications are higher or lower than that of their parents, an average of 39.2 percent can be seen for all OECD countries (with Finland, France, Poland, the Netherlands and Sweden significantly higher). and 11.6 percent determine educational decline (Finland, France, Spain, Italy are significantly below). In Germany, educational advancement is below average at only 24 percent and educational decline is above average at 17.9 percent. Educational mobility in Germany is thus below average upwards, but above average downwards, which is tantamount to an indictment of the educational system (cf. OECD 2015, p. 109; Müller/Neubacher 2015, p. 72).

### **Should Education be the only measure against poverty?**

Educational inequalities are usually the result of socio-economic inequalities and not vice versa. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu was able to substantiate this in his analyzes of the educational system as an institution of reproduction, allocation and legitimation of class societies. The objective goal of the education system is not to enable everyone to learn equally, but to create a hierarchy of differences in performance and to organize the division into so-called ‘good’ and ‘bad’, ‘gifted’ and ‘untalented’ students. The operational function of the education system thus turns out to be something completely different from what many believe (cf. Bourdieu/Passeron 1971, p. 15ff.). According to Bourdieu, the principles of such competition, based on “encouraging the most fortunate and penalizing the most disadvantaged, (...) make it necessary and sufficient that the school ignores the cultural inequality of children of different social classes. In other words, by treating all students equally in their rights and duties, however unequal they may actually be, the school system effectively sanctions the original inequality to the culture” (Bourdieu 2001, p. 39) and thus confers on it the “semblance of legitimacy” (ibid., p. 25). His assessments of apparently objective measurements of supposed talents and non-talents convince the likely losers to see their failure as self-inflicted and to reconcile their devaluation. On the other hand, the education system “justifies” the children of the

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higher classes with high probability their supposedly self-acquired social advancement to the inherited position of their parents in the social space. According to Bourdieu, this is a kind of “class racism” (ibid., p. 147), which portrays the rulers as beings of a higher nature and value and the ruled as not very intelligent subjects (cf. Thilo Sarrazin’s social racism: Foroutan et al. 2010 , p. 5ff.). The higher you get in the education system, the more young people and young adults of high social background you meet there, with the awarding of grades alone taking care of that, but in Germany this is supplemented by the tripartite nature of the school system, which is still cementing its effects (cf. Wernicke 2009 , p. 31).

### Conclusion

Investigations of educational opportunities depending on social background must always be asked about which education and which opportunities are to be distributed. Conversely, socio-political debates about so-called educationally disadvantaged people should also be analyzed in regard to their descriptive premises. The right to education should, however, be seen as an opportunity for liberation and not as a compulsion for burnout kids to “bulimia-learning”, as is unfortunately all too often experienced by young people (cf. von Westphalen 2015). Finally, the question can be asked to what extent the social order and the education system already hinder real educational processes for structural reasons and (can) promote a literal irrationalism. However, this means taking a closer look at the social and ideological conditions and meaning factors for educational processes and working out how adults and children can be empowered to see through these structures themselves and to influence them in their best interest. After all, (the right to) “education” could also be understood as formulated by the French Enlightenment in the 18th century and responsible for the first education, school and upbringing plan of the French Revolution, Marquis de Condorcet in 1792: “Education makes the People disobedient and difficult to rule.” (quoted from: Zoughebi 2014, p. 7) Loosely based on Karl Marx’s 11th Feuerbach thesis, this could mean not harboring too many illusions about the change in domination and inequality through changes in human rights articles: The jurists and scientists have only interpreted human

rights differently, it depends on their application or implementation. So there is still a lot to do – before, during and after an extension of the human right to education.

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## THE COLLAPSE OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS

The publication of the PISA reports in December 2023 fell like a bombshell across the West. No sooner had the results been published than each country became involved in barren debates and a dynamic of laments and complaints about statistics that were as unfavorable as expected and that most analysts had already predicted. Because, despite having the slightest indication of what has been happening in schools, institutes or faculties in recent years, they already had enough data to anticipate what is beginning to look like a generalized educational collapse. Since we still do not have European public opinion, but public opinion at the state level, the various educational actors started to blame each other and pass the responsibility onto others (with a special predilection for attacking teachers on the verge of collapse, who have been repeatedly criticized in recent years). Nevertheless, despite regional differences, derived more from socio-demographic<sup>1</sup> composition than from the systems themselves, and systems resisting the changes promoted by the international organizations driving tests such as PISA (and whose results give reason to their objections), the truth is that there is a widespread observation that, in general terms, education systems in the West are in a phase of decomposition. The problem is that what happens in the classrooms of Detroit, Barcelona or Marseille, represent nothing more than that the canary in

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the coal mine, the first sign that something is wrong. A hint of an underlying movement that affects economic transformations, social crises and the growing weakness of democracies.

In the light of these results, in France, the President of the Republic Emmanuel Macron pulled one of his habitual rabbits out of his hat. Faced with the devastating panorama of the *École Républicaine*, he proposed a return to the school uniform. His proposal comes to reinforce other proposals of his short-lived Prime Minister Gabriel Attal (who jumped to Matignon directly from the Ministry of Education) such as groups by level, tightening of the criteria for promotion and graduation and a reinforcement of discipline, a particularly sensitive fact at a time when there is a lack of teachers who refuse to practice in certain neighborhoods.<sup>2</sup> As with Macronism, these are slogans without practical implementation, measures both naïve and desperate, and above all, unrealistic. The Republic no longer has control over a large part of the territory, and proof of this is the large number of teachers who are leaving the profession or who no longer plan to practice it, at a time when some teachers have been murdered and others threatened with death without the administration making anything more than empty declarations,<sup>3</sup> and while the various governments, since the resignation of Mitterrand to undertake left-wing policies in 1981, have been degrading public services to a point, probably of no return.

Maybe France could seem an extreme case, from what had previously been considered a benchmark, to the sense of republican aluminosis of failed society that it seems now. A society in which, as the geographer Christophe Giully describes,<sup>4</sup> the country is in the hands of a ruling and enlightened minority, Parisian, upper class, bohemian-bourgeois, indifferent to the needs of a majority reflected in the revolt of the yellow vests and in an increasingly evident social unrest. Nevertheless, although the collapse of education systems is a fact, this contrasts with statistics on rising graduation rates. However, the reality is different. In addition to PISA or any kind of school assessment, regular Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tests showing mental abilities, verbal, mathematical or spatial intelligence, show what psychologists call the “inverse Flynn effect”. The Flynn effect might indicate that

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the IQ levels of the population tend to increase as a function of aspects related to food, the satisfaction of material needs and the prolongation of compulsory schooling. Nevertheless, regarding the West, many countries have already seen the IQ of their adult populations fall, as noted in a study by analyst Emil O. W. Kirkegaard, who points out that between 1978 and 2019, the United Kingdom has dropped from 100 to 99, the United States from 100 to 97; Belgium from 104 to 97.5; France from 104 to 96.5; Denmark from 100 to 98 or Italy, from 100 to 94. In the case of Spain (increased from 87 to 94), it is obvious that the impact of Franco's regime has left its effects on the country's social and cultural landscape. The normal score should be 100.<sup>5</sup>

What is happening? As a historian, I must say that there have already been situations in the past in which there have been setbacks in the physical and mental health of the population. The studies of John Rule and E. P. Thompson on the English industrial revolution of the 19th century demonstrated that the impact of the sudden worsening of the living and working conditions of the English working class, subjected to a period of proletarianization, explains the reduction of a few centimeters in the height of British army recruits, derived from poorer health, food resulting from the dramatic social and economic transformations that led to the transition from an agricultural and rural society to an industrial and urban one. This was also confirmed by the report written at the same time by Friedrich Engels, also for England. In the Catalan version, Pere Felip Monlau also noted, in the Barcelona of the XIX century, how the change of paradigm that industrialization implied, with child labor, ruthless exploitation, worsening food or housing conditions, meant a general degradation of Catalan society, -with an extension of physical and mental illnesses- that only interventionist and protective measures (and the action and resistance capacity of the workers' movement) managed to correct. More recently, the collapse of the Soviet Union also meant a drop in life expectancy (which in the case of men fell below the sixty year barrier) but also a decline in educational levels, and a trauma that may also serve to explain the current geopolitical tension. However, in order to increase hopes, in the Russian case, even without much data, these indices seem



to have been recovering since the moment when economic recovery and social recomposition have taken place.

The shift of paradigm in the West during the first quarter of the XXI century, which has involved deindustrialization, neoliberal policies of economic deregulation, cutbacks in public services, individualization, competition, precarious labor and housing, necessarily has a very negative impact on a society where there is a growing perception of decline. Nevertheless, we return to the canary in the coalmine, in other words, how schools are registering the symptom of a deep and global social process, based on declining educational results. The decrease in educational levels is surely a complex and cross-cutting problem that the usual opinionators would like to reduce to simple factors. In the last few months, too much has been said about the effects of screens as being responsible for the phenomenon. The 2020-2021 pandemic has been an easy wild card for education authorities to use as an excuse (when, in fact, the indications are from much earlier). And the majority of analysts are looking for culprits instead of digging into the root causes and proposals for correction.

In April 2024 I was a presenter at the University of Barcelona at a conference on digital capitalism and education in the age of artificial intelligence,<sup>6</sup> which offered a few keys to understand and think about. The fourth industrial revolution -a term chiseled by Klaus Schwab, former president of the Davos Forum<sup>7</sup>-, promoted by Artificial Intelligence and disruptive technologies, implies a radical change in the economic and social paradigm. When we talk about “change”, we should strip this concept of positive connotations, because it basically implies that the economic transformations derived from technological innovations, in the midst of the crisis of capitalism, make a large part of the population redundant. And this is so because in this new economic paradigm, if we continue with the current rules of the capitalist game, there cannot be decent work for all. In such conditions, and in this era of social polarization, it implies that there is no project of social integration, a place in the world, for the majority. In other words, the powerful minorities, protected by the control of institutional and economic mechanisms, are reinforcing their status and position, while the majority is being pushed out of the system.

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Over two decades ago, the German sociologist Ulrich Bech predicted “the brazilianization of the West”, in reference to the fact that the privileged classes, the economic and social elites of the Latin American country tended to live in private residential areas guarded by security guards, in the manner of medieval castles, while the disintegrated majority lived in chaos and violence outside in endless *favelas*, from which the state, with its police, administration and legal system, was retreating.<sup>8</sup> In a certain way, in the Europe of 2025, and if we look closely at urban transformations - as well as educational transformations and the proliferation of urban and school ghettos - this prophecy would be coming true. A change that goes in parallel with the erosion of the welfare policies that characterized the continent between 1945 and 1973, although they continued with a certain inertia until the end of the twentieth century.

And, maybe, the global education crisis has too much to do with that. If the school, as an institution, had been designed in contemporary times as a space for labor training and incorporation into citizenship, according to a series of rituals and clear norms (adaptation to artificial environments, obedience, obtaining technical skills necessary for the environment of an industrial society) and meritocracy (individual success linked to the internalization of norms, acquisition of formal knowledge and the capacity for social adaptation and cultural assimilation), at the present time, conventional school institutions are becoming an anachronism, and what is worse, in their present form they no longer have a clear purpose. What is the purpose of school in 2025? Currently, we are witnessing debates on methodologies, on the role of teachers, on changes in calendars and timetables, on what to teach in the curricula... but we have not been witnessing the main debate for a long time. What is the purpose of school? Probably, and I am thinking about Schwab and his ideas, the only place they are thinking about it is in the opaque halls of the Swiss resort of Davos.

For this reason, in education, beyond the recurrent lamentations, we are witnessing an era of confusion and uncertainty. Nowadays, educational centers tend to be anomic (there are no longer clear or defined rules, beyond a collection of slogans plagiarized from self-help books included in their ed-

ucational project); meritocracy disappears (diluting the concept of success and failure at school), socialization tends to individualization and atomization, and the adaptation to social demands is no longer made by the student, but the institution adapts to the student's will (or lack thereof) of effort. This is how the school becomes a "no place", in terms of the anthropologist Marc Augé, in the sense that it is perceived as an undefined space, of passage, without personality, nor clear rules, nor a shared purpose. Indeed, confusion is the feeling that a good part of the educational community senses in this type of new educational (dis)order. Confusion, for example, in the role of professionals: Are they teachers or are they leisure monitors? should they teach content or should they coach? should they focus on training activities or should they attend to bureaucracy? should they set a bar to determine success, or should they relinquish their power and authority? We could say the same about the students: should they blend in with the growing demands - training themselves in the face of increasing and often contradictory social demands - or should they pursue happiness? And the school, is it an educational space (in all its dimensions, especially the academic dimensions) or is it a space of confinement? (the main ongoing controversies have to do with the extension of school hours and school calendar). Is it a passage into adulthood with all that comes with respect to growing responsibilities and demands, or is it an area in which the recreational and educational aspects are confused and mixed? Is it an institutional or informal space?

Measures such as the school uniform are yet another Macron-type action, which does not address the real debate. In recent years we have been talking too much about methodologies, cultures of effort, inclusion, prevention of early dropout. We talk too much about the who (the functions of each educational actor), the where (the space), the how (methodology), the when (school time), even the what (curriculum), and we have neglected the essence: the why?, the purpose, the aim. As long as we are unable to resolve these questions, educational systems in the West are sinking, often amidst sterile controversies. And perhaps this is the great pending debate.

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<sup>1</sup> From the early years of this century, a significant part of European regions have seen their population increase, usually due to the net contribution of immigration, and this generally leads into instability in family, social and economic life, which usually leads to poorer educational outcomes. In the case of Catalonia, a paradigmatic example, the population has increased from 6.17 million in 2000 to 8.07 million in 2024, an increase of more than 25%, which has unbalanced resources. During the same period, other countries such as Austria have seen their population increase by 11%; Denmark, by 9%; Finland, by 7%. The Netherlands has gone from 16 to 18 million, while France, from 61 to 68.5 million.

<sup>2</sup> Attal became prime minister for a very short time. During the spring of 2024, President Macron dissolved the chambers and lost the elections, which implied a phase of political instability that prevented the implementation of a good part of the maximalist proposals of an Attal who ended up losing all political prominence. Furthermore, it is clear that in France there is a growing problem of teacher recruitment. It has become commonplace in the current decade to find more vacancies than candidates for the public teaching competitive examinations. It is becoming common to see determined efforts to convince willing candidates to become teachers in difficult neighborhoods (*banlieux*), so far without much incentive and without much success.

<sup>3</sup> The assassination of teacher Samuel Paty, in 2020, at the hands of Islamists, for having shown cartoons of Mohammed in a class on freedom of expression, created a great social impact and a feeling of total loneliness on the part of the teaching profession which, beyond political declarations, has not obtained any support from the educational authorities. Threats by radicalized students have fostered an atmosphere of self-censorship and fear among education professionals, to the point of avoiding addressing issues such as the theory of evolution or international conflicts. As a matter of fact, it is noted that French teachers, traditionally leftist, are beginning to show more and more support for Marine Le Pen (25% according to an IPSOS survey in 2024).

<sup>4</sup> Christophe Guillaud, *La France Périphérique. Comment on a sacrifié les classes populaires*, Flammarion, Paris, 2014; Les Dépossédés, Flammarion, Paris, 2023.

<sup>5</sup> "Intelligence quotient drops 7 points in each new generation and technology could be to blame", Infobae, 18-VI-2018.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ub.edu/portal/web/gr-grepps/inici/-/detall/seminari-capitalisme-digital-i-educacio>.

<sup>7</sup> Klaus Schwab, *The fourth industrial revolution*, Debate, Barcelona, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Ulrich Beck, *World Risk Society*, Polity Press, 1999



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## HUMAN RIGHTS AND DISCOURSES: IS IT DEFINABLE FINALLY?

### **Introduction**

The popular discourse of human rights shows it in poor light but the idea of human rights is much more beyond that. It has been asserted that human right is standing on soft conceptual grounding and it has been just reduced to rhetoric. Many philosophers and legal theorists see the rhetoric as just loose talk and human rights with less intellectual strength and less strong teeth. It seems that human right activists seem more concerned with changing the world rather than interpreting it. The reluctance on the part of activists is understandable given the urgency to respond the terrible sufferings (Sen, 2009). But, despite all of this, society is unimaginable without the provision of rights. A right in its acute sense means the liberty to pursue one's own conception of good. It entails claim to those good needed for one's well-being as opposed to merely the liberty to engage in one's own pursuits..

### **Understanding Human Rights**

The concept of human rights has emerged from the concept of rights. There have been many western scholars with different sets of theory of rights like John Rawls (1921-2002) and Robert Nozick (1938-2003). In the liberal-individualistic theory of rights, Ronald Dworkin has given new insights. Dworkin in his work *Taking Rights Seriously* (1978) attempted to create a new theory of politics based on the adequacy of moral

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rights. Marx has regarded rights as a bourgeois concept and described at length that how rights are linked to politics and seems abstract (Gandhi, 2007). Louis Henkin observed rights as 'claims' rather than charity (Verma, 2002).

Existence of human rights has a long history. Philosophers traced such ideas back to classical Greece, in particular to Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, also in some respects to Confucius in China. Even it was in India since Veda, Upanisad and other religious sects and texts since thousands year back. In a common concern of these philosophers was to finding way to achieve a society in which people were able to live fully human life.

Even contemporary understanding of human rights has emerged during the modern period in Europe especially in 18th and 19th centuries. Say for example, at the heart of Kant's approach was the values of human agency and autonomy. For Kant, all human beings are of equal moral worth, with all being entitled on these grounds alone to moral dignity. Kant argues that all people have an ethical duty to each other, to act in a ways that respect and uphold humanity.

All the debates and theory has generated the ground of human rights. Now let's move from the concept of rights to human rights.

Human rights have been understood as 'basic moral guarantees that people in all countries and cultures possess simply because they are human'. Human rights are universal in nature. The moral doctrine of human rights aspires to recognise the fundamental prerequisites for each human being for a good life. This aspiration has been reflected in various declarations and legal conventions commencing with Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) followed by the European Convention on Human Rights (1954) and the International Covenant on Civil and Economic Rights (1966). These three documents constitute together the centrepiece of a moral doctrine of human rights (Gandhi, 2007). Jack Donnely has regarded human rights as the new standard of civilization (Verma, 2002). Hence, human rights are inalienable and inherent rights of humans. Let's now move to Indian context of human rights and its legality.

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### **Complexity of Human Rights**

Baxi (2005) has articulated at length what constitutes human rights. He says that there is no simple answer to a clear question: what are the rights of human beings. He further says that in defence and justification of human rights, we have produced “complex and contradictory discourses”. Even the global consensus on human rights values serves as poor guides in translating idea into law or practice. In his book, *The Future of Human Rights*, Baxi (2005) has made us familiar with the complexity in the meaning of human rights and described human rights as: (a) ethical imperatives; (b) grammar of governance; (c) language of global governance; (d) insurrectionary praxis; (e) juridical production; (f) culture. It actually highlights the ambiguities in conceptualising and practicing human rights. But few scholars like Amartya Sen (2009) has tried to understand this dilemma and mentioned that “the framers of Universal Declaration in 1948 clearly hoped that the articulated recognition of human rights would serve as a kind of template for new laws” (p. 359). The emphasis should be on new legislation not just mechanical interpretation.

### **Human Rights**

The Indian Constitution is in congruence with United Nations charter, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and several other international covenants as they all lay emphasis on human dignity. The constitution of India assures dignity of the individual which is a core value in its preamble. Even the constitution of India was drafted at the same time as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that is why, it has resonance of similar provisions. This becomes obvious when we look at the Part- III of the Indian constitution and articles 2-21 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Part-IV of the Indian constitution which contains Directive Principles of state policy also has reflection of articles of 22-28 of the UDHR. So, it can be said that Indian constitution has enormous scope to protect and promote human rights and the Supreme Court of India has been at forefront to protect the human rights inherent in fundamental rights. The importance of fundamental rights can be imagined by that is not only available to citizens of India but



also non-citizens and it establishes the relevance of rights in the times we are living.

### **Human rights in the 21st century**

Baxi (2005) has mentioned that twentieth century of the Christina Era (latter half) is hailed as an age of human rights but what about twenty-first century issues of human rights. It has been asserted that human rights discourses are much about civil and political rights which constitutes first generation of rights. Though first generations of rights are necessary prerequisite for a just society, but they do not reach to the point of social justice. Hence, a shift towards second and third generation of rights is required (IGNOU, 2010). There is also a growing concern towards overhaul of the conception of human rights. Ife (2001) has proposed reconstruction of human rights towards the post-modern context.

There seems to be a stark paradox between promise and practice. Everyday there is a story of human rights violations, leave alone the unreported. It seems the dignity and respect has no meaning in contemporary life and has thrown to winds. Gandhi (2007) says that “the preponderance of different institutional frameworks and social systems along with inadequate resources make it impossible to comply” to national and international conventions (p. 139).

### **UDHR and Three Generation of Human Rights:**

World War-II and creation of Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Devastation after World War II, UNO had created Universal Declaration of Human Rights to provide the guidelines to states to follow and to protect the incidents of human rights violations.

**First Generation HRs:** Civil & political rights such as right to vote, practice religion, freedom of speech, equality before law.

**Second Generation HRs:** Social, cultural and economic rights such as, right to food, clothing, shelter, housing, employment, health, education.

**Third Generation HRs:** Community and collective rights such as, right to social and economic development, express own's culture, to enjoy natural world free from pollution.

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## **Human Rights Narratives:**

### **Some Questions**

Through the above discussions, it is pertinent to reflect upon some valid questions which might be debated to intellectual forum. But, we must try to find out some answers through analytical and reflective thought process. And I think and argue that as intellectuals, we must try to do that. The questions are as follows:

### **Whether development of human rights is a process?**

There has been tremendous growth in human rights over the past thousands of years, incorporating religious, cultural, philosophical, and legal developments over time. All human beings are entitling to certain rights simply because of their existence; those rights are known as human rights. These rights survive for all humans equally, universally, and indefinitely. According to Kant, human beings have a unique intrinsic value that cannot be found in inanimate objects. Violation of a human right is therefore an act of disrespect for the value of human life. Human rights are a concept that has evolved continuously throughout history. (Fasih, F., N.D.)

Human rights demand to acknowledge and take into account everyone's self-respect so that everyone is protected against ill-treatment that sabotages their self-esteem, and has access to the opportunities needed to recognize their full potential, free from discrimination. Human rights development is a process in which people's options are clarified and human capabilities provided. In addition to the government, individual citizens must act as guards to ensure the rights are protected. Every country needs human rights for development and stability. These rights have become even more important in our technologically advanced world as they protect people not only from the ill effects of change, but also ensure that they can use certain benefits as a citizen of the country. (Kapur, A., 2019)

Human rights have been negatively and positively impacted both in the past and in the present. As technology progresses, one must ensure they use these rights logically. Human rights play an important role in deciding the kind of future we want as we move forward into the 21st century. Recent human rights are characterized by state sovereignty

and promote liberty and the right to property, ideas that complement life in liberal societies. It is therefore, important that human rights shape the development of new possibilities. Human rights are regarded as a codification of moral behavior that is the product of human social evolution (associated with Hume's theories). According to the sociological theory of law and Weber's work, human rights are also seen as a pattern of rules. Different approaches define society, such as the notion that individuals accept rules from legitimate authority in exchange for security and advantages – the concept of a social contract. (Wikipedia contributors, 2022) Therefore, human rights are an evolutionary process that began to reform the concept of security.

In order to ensure adherence to a universal standard of acceptability, great importance has been placed on international conventions and their implementation. These principles are gaining importance not only because of globalization and the introduction of new technology but also because they protect human beings from the ill-effects of change as well as ensure that everyone benefits equally. Science and technology advancements, in particular, pose large risks that can severely hinder the implementation of human rights if not handled carefully. For example, in the field of biotechnology and medicine is particularly in need of incorporating human rights into their ethical codes and ensuring that basic human dignity is upheld under all circumstances. For instance, when organs can be transplanted from the living and the dead, various issues arise such as consent, defining death to prevent premature harvesting, and ensuring that all children are eligible for transplantation. A key aspect of this Convention is that it puts the welfare of the human being ahead of the welfare of society and science in order to deal with these issues. In spite of this, many countries in one or more ways are violating human rights and disregarding basic human dignity, raising questions about the efficacy of today's mechanisms. Politics, power equations, and other factors often prevent the wrongdoers from being held accountable. Violations of this type, when they are not checked, are prone to increasing in frequency and intensity, typically because the perpetrators believe they will not be punished. (Fasih, F., N.D.)

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### **Can UDHR be valid for all time?**

The Second World War remains the deadliest conflict in history. The 1948 adoption of this magnificent and noble document was a result of not only the horrors of war and genocide, but also the economic depression of the 1930s. As a result of a growing demand and recognition by all countries, there was an impetus for developing a framework to prevent the atrocities that took place during the war as well as the terrible hardships that preceded and followed it. Consequently, the UDHR was intended to cover the entire spectrum of human rights: civil, political, economic, social, and cultural. (Green, C., 2018)

In the age we live in, the key question is why are human rights abused and ignored repeatedly throughout the world? It is quite impossible to universally enforce these rights or to punish transgressions despite being highly authoritative and respected, the UN and the UDHR are mere declarations, not hard laws. Some critics considered that it's naive to think that human rights are a giver in a world where state interests are so powerful that the UN is mostly responsible for monitoring and investigating violations but can't force states to change laws or compensate victims, because the UN can only observe and probe violations but cannot force states to change their policies or compensate victims. Human rights laws are defended by others as vital because they provide international standards and help activists with their campaigns. Moreover, they explain that not all International Human Rights are powerless, for instance, the European Convention for Human Rights, which established a code which 47 member countries and their citizens could use to bring cases. The court issued binding decisions and each member state must abide by them. (Chisvo, L.C., 2020)

The significance of a declaration depends on how strictly it is adhered to. A universally endorsed document like the UDHR certainly has influence, and it can change the behavior of actors who might otherwise appear to stand against history and civilization. In addition, citizens and the international community can use it as a normative weapon to shame hypocrites who violate the principles they and every nation in the world have agreed to. Even so, it is simply a document, and unless it is backed by strong international insti-

tutions that assure implementation and compliance, it is unlikely to have a significant impact. UDHR and all other UN declarations are aspirational. The principles embody ideals and goals, but by themselves do not provide a framework for the achievement of these goals. The UDHR does not include any mechanism for monitoring progress or supporting the implementation of its aspirations. Despite universal acceptance of the declaration, the reality is that the people enumerated in the UDHR still reside within states and that each state remains sovereign. Human rights defenders can try to change laws and policies to implement these principles, but states are ultimately responsible for institutionalizing these principles. State volitional implementation and enforcement of human rights protection is fundamentally flawed in any international declaration. (Ozler, S.I., 2018)

While the road to progress is not always clear, it is clear that rights must advance together. Some rights cannot be privileged over others. A world without free speech or self-determination, in which everyone is materially comfortable and cared for, would be unwelcome. In the same vein, we are against a world in which people have the right to vote and assemble, but do not possess the basic economic necessities to exercise them. Human beings are endowed with a variety of fundamental rights that are listed in the UDHR. By recognizing some rights and ignoring others, the entire project is undermined. (Ozler, S.I., 2018)

Therefore, in the natural law perspective UDHR is valid all time since these rights are inherent to the human race but practically its validity remains in the hands of the state powers when we specifically talk about the document.

### **Do we need to focus on the social or the biological nature of human beings?**

There are many different approaches to psychology today, including one in opposition to another. Biological psychology, for example, tends to emphasize the relevance of genetics and biology. As opposed to behaviorism, which emphasizes the impact of the environment on behavior? Historically, debates about the relative contribution of nature versus nurture have been one-sided with one side bringing up nature the biological factor as the most significant factor and the

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other bringing up nurture the sociological factor as the most important aspect. Today, most experts realize that nature and nurture are critical factors in determining human development. Not only that, but they also realize that nature and nurture interact in many ways throughout life. Descartes and Plato are two philosophers who thought certain things were inborn or arose naturally regardless of environmental influences. (Cherry, K., 2020)

According to natives, all or most characteristics and behaviors come from inheritance. All of our characteristics, as well as our behaviors, are attributed to evolution according to advocates of this approach. Individual differences are influenced by the genetic traits passed down from the parents. Other thinkers such as John Locke believed in *tabula rasa*, the notion that the mind is a blank slate. In this theory, everything we are, as well as all our knowledge, is shaped by our experiences. (Cherry, K., 2020)

According to empiricists, all or most behaviors and characteristics can be attributed to learning. Behaviorism is an example of an empiricism-based theory. Behaviorists believe there are no actions or behaviors that cannot be conditioned. According to John B. Watson, people could be trained to do and be anything regardless of their genetic makeup. (Cherry, K., 2020)

For example, Heritability is studied in twin studies, which are common in nature versus nurture research. Studies involving twins have examined identical twins who share 100% of their genes and nonidentical twins who share 50%. Within these studies, twin sets are reared separately and together in order to evaluate their characteristics in both like and alternative environments. Studies of twins are conducted to determine whether nature or nurture plays a greater role in development. Research revealed that nature and nurture influence traits differently. A study found that personality and religiosity are influenced by half genetics, whereas intelligence is influenced by 75% genetics and 25% environmental factors. (Perry, C., 2020)

Environmental influences can influence certain characteristics. Parenting styles and experiences can have an effect on how a person behaves. For example, observing other children's aggressive behavior might teach one child to say,

please' and ,thank you.' Another child might learn to be aggressive by observing older children on the playground engaged in violent behavior. A popular empiricist theoretical approach within psychology is Albert Bandura's social learning theory. This theory contends that people learn from observing others' behavior. Bandura demonstrated through his Bobo doll experiment that children could learn aggressive behaviors simply by observing others acting aggressively.

The vast majority of people in modern times don't share the extreme perspectives of nativism and empiricism. As a result, they do not view from a nature-versus-nurture perspective. Instead, the two views are considered "AND" one another, such that they cannot be separated. They play off each other. A particular trait will not necessarily be expressed due to genetics or environment alone. A person who consumes high amounts of junk food and rarely exercises, for example, may avoid heart disease due to their genetics counteracting their unhealthy lifestyle habits. Activating certain genes requires specific environmental conditions. (Cherry, K., 2020)

According to most experts today, both nature and nurture play a role in influencing behavior and development. Even so, the issue continues to be a contentious issue in many areas, for example in the debate on origins of homosexuality and influences on intelligence. The degree to which environment and biology influences behavior is still a subject of debate among experts and researchers despite the relatively low prevalence of extreme nativist or radical empiricist opinions. A genetic factor interacts with another factor, an external factor such as a social experience or culture, as well as the interaction of genetic and external factors. In recent years, more researchers are focusing on understanding how genes influence environment, and vice versa.

### **Do human rights have to be expanded or redeveloped?**

It is true that human rights have slowly become widely accepted since the mid-20th century, and many people are now aware of how they can be used when they feel threatened. While these rights have been around for a long time, the contemporary understanding of them can be traced back mainly to 1948. During this time, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) came into effect. As a result of the

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devastation caused by World War II, this document sought to facilitate a new world order. All people are born free and equal. In a nutshell, it ensures that states protect such rights as the right to life, to freedom from torture, to work, and to a sufficient standard of living.

Over the last few decades, these promises have been embodied in international treaties, such as the 1966 International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and in regional instruments like the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights. Recent years, however, have seen states reconsider their position. Donald Trump has flouted international human rights commitments in the US during the first months of his presidency, most notably through a controversial travel ban targeting travelers from mainly Muslim countries and refugees. Since the Paris terror attacks of 2015, France has been in a state of emergency which heightened security and police powers. (Henery, M., 2017)

According to reports, in India sexual assaults against women and girls, including those with disabilities, increased in 2012. Police sexual abuse in custody has yet to be investigated and prosecuted by the government. Former world champion swimmer Pinki Pramanik was arrested on rape charges in June 2012. Her rights to dignity, dignity, and privacy were violated as a result of the mistreatment she received from male police officers and the “gender determination” tests they conducted. A video showing some of her abuse has been released. (Kalita, B., & Medhi, B., N.D.). Many more similar cases can be found all over the world.

People are calling for the Human Rights Act to be scrapped in the UK. Also, the issue of whether the UK should retain human rights protections after leaving the EU is uncertain ahead of Brexit. In a world where human rights are undergoing rapid change, this raises important questions about what they are and how they should be governed. When should these rights be adapted to meet our current needs? How should future human rights be structured? Human rights are no longer tenable as they were conceived in the 1940s and 1950s. Human rights need to be reassessed and redefined. If not, the government may impose it on us.



As Utopian ideals, human rights provide a model for thinking about what we want our future to look like. The post-war foundation of the organization was built on this element, which is still important today. Nevertheless, an alternative vision need not be incompatible with liberalism, capitalism or Statism, as was the case with human rights during the 1940s and 1950s. The current instruments of human rights were defined by states and uphold the constitutional rights to property and to individual liberty, ideas that are compatible with life in liberal, capitalist societies. It is possible to imagine a new utopia using human rights instead. In order to address the problems of the present we may need new ways of living, of being, and of constructing society. During the 20th century, these approaches were often used to think about societies that displaced the state as the center of the economy. Human rights could be defined and protected collectively by the people rather than by the government. Human rights need to be viewed as collective rather than individual rights. This would help us think about ways to structure society that go beyond a focus on individuals, which is characteristic of liberal and capitalist paradigms.

In order to achieve this, members of a group may be empowered to assert their human rights rather than as individuals. In the context of indigenous groups and cultural identity, this concept has been employed, but it could be further developed to conceptualize other issues in a collective manner. Consider, for instance, that rights may be used to begin considering healthcare as collective, with various protections and responsibilities held and discharged in relation to others as opposed to purely individual rights. These actions would produce a modern Utopian vision of rights, based on very different relationships from those in which we currently live. To make the right changes for today's world, human rights must become tools to fuel critical debate and discussion in the present. They must help to create an entirely new vision of the future rather than repeating that of the past century. As a result, human rights can emerge not as something of the past, but as an integral part of the future. (Henery, M., 2017)

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### **Can human rights be universalized?**

In a pluri-cultural multipolar world universalization or having a universal definition of human rights is in itself a big question today. Human rights are not simply an exclusively Western concept – ignoring the very different cultural, economic, and political realities in other parts of the world – as some claim. The international conventions of human rights do ignore the customs, socio-cultural and religious patterns of the third world countries to a great extent. The concept framed also spurs questions of duality and puts individuals into a dilemmatic position, for example, in 1993 Bombay bombing Yakub Memon was convicted over his financial involvement in the bombings that took over 257 lives, this particular case left the opinions divided wherein most people upheld the human rights of the ones who suffered majorly from the bombings and thus wanted Yakub's punishment for the same while on the other hand there were a different bunch of people who defended Yakub's human right and were of the opinion that punishing Yakub with a death penalty would be a violation of his human right. Hence, upholding one's human rights might lead to violation of another's leading people into a confusing state.

Another challenge to the concept of universalization of human right is of cultural relativism. Some of the human rights norms that the West considers universal are not applicable to other cultures. According to this argument, human rights are a product of Western culture and therefore should not be applied to other cultures. For example, in the Indian culture the Vedas tend to believe in duties more than rights while in the African Culture community living is encouraged more. Therefore, placing more importance on individual rights rather than community rights is what again is not acceptable to be in the defining parameters of Human rights.

Human rights are just the façade for US interests, claims Samir Amin (2004, 78). In the context of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, concern about neo-imperialism and human rights has risen strongly, since the US has not promoted human rights in Kuwait despite being there for decades. This clearly points towards the limited conceptual definition that the west had imposed on other countries. There is an argument among developing nations that some human rights, such as the right

to political multiplicity and paid vacation time, do not apply to their societies – in this case, the right to equal rights for women. Some societies consider „universal“ human rights to be little more than an attempt to impose alien Western values on them, rather than simply believing they cannot provide certain rights to all their citizens.

On the religious front, there are examples of countries that had different opinions regarding human rights according to their religious belief. For example, as far as Saudi Arabia is concerned, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights violates the precepts of Islam according to them, and the Islamic law of Saudi Arabia protects more human rights than the Declaration. This is the reason why Saudi Arabia did not comply with the concept of human rights as laid by the Western world.

### **Conclusion**

With the concept of human rights, the notion of development evolved; de-colonization and self-determination progressed in tandem with the desire to improve the standard of living of subject populations. When confronted with a billion human beings who are starving, underprivileged, suppressed, troubled, uneducated, and unemployed all over the world, the idea that human rights may be guaranteed simply by lacking government interference is unsustainable and indefensible. I am sure that there can be no debate as to the fact that social and economic exploitation are just as evil as political or racial persecution. We need a deeper & logical understanding and thought process of human rights and more progressive development. The universality of human rights depends on their compatibility with cultural differences, ethnic values and religious concepts, universalism should not be seen as a ‘fixed’ platform rights and community (culture) can and should “coexist”. I also feel it is the ultimate truth about it. Hence, a definition per se of human rights though theoretically might be possible but practically one needs to consider all the above mentioned aspects before coming to one particular definition which then can be universally circulated and implemented thereafter. ‘Hope is truth’, let’s hope truly.

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**DR. MAHİR KONUK**

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## HUMAN AND HUMANIZATION AS A FORM OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP

As an object of research, human existence and the process of humanization are the direct concern of many scientific disciplines in their universal time and space holism; particularly in anthropology, archaeology, paleontology, as the most well-known ones... Common characteristic of these scientific disciplines, which are more concerned with the overall human existence in the universe, is that they have generally researched the forms that the human existence and the process of humanization, which expresses the continuity of human existence and its continuity in time and space, have adopted towards the past and/or the far past. Hence, it is not a coincidence that when laypeople hear these disciplines mentioned, they immediately think about Lucy, the “humanoid” Lucy who stood on her feet 3.1 million years ago, or the painter who painted the figures in the Lascaux cave some 70,000 years ago and “signed”<sup>1</sup> them as if to indicate that they were the product of an individual or individuality. These disciplines, as their research objects suggest, define the current process of humanization and the state of being human as a finished process.

It is also possible to make the human being and its form of becoming an object of research through the science of sociology, which, in its most general definition, is concerned with “human society”. However, in the concept of “social relations”, which is the subject of sociology, man and the pro-

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cess of humanization are not discussed in a direct way, as is usual, but in an indirect (implicit) way. That means: Every type of human relationship that exists in various forms must be recognized as a natural part of the universal and emergent human by itself (*en soi*); that is, every type of “social relationship” is a concrete human relationship, but a form of “human social relationship” independent of them is not conceivable, or such a state of relationship is not envisaged. Thus, for the sociologist, a human individual is traditionally defined through **relational forms** in which he or she is defined and identified in society, like the citizen, voter, worker, capitalist, soldier, teacher, student, Turk or Frenchman, proletarian or bourgeois...

In contemporary conditions, in a society like France, which is withdrawing from the stage of history and which bears all the institutional, political and ideological characteristics of a bourgeois society shaped by the capitalist system; everything related to human beings is no longer defined as **generally valid and continuous**, as in the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” and in accordance with the principles of Liberty-Equality-Fraternity that flowed from the Great French Revolution. In other words, the social relations shaped from top to bottom in the form of the “Nation State” in French society, which is seen as a “historical model” for the societies of the world, seems to have lost much of both its universality and its “humanitarian” quality. The Great French Revolution, which was a revolution of unprecedented magnitude in history and which took place with the mobilization of all classes and strata in society, has not only lost its “socialist” character, which it already had in a limited way due to the fact that it was a “bourgeois revolution”, by decomposing and dissolving, but has also come to the end of its continuity. We are witnessing all this destruction and annihilation happening at a time when the dominance of the bourgeoisie has reached its peak with the globalization of capitalist capital and the situation of the working people has deteriorated to a level comparable to what it was at the beginning of capitalist society. The bourgeoisie, together with capital, which has now lost its socialization character to a great extent, and which has always tried to exist through capital, can only show a continuity in time and space that only a corpse can have in the “vegetative state”

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it has fallen into, by confiscating the wealth that it had previously produced and that was socialized and written into the households of all humanity as “earned rights”. The capitalist system and bourgeois society, having lost its own future, now exhibits a genocidal mode of existence by consuming the future of all humanity; in other words, all humanity is sacrificed for “a little more longevity”...

In the present world dominated by the globalized capitalist system, the understanding of man and humanity that is not defined according to the principle of “liberty-equality-fraternity” is a form of understanding imposed on the entire globe. As a consequence, “solidarity” (Durkheim), which structures all kinds of social relations, is not considered within the framework of the institutionally defined “legal right”. The concept of “legal right” has been replaced, at home as well as abroad, by a system of aid that not only maintains the “social distances” between individuals that have emerged as a direct consequence of the social organization of the capitalist system, but also absolutizes these distances: **“Humanitarian aid”**. The concept of “humanitarian aid” as it exists in social practice describes a type of relationship that does not have a legal, in other words, a structural basis in society, but rather is realized for psychological reasons such as “feeling of pity”, and is not specific to the person in need, but to the person providing the aid. Since it is not an earned right, but a bestowal of grace, it does not have a continuity over time. Such examples of solidarity, which are described not as “human rights” but as “humanitarian donations”, do not directly participate in the socialization of individuals, as they are not the product of social structuring, and are in fact a form of activity called “othering”.

As a result, the concept of “humanitarian aid”, which has taken the place of the concept of “human rights”, aims to keep the relations with “Others” on the agenda not in a social nature, which means in the long term, but in a momentary psychological nature, as in the “feeling of pity”, and as a one-off event. Likewise, this concept is an attitude that aims to maintain existing distances, to keep the “others” permanently on the periphery of humanity, and thus to prevent the integration of humanity on the basis of universal rights. The fact that the “French Doctor” (Bernard Kouchner) who was the



instrument of such “humanitarian aid” scenes, later became the interior minister of a “Socialist” President (François Mitterrand) during the genocide in Rwanda, and that France’s responsibility in this genocide is being questioned, cannot be explained by “coincidences”.

We can briefly summarize what we have said above as a hypothesis that we can use to interrogate social practice as follows: Under the capitalist system, human beings and the process of humanization express themselves as “social distancing”. However, when we talk about the reaction to the “social distance” that exists in the capitalist system with a class social structure, we are confronted with two types of human figures that do not overlap with each other, but rather contradict each other. The first of these is a definition of humanity that preserves the existing “social distance” and even increases it given the power capitalism has nowadays to destroy-annihilate; the second one is a definition of humanity that aims to eliminate the social distance in question. These two definitions also express themselves in accordance with the contradiction between capital and labor that creates difference.

Our hypothesis, which we have formulated by taking into account the internal connections of the phenomenon we call social distance, is an empirically demonstrable hypothesis. Indeed, when we examine the information we obtained from the field research we conducted in France towards the end of the 1990s, we witness that the social distance arising from class structures has increased in such a way as to cause anthropological destruction and disintegration. The most prominent example of the unilateral and continuous increase in social distances during the last half-century of the capitalist system, first in a protracted period of crisis and then in a period of total collapse, is the massive and irreversible elimination of social integration as defined in the Durkheimian sense. In this article, we will first analyze the consequences of the elimination of the possibility of “social integration”, which - although it is now more dependent on new survey results - has a certain social practical implication.<sup>2</sup>

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### **The outburst of individuality or “lifeline”**

What leads us to the identification of what we call the “outburst of individuality” is the identification of the impossibilities that young individuals from the new generation, who have achieved individual success by fulfilling the condition of “having a higher education” that enables social integration to take place according to the official narrative, face in the social externality when entering the adult world, and the determination of the identity fragmentations in individual interiority. A “total social event” (*le fait social total*)<sup>3</sup>, which we also call an “outburst of the lifeline”, is a series of events with many components that come together in the historical conditions determined by the capitalist system:

1) Social externalities are no longer a whole that is constantly enriched and diversified by the participation of new individuals (social integration). Instead, social externality has become either a “black hole” that destroys individualities by fundamentally stripping them of their qualities; or it has become a mechanism that, despite its position of “externality” in relation to individual interiorities,<sup>4</sup> sends individual existences not towards the future but back to their recent and distant pasts in their own search for identity, that is to say, it has become a mechanism that continuously produces regressivity. The natural consequence of this situation is that the existing social distances, which have emerged as a result of the capitalist system’s orientation of human society, are at least preserved in absolute terms and turned into impenetrable walls by continuously increasing them in the historical process.

2) However, the formation of a social “black hole”, which can only be explained in terms of the situation of the capitalist system, brings with it an anthropological phenomenon of disintegration and destruction, which directly challenges the continuity of human existence and the process of humanization. This event itself represents the divergence of two components of the process of humanization: Individualization and socialization. Hence, the divergence between individual interiority and social exteriority, which complicates and often even removes the possibility of establishing an existential identity balance, manifests itself in the extremes observed in the behavioral patterns of individuals: The state

of “over-individualization” of individuals who cannot be socialized enough -due to the disappearance of integration- in order to satisfy their search for balance despite their continuous individualization, and the transformation of this state into a form of overly individualistic behavior that is continuous over time; on the other hand, the state of developing an overly socializing line of behavior in search of balance against the imposed over-individualization...

3) The divergence of the processes of individualization and socialization also expresses itself as the dissolution of the dialectical unity of human time and space. Disintegration is best observed in the life course of the individual and the phenomena observed there, which are decisive in determining behavior patterns: The dissociation of the three moments of human time, past-present-future; the possibility for human space to constitute a single space that realizes social integration, as expressed in global society, disappears and is replaced by what are defined as “social institutions” (Durkheim), such as the family and the school, and/or by social class or local and ethnic communities. Between individual interiority and social exteriority, they are the product of the identity balance that individuals strive to establish in order to overcome the state of excess that arises from the divergence between individualization and socialization, and thus express the urgent need for socialization and individual integration.

During our surveys, we observed four main types of identity equilibrium emerging as products of this endeavor: Community, family, school and global society. Every identity structuring also corresponds to a type of relationship that is continuous in social time and space and structures the relations that the individual develops with “others”. Two out of the four identity structurings that emerge associate the individual’s identity with the established order, and in this case, relationships for individual benefit in the present are at the forefront: Global society and family identity structuring. In the communitarian structure, the norms of the relationship with the individual’s distant past are decisive and the interests of the community organization to which the individual feels he/she belongs are at the forefront. In the case of school identity structuring, the structure is entirely based on establishing a future-oriented relationship, and the quality attrib-

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uted to the “other” in a direct relationship is linked to the fact that he or she is primarily human. Hence, in this identity structuring, the human and humanization are not “implicite”, or indirectly involved in a relationship established by the individual, but “explicite”, that is, they are directly involved in the relationship and determine the nature of the relationship with the involvement of the individual’s will.

The results of our field observations from a quarter of a century ago can be briefly summarized as follows: **1)** Human and humanization, as a type of social relationship that binds individuals in a society like France, which is determined by the world capitalist system, does not emerge in the “center”, that is, in the established order that governs society, but in the “periphery”, that is, in the form of behavior determined outside and even against the behavior determined by the center (School identity polarity). **2)** Since the development of the capitalist system has stalled and tumbled into a long-term crisis, and as a result, the periphery has moved much further away from the “center” in the process determined by the fact that it has become unable to respond to the integration of individuals in the so-called “social progressive” -post-World War II - period, the fact that humanity has been pushed to the periphery and humanization has been pushed to the social structure formed by the working people is much more “explicite”, that is, “self-evident”.

The field research results, which we have summarized in two points, led us back to the verses of the “Anthem of the International” and the famous text, the Communist Manifesto, written by Marx and Engels, in which the principles of class struggles are discussed. In this way, since the early 2000s, we have been able to observe and make sense of the economic, political and social repercussions of the reality we have observed in a relatively narrow field when it comes to the development of different societies around the world.

### **The end of the capitalist system, the beginning of human society**

We have to emphasize: When we address human and humanizing phenomena, we treat the individual and the social, the “individual interiority” and the “social exteriority”, or the subjective and the objective, as components of a single

reality, the human reality, at the same time, without reducing them to each other. For this reason, we will attempt to become conscious of what is happening concurrently in social externality in order to deepen our understanding of the phenomenon of the “outburst of individuality”, which is indicated by the bundle of facts we have gathered from the field and which manifests itself as a phenomenon more related to individual interiority.

According to our conception, “social externality” is not only something objective - and/or structural - **granted** to individuals, but also something created collectively by individuals through the activity of producing their own conditions of life. As something “granted”, social externality has structural features and therefore, since it has a continuity in human time and space, it also shapes and determines the behavior of individuals. However, like all structuralities, it is also **something done**, since it cannot renew itself without external intervention, and therefore it has a nature that is bound to change. The social structures, as we know, observed in the 5,000 years of humanity since the Sumerian period, have been shaped by social classes that have been successively formed over long periods of time in response to the changes in productive forces and “class struggles”, and as such, they are “granted” structures.

Since it responds to the necessity of “being human” or “becoming human” in time and space as something created by individuals through labour, social externality as a “something created”, which has a “transcendental” quality despite the successive class structures, will determine the future of the whole we call humanity to the extent that it determines its beginning. Social externality as something “created” the future of humanisation and determines its dimensions; in this sense it is always one step ahead of the “given” social externality in time and space. Social externality, structured by the existence of social classes, is structured through class contradictions as a granted externality. The continuity of such a “given” structure is bound up with the historical destiny of the working class, whose historical mission is to abolish class structures as a whole.

In contemporary societies, structuring follows a path dependent on the movement of capitalist capital aiming at

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unlimited accumulation. In addition to that, the capital has structured the “created” sociality, which exists at the disposal of the bourgeoisie, the ruling class, but which is realised by the working people, in accordance with its purpose, but it is not capable of creating a new sociality itself. All that capital can do is to be an instrument for the act of creating sociality. For this reason, **“bourgeois society” is not a human society in the strict sense of the word, but a “society-like” formation.** A human society or, to adapt it to our own conceptualisation, a “social externality” will always be realized through the labour mobilisation and social production activity of the working class; the fact that this is realised under the rule of capital and in the capitalist system can only be a historical accident that must be remedied in the course of time and space. Capitalists are also involved in this process in which sociality is formed and realised at the same time, in which human beings continuously reproduce their own existence, by purchasing “commodified” labour with their capital, which does not produce any value in itself, and in the meantime they have only one goal: **Unlimited capital accumulation.**

The condition of existence and also the future of a society structured by the capitalist system depends on the realisation of production activity in such a way as to ensure the continuity of capital accumulation. Moreover, to attain this goal, it will have to continuously revolutionise the means of production, in other words,<sup>5</sup> it will have to invest much more capital in the purchase of means of production in the production activity (unchanging capital) than in the purchase of “living labour” (changing capital), which gradually leads to the accumulation of capital.<sup>6</sup> As a result, the “unlimited accumulation of capital”, which is the reason for the existence of capitalist capital, will also prepare its own historical end, and by moving away from production, which can no longer provide it with this opportunity as before, it will endeavour to ensure the “maximum profit” either through speculative methods or by confiscating the historical rights of the labouring class in various forms, as we observe today, this condition can only allow the capitalist system, which has objectively reached its historical conclusion, to exist for a short period in a “vegetative state”.<sup>7</sup>

The fact that the capitalist system is experiencing its own historical end has consequences for the process of humanisation and human society, which also have implications for individual interiority:

1) Capital, which, by withdrawing from the production activity that creates the necessary conditions for human existence since it cannot provide the maximum accumulation aimed to sustain its existence, causes the space of socialisation of the same individuals to shrink and even to be eliminated to a great extent, thus deals a fundamental and fatal blow to humanisation. The capitalist system, constantly excluding human beings from productive activity (the end of 'social integration'), over-individualises human beings to such an extreme that it is unable to socialise them to the extent that new forms of sociality emerge, ideological (neoliberalism), political (liberal fascism) and economic (global domination) obstacles prevent the continuity of humanisation in time and space, and drive human beings towards their historical destiny of extinction. To paraphrase it in a familiar way, the capitalist system, which has turned into a "black hole", eliminates human existence together with itself to the extent that it eliminates human sociality.

2) The "human annihilation-extinction" that takes place in the time and space structured by capital also reveals itself through the fundamental rupture seen in the processes of individuation and socialisation, which determine the process of humanisation through the dialectical relationship between them. The capitalist system, like a black hole, continuously individualises and socially dequalifies human individuals who are drawn towards it in a unilateral way, and in the same way it also carries out the rupture from human society, which gives individuals their qualities through socialisation, and, most gravely, it prevents the continuity of the process of humanisation through the creation of new forms of sociality.

3) The anthropological breakdown that took place under the capitalist system in the process of humanisation and the hosing down of human society by the capitalist system, which turned into a black hole, created the problem for individuals to exist despite everything in new historical conditions. In this situation where socialisation is turned into a problem, the pre-condition of existence is made dependent

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on the question of how the social externality that is being destroyed will be resolved in time and space. As we can observe very clearly in the recent parliamentary elections in France, one of the most important strongholds of the capitalist system, three main tendencies indicate that this question is being concretely answered in three different ways.<sup>8</sup> **The first tendency** is the ultra-nationalist and racist tendency represented by the Le Penist party, which sees the traditional sociality of the past and even the distant past as a reference point, but poses no obstacle whatsoever to the continuation of the capitalist system in its current form. **The second tendency** is the so-called “Macronist” tendency, which favours the continuation of the neoliberal structure as it exists, and in any case foresees the continuation of extreme individualism. **The third main tendency** represents the ideological and political tendency represented by the “New Popular Front”, which claims that the established structure, which has been “given”, must give way to the new structure, which has been “created”, and to that extent envisages a new form of social organisation in the future. As can be understood, **these three main tendencies, which are clearly observed in France, indicate that the three moments, past-present-future, which determine time, are also in a state of decomposition.**

4) In addition to this, another new divergence, reflecting class contradictions, emerges in the form of the three main tendencies we observe, the “given” political structure in the past and present, formed by the supporters of Le Pen and Macron, who see each other as mutual “subcontractors”, and the “created” political structure, which is naturally owned by the “creators”, that is, the labourers. In this political and ideological divergence, the process of humanisation is represented and practically carried by those in favour of the “created” construction.

### **The end of class societies, the liberation of the humanisation process**

The historical circumstances experienced by humanity, as reflected in individual interiorities and social externalities, indicate that class social structures are incapable of carrying the process of humanisation and therefore pose a fundamental danger to the whole of humanity. The human history, defined in a process of social structuring that spans



approximately 5 thousand years and varies over time, bears witness to the fact that humanity has been able to progress by untying the knots formed by class structures crystallised in a certain mode of production one by one by the labourers as a result of class struggles.

The capitalist system, which is the last of these knots that we can directly observe to be coming to its end, also exhibits a distinct characteristic from the previous knots in the sense that it makes the continuity of human existence in the universe a problem. This brings a different mission to the agenda of the struggles of the labouring masses, who continue the process of humanisation by constantly recreating the conditions of their own existence, “untying every knot” and overcoming every obstacle. In other words, the labouring masses have carried out their class struggles, which also bear the burden of the “humanisation process”, by linking their class struggle to the outcome of the traditional struggle for “seeking rights” and “expanding their living space”, that is, by subjecting it to their own class interests. However, nowadays this struggle is objectively linked to the struggle for the fundamental liberation of the humanisation process from the capitalist system and class social configurations.

In conclusion, the foresight expressed by Marx and Engels as “The working class cannot save itself without saving all mankind” (Communist manifesto) has now overflowed from its theoretical plane and has become a practical problem to be solved.

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<sup>1</sup> As is known, this act of "signing" took the form of drawing the pattern of the hands, the organ that also created human existence in the universe, next to the paintings.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed and illustrated breakdown of the survey results, please refer to our books "BALANCE and REVOLUTION" (2018) and EXIT LINE (2020) published by "EL Publications".

<sup>3</sup> As is well known, we owe this concept to Marcel Mauss (*Essai sur le Don*), who was also Emile Durkheim's nephew. Very briefly, this concept refers to a social event whose existence has a decisive impact on the individual internalities of all members of a society, and which is also decisive for the meaning of other events occurring in the social exteriority. According to the anthropologist, "making a donation" or "giving a gift" is one such event.

<sup>4</sup> We define the concept of "identity" as the basic quality that the individual shares with "others" in order to make sense of his/her own interiority and that provides continuity to his/her existence -or life line- over time and space.

<sup>5</sup> "Capitalism cannot survive without the continuous development of the means of production" (K. Marx).

<sup>6</sup> Marx, in Volume 1 of his 'Capital', describes this situation, the tendency for the share of "changing capital" in total capital to steadily decrease in relation to "unchanging capital", as the phenomenon of the "historical decrease of capitalist rent".

<sup>7</sup> Marx evaluates this situation in relation to the contradiction that has always existed in the capitalist system between the productive forces, which are the sphere of investment of "unchanging capital", and the relations of production, which are determined by the labour-capital relation, which is the sphere of investment of "changing capital". The present situation in this relationship is as follows: The gradual shrinking of productive activity in proportion to the increase of unchanging capital in relation to changing capital brings about the abolition of bourgeois sociality, which, in our opinion, already has a "society-like" character

<sup>8</sup> We had the opportunity to explain our opinions on this subject in detail in an interview with Osman Çutsay in the online publication "For a new Republic", under the title "The 1789 Revolution did not resurrect in France". This interview was also published by "Yazi Portal".



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## THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) AND EDUCATION

The United Nations (UN) defines the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as "an action plan for people, planet and prosperity, which also aims to strengthen universal peace and access to justice". The UN General Assembly - composed of Member states- approved unanimously this plan in 2015, which contains the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

These **goals** include the eradication of poverty, the end of hunger, the promotion of health and well-being, education of quality, gender equality, access to safe drinking water and sanitation, access to affordable and clean energy, and the promotion of inclusive economic growth.

One of the key goals of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda is to engage new generations in sustainable development. We always say that young people are the future. And, unquestionably, the children of today will play a decisive role in designing the world we will inhabit tomorrow.

All these statements would be a good move forward to confront the great inequality, poverty and wars in today's society, as well as to combat climate change and its consequences. Nevertheless, the very same governments that committed themselves to these objectives are the ones that maintain policies that go in precisely the opposite direction and that are, in many respects, totally contradictory. Therefore, goals which are completely necessary and desirable, become totally useless.

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### Contradictions

More industrial growth is proposed to reduce poverty, which implies more extraction, production and consumption, which is totally contrary to stopping global warming. What we need is less consumption and a greater distribution of wealth. What we need is less consumption and a better distribution of wealth.

It points to growth to reduce **poverty**. However, growth does not reduce poverty, but rather increases inequality, and inequality is the greatest source of poverty. They suggest no further regulation of banks or markets and **refuse** to call for debt cancellation, despite the fact that the debt is worth more than \$700 billion a year to developing countries, money that could be spent on poverty reduction.

It is recognised that we are facing a **climate emergency** and that stopping global warming would require a 6% reduction in CO2 emissions from fossil fuels, but every year it is increasing by 1% instead of decreasing.

People talk about the need to save forests, but in the Amazon 17% of forests have already been lost and there is no talk of any measures to stop it.

It also proposed an increase in **extensive agriculture**, forgetting that this is one of the biggest emitters of CO2. Agro-exports also mean that some foodstuffs travel over 4,000 km from the farm to the fridge, we have to think about the energy involved in doing so.

**New Technologies** are used as a salvation, without mentioning the water and energy consumption they entail. It is estimated that two Data Centres alone consume the water consumed by 28,000 households. This is also the case with the so-called “**energy transition**”, with electric cars needing a large amount of minerals (lithium, cobalt, etc.) for their manufacture and their large batteries. These minerals are only found in some countries, where children are already dying in the mines, as in the Congo.

The “**ecological injustice**”, which tells us that we are not all equally accountable, is ignored. In fact, the richest 1% emit as much CO2 as two thirds of the poorest. So the richest 10 % emit 50 % and the poorest 50 % emit only 8 %.

All of this has negative consequences, especially for the poorest people, who are also the ones who suffer the most.

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Global warming reduces precipitation, and without rain there is no water, and without water there is no food.

It is proposed to **strengthen the peace**, but military budgets are being increased, weapons are being sent to continue the war in Ukraine and the countries with the most power are not capable of stopping genocide such as that which is happening in Palestine and in some African countries.

### **Goals in education**

The SDGs agenda places great importance on education and argues that better education leads to an earlier exit from poverty. They also stress that education is the key to achieving the other goals: poverty reduction, peace and sustainability.

But in reality, very little progress has been made and in 2018 there were still 260 million children (mostly girls) out of school. More than half of the world's children are not meeting the literacy and numeracy standards, and if things continue as they are now, by 2030 there will be 84 million children out of school and 300 million without the basic skills to thrive.

It is obvious, and we all agree on this, that education is basic, the problem is:

In a world of constant war and cruel genocide in Palestine, how are we to educate for peace? How can we hope that our students will learn to resolve their conflicts without violence if the world tells them that violence is what resolves conflicts.

How can we educate to stop climate change if there is no action against the corporations and the richest people who are causing the environmental disaster? We cannot mislead our students by telling them that if they consume less water and throw plastics in the recycling bin they will stop global warming.

How can we educate for equality and cooperation if those in power do not eradicate inequality? How to educate about gender equality and against gender violence, if the right-wing parties (increasingly in the majority) deny it, if the social networks are full of sexist videos and messages and children watch pornography from the age of 8?

### **What to do?**

What can education do in such a situation? What are the consequences of education? How can we encourage ideals

and attitudes in our young people that can help achieve some of the goals outlined in the SDGs?

It is necessary to educate, organise, fight and provide an education in values. Because, as stated by Paulo Freire, "education cannot change the world, but it can change the people who will change the world".

We must fight privatisation, school segregation and lack of equal opportunities. We should fight to decrease arms budgets, which promote war, death, pain and destruction, and increase budgets for public education.

And we should provide education that promotes peace, equality, non-discrimination, solidarity, indignation in the face of injustice and the conservation of nature.

To this end, it is necessary:

- Less screens and more teachers. Presential education allows socialisation, learning through interaction and teaching content that helps to understand the world and to improve it. Screens make it difficult to learn and acquire a critical spirit, and social networks increase isolation in our young people, isolation, dependence, rapid access to pornography and false information.

- To transmit knowledge that helps to understand how the world works and gives tools to be able to change it.

- Educating for peace, talking about the inhumanity of war and helping to prevent violence and discrimination. It is necessary to explain to them that wars are not fair, that they are always in the interests of a minority, but that the vast majority of those who have less money and less power always pay.

- Educate individual behaviour that implies respect for nature, reducing consumption, increasing recycling, and opting for a healthy and ecological diet. Make them aware that the world belongs to all of us and that if we do not take care of it, a future full of disasters awaits us. Infinite growth on a finite planet is quite impossible.

- To transmit values of solidarity, anti-racism, feminism, cooperation and indignation against all kinds of injustice and violence.

- To encourage involvement in society, participation in actions and organisations fighting for a better world and to put pressure on governments and companies.

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**In conclusion**

It is important that boys and girls graduate from high school and university with the conviction that it is necessary to fight against all types of violence and that human rights must be defended, that they do not get used to the idea that wars and massacres are normal, that they do not become insensitive to the pain of others, that they are concerned about the destruction of the planet and its consequences, and that they are capable of becoming indignant in the face of injustice and violence. They should feel solidarity with people who suffer and want to get involved in stopping all types of aggression, wars and violence.

This should be the ethical mandate of all people involved in education. Because the goal is not to educate so that tomorrow, our students will "adapt" as well as possible to an unjust, violent world, full of injustices and inequalities, but so that they will have information and knowledge that will allow them to understand how the world works and have the elements and the will to improve it.

This is the only way we can help meet the goals set by the SDGs" for a better future.





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## EDUCATIONAL DIGITAL EXTRACTIVISM: DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY FOR SALE

The right to education should also include the right to a democratization of the digital world, which means recovering technological and digital sovereignty and placing it in the hands of the common people.

Nowadays, human beings not only communicate in an analogical way, but more and more frequently in a digital way, through technology and online communication. Therefore, human communication cannot be held captive in the hands of a few multinational technology companies that decide and establish the limits and definition of how, when and with whom we can communicate.

### **Democratizing the digital world**

Democratizing the digital world involves regaining the technological and digital sovereignty that has been seized from us by capitalism in a massive robbery and assault on the common good, financed moreover with public money, to put it at the service of the interests and profit of a few BigTech shareholders who want to dominate, colonize, control, monetize and exploit the digital world as it has been done with the material world.

Digital sovereignty means that we as a society should be able to set the direction of technological progress and put technology and data at the service of the people. It also means

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focusing technological development on addressing the most pressing social and environmental issues of our time, starting with the climate emergency, the energy transition, and education and public health. Democratization of data, citizen participation and democratic control of technology in the service of society and the common good. However, it looks like this demand is far from the collective consciousness (Parcerisa et al., 2024).

Big Tech or GAFAM, an acronym for the US tech giants Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple and Microsoft, which have monopolized the technology and digital communication market, with their narrative of modernizing an education anchored in the last century are pushing their definitive assault on education, proclaiming the imperative need for public-private collaboration to manage the education of the future and turn it into a business space, into a new market niche in the expansion of capitalism. They demand a new hybrid management (public-private: parasitization of the public by the private) under the control of a supposedly “innovative” digital educational technology controlled by? ....who?.... by private Big Tech corporations. Who is constantly pressuring us to buy more products, of higher and higher ranges, which contributes not only to increase dependency but also to further increase inequalities between students and families?

International congresses, high impact journals, influential “think tanks” or recognized research projects, receive donations and philanthropic funds to create a “narrative”, to build a vision of a desirable future in education thanks to advances in technology, invoking “technological solutionism” as a panacea for education (Jasanoff, 2015). This vision, specifically political and acting as a powerful normative and aspirational vision of social order, now unites the traditional neoliberal approach to education as a factor of economic development, linked to the theory of human capital, together with the introduction of private management practices in education with the application of “new public management” and “hybrid governance” (Díez-Gutiérrez, 2020), with that of the expansion of digital EdTech. A story that transforms the conception of education, once considered a right to be guaranteed by public authorities, now progressively turned into a business space and confluence of a new public-private hybrid management

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and an “innovative” digital educational technology controlled by Big Tech.

The change witnessed by us is linked to this story of technopedagogical solutionism. Under the excuse of “pedagogical innovation”, they launch viral marketing campaigns announcing changes and re-evolutions in education, using the mantra of adapting it to the 21st century and to the demands of the future market, automating processes and lowering costs by replacing teachers with algorithms that will know before we do what we are going to do. It is not that they are watching our future, but that they are conditioning our present so that, when the time comes, we will behave as those who design that future imagine.

Big Data, Artificial Intelligence (AI), digital platforms and cloud technologies will bring us the modernization of an education anchored in the last century, they proclaim in this reissued “savior narrative” of technological solutionism as a panacea for education. The big backers of EdTech are pushing their final assault on education, promoting a hybrid governance that proclaims the imperative need for public-private collaboration to manage the education of the future.

### **Digital capitalism and education**

We therefore witness how digital data, software code and algorithms are mixed with specific political agendas related to educational governance, commercial interests of large conglomerates, business ambitions of venture capital funds and corporate objectives with philanthropic marketing, which allocate huge amounts of economic investment to create new ways of understanding and imagining education and intervene in it, as if it were a new market niche and expansion of capitalism (Haddad & Reckhow, 2018). They are already in control of the informal means of construction of collective thought (Netflix, Walt Disney, Fox, MTV, etc.) and they also control the formal means of socialization of future generations and exploit a big business that moves many billions of dollars a year.<sup>1</sup>

The new neoliberal slogan in educational management reads as follows: “new policy follows private innovation in the management of the public sector”. Privatization in the guise of innovation. This is the re-edition of the classic pub-

lic-private partnership or joint management, where the public sector ends up becoming a niche for the private sector to extract and obtain profits. However, today, in this re-edited post-modern narrative, it has been polished up and given a coat of varnish, stating that the idea is to make decisions “jointly”, to guide public policies and decisions from the “innovative principles of the private sector”, with the direct participation of the “qualified” leaders of civil society, the new philanthropists of capitalism (sponsors, banks, foundations, venture capital funds...) who have already proved their worth by succeeding in the management of capitalism and now want and demand to apply their recipes to the public sector and to guide its management appropriately.

This slogan is now framed in the context of digital governance. Digital technology makes possible a new kind of governance which, according to its prophets, “attends and listens better to citizens” and “lags behind private innovation” (Ortega, 2019), easing the necessary evolution from the “homo videns” of the analog society, to the “homo instagram” of today’s digital society. They sell it as “inductive governance” or governance “from below”, which is added to and complements the governance of the States.

In the midst of this struggle, almost without noticing it, we have been displaced from the context of the debate. The discussion no longer focuses on what education we want, what is the purpose of that education. It’s focused on how: how to manage, how to organize, how to digitize, how to innovate... Assuming in this way that it is already decided what good education is, why educate and for which school is this digital governance proposed to us. An increasingly neoliberal “how”, but at the service of an increasingly neoconservative “for what”. Putting the logic of the private interest and profit based on the market and the business world in substitution of the democratic logic of the common good in public education, as if it were inevitable and acceptable.

Digital capitalism<sup>2</sup> wants control and domination of the last remaining frontiers of the public spaces yet to conquer: our information in the form of data to predict behavior, a common and essential good. Big Tech, neo-feudal landowners of the new digital economy that follow the centuries-old extractivist, capitalist and colonial logic of extracting and piling

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up the gold of the 21st century (our information), are taking control of our digital sovereignty by extracting and selling data.

We are the business: to extract information from students, in order to turn schools into a factory of data and marketable information about present and future customers to whom they want to build loyalty. In this way, the digital era has become yet another chapter in the history of capitalism, which has commercialized the human experience for profit by translating behaviors into data in order to make predictions that can be bought and sold.

Big Tech have thus managed to conquer the digital infrastructures of schools, the servers, the cloud, the applications that only function on their platforms. They cover software, hardware and cloud storage, and have become so powerful that many centers and universities outsource the management of their services to these servers (e-mail, storage, etc.). Students, starting from an early age, become familiar with their environments designed by Silicon Valley and learn with them the skills required for the future digital marketplace and for the consumption of their products.

Initially launched as the educational innovation of the future, the big technology multinationals are rubbing their hands together with this new expansion of the “EdTech ed-business”, which affects millions of students and brings them huge profits. Hundreds of millions of euros are spent each year on the cost of not only the platforms, but also on the cost of each operating system, plus each license for the corresponding student software. We should add other licensing costs, such as anti virus, which is indispensable for private operating systems (and unnecessary for free software) and which requires annual updates per user, that continue to add up to the multinationals' profit account, on top of the cost of all the rest of the applications.

This makes us rethink whether innovation and improvement of education is not being shaped by the business opportunity for a few private multinationals. Furthermore, as Adell (2009) says, it is surprising how large technology companies not only condition (or dictate) the government agenda for educational technology, but also the professional identity of many “Edtech” teachers who, for example, include their corporate «certifications» in their social media profiles.

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We cannot forget that all digital technology implies an ideology (Watters, 2020). The progressive introduction of educational technological platforms into classrooms implies an adaptation of educational communities to the structures previously designed by large technology companies. The artifacts have political configurations inscribed in their design<sup>3</sup> that manifest themselves in use (Rivera, 2019): “when an AI system designed in California comes into contact with the Global South, it brings with it the designers' assumptions about how education should be organized, how evidence-based policy should be made, how teaching should be practiced, and how learning should be conceptualized” (Williamson, 2019, XV).

Moreover, with the introduction of digital platforms, the work of both teachers and students is intensified regardless of time and space, as long as there is connection (Sen, 2020), increasing more and more unpaid digital labor (“Free digital labor”). As mentioned above, it transfers, in an “Uber style”, to the teachers themselves the costs of means and resources to develop distance education from their homes (including electricity, internet, computers, etc.).<sup>4</sup> We become more productive without relocations and departures (Estévez, 2020). Relations in such digital environments are apparently founded on trust and collaboration, but nevertheless, rigorous disciplinary control systems that continuously “monitor” prevail. Which generates an artificial relationship away from the emotional and vital aspects of coexistence and face-to-face relationship in an educational space. The loss of the view and the end of the “studentship”<sup>5</sup> as a way of life (Agamben, 2020). The structure created by them subordinates the dynamics of the center to technical standards and bureaucratic compliance protocols that support and account for the actions carried out (given the mistrust expressed by the educational administrations about the reality of the work carried out in a non-presential setting). They establish “new management systems” founded on the accomplishment of standards and constant accountability for them. A path that, as concluded by Pardo et al. (2018), leads inexorably towards the phenomenon of *uberization*,<sup>6</sup> promoting a more technocratic and managerialist organization.

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But now, the world's most powerful technology companies, the Big Tech, are taking a step further and, with the excuse of pedagogical renewal, are mobilizing viral marketing campaigns that announce to change and re-evolve education (Ostrowicz, 2019), under the pretext of adapting it to the XXI century and to the demands of the future market, automating processes and lowering costs by replacing teachers with algorithms. So, whoever puts their applications in the customized education market of schools, if they have a physical presence in a few years, will have the best source of extraction and collection of information and data, trends and desires, detected with artificial intelligence algorithms that will record the activity of each student,<sup>7</sup> in order to educate the future generation of consumers (Cancela, 2017). There is a need to expand dependence on its technological tools and control over data. Although they are no longer satisfied with extracting personal data to identify preferences and recognize profiles of potential consumers; they seek to go a step further: to influence and decisively shape desires and behaviors (Alvarez, 2019).

The global education project promoted by Silicon Valley, a cocktail made up of the philosophy of Netflix, Uber and Pokemon Go, aims to extract students' academic data, their particular educational background, as well as their trajectory and preferences, in order to predict and personalize educational matters (based on little more than the behaviorist stimulus-response model, which already began in the 1960s with the "Skinner Teaching Machine"), progressively replacing teachers and educational communities with technocratic artificial intelligence systems, which are responsible for monitoring, measuring and scoring the results of students, who supposedly "learn the lesson" with the help of online video games developed by augmented and virtual reality systems (McDowell, 2017).

These kinds of customized learning applications are currently among the most commercialized and controversial Ed-Tech applications. These applications evaluate the probable learning profiles of students by collecting big data to classify individual learning styles and then target appropriate learning activities to those students. Known under various labels (personalized learning, student-centered learning, and adap-



tive learning), these are promoted by EdTech companies and foundations, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Chan Zuckerberg Foundation (Regan & Jesse, 2019).

Making people «measurable», creating situations so that educational standards can be measured by very reduced categories and then digitizing it.<sup>8</sup> This is the motto of programs such as *Open Education Resources*, where Google has invested a good deal of money. Or likewise, Blockchain technology, known for being the one on which the Bitcoin monetary system is based, which is currently being sold as a way to turn online education into a business through «decentralized platforms in which teachers can charge for teaching in proportion to the recognition acquired in the community» (Reig, 2018), which, according to its advocates, represents a “democratization of meritocracy”, in no case, of course, an uberization of educational precariousness.

These projects seem to be an excuse to extract information from students in order to turn «digital schools» or «start-up schools» (Williamson, 2019) into a factory of data and marketable information about present and future customers to whom they want to build loyalty (Fueyo et al., 2018). Furthermore, with certain digital infrastructures embedded in education systems and the lives of students reduced to a set of data, the finance industry will have ideal conditions to speculate and gamble on the future prospects of any child, school or district. *Goldman Sachs* is already suggesting a kind of public contract, in which the private sector pays for the implementation and development of these programs, and then receives money, depending on what the State supposedly saves as a result of being provided by the technology companies.

### **For a democratic digital sovereignty**

This digital capitalism of platforms (Saura et al., 2024) consolidates an image associated with a digital future that seems unavoidable, centered on global educational digital platforms, collection of big data on student behaviors and preferences, the development of artificial intelligence (AI) to “automate” educational work, or the exhortation to young people to become apprentice data analysts and programmers (Williamson, 2019).

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The basic problem here is that the pressure from the Big Tech industry to increase profits based on EdTech capitalism ignores, or omits, the most basic thing about new technologies and pedagogy: that the introduction of «gadgetry» alone does not change anything that happens inside classrooms or develop a country's possibilities for free access to knowledge and culture. Furthermore, it may mean the loss of control of the data generated, the adoption of forms of work based on individualization, behavioral control or basing learning on the mere sequencing of content (Fuentes-Alpiste, 2019).

So we are back to where we started. Digital capitalism is creating a narrative of salvation and revolution that has little to do with reality, but rather with the control and domination of the last frontiers of capitalism: public services. These are the last far west they have left to conquer (the rest of the planet has already been converted to the "one creed") and are key sources of profit extraction, if they manage to convert them definitively into commodities and commercial value.<sup>9</sup> What is at stake is the ownership of our information, a common and essential good, forgotten or silenced in current political analyses, which is being hijacked by Big Tech, neo-feudal landlords of the new digital world-economy that have taken control of digital sovereignty (Morozov, 2018). The algorithmic organization of the millions of data that digital corporations steal from us to sell to governments gives them unprecedented power. In this way, the digital era has become yet another chapter in the history of capitalism, which has commercialized the human experience for profit by translating behaviors into data in order to make predictions that can be bought and sold (Zuboff, 2019).

It represents the new digital governance imposed on us, where, public-private hybridization becomes public subordination and dependence on the private: digital platforms continue with the centuries-old extractivist, capitalist and colonial logic of extracting and accumulating the gold of the XXI century,<sup>10</sup> enough data on the entire population to develop their artificial intelligence systems, generating a system of dependence and submission of a large part of the governments elected by the citizenry. EdTech online learning platform providers that are racing to conquer the new market of "consumer educational technologies," where

"companies must no longer even assume that a trained teacher is available for the learning process" (Koenig, 2020).

Therefore, as stated by Cancela (2018), the solution does not involve controlling techno-totalitarian watchdogs (Morozov, 2018) or becoming an opponent to a future of public education in the hands of private digital technologies and infrastructures, outside of democratic control (Williamson & Hogan, 2020), as some have proclaimed. The question is whether we think that education seeks to build collectively and in a shared way, to learn together and to help children discover that the common good is much more than the sum of individual interests, something that goes far beyond productively juxtaposing students in front of computers (Meirieu, 2020). Therefore, to "storm the skies" it would be necessary to start with the socialization of the cloud and the development of public digital infrastructures,<sup>11</sup> in other words, to place the new means of digital production in the hands of the commons, as the old Marx would say, in order to move towards the "socialization of data" as a public good and towards digital democracy.

It is certain that there have been attempts to develop transparent alternatives that guarantee the security of citizens in the digital environment and allow greater autonomy and independence from BigTech, such as the DD educational infrastructure developed by Xnet in Barcelona for the Democratic Digitalization of Education (currently at a standstill), or the proposal for an open data infrastructure promoted by Gaia-X2 at the European level (Parcerisa et al., 2024). But this is not sufficient. It's not only about data security and autonomy, it's about democracy, participation, control and the common good.

If the Internet is essential for many things in our lives, as it clearly is, shouldn't it be treated as a non-profit public utility commons? (Klein, 2020). In other words, we should move towards the post-capitalism or digital<sup>12</sup> socialism proposed by Mason (2016) or Morozov (2018). And education has a crucial role to play in this.

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mons, as the old Marx would say, in order to move towards the "socialization of data" as a public good and towards digital democracy. If the Internet is essential for many things in our lives, as it clearly is, shouldn't it be treated as a non-profit public utility commons? In other words, we should move towards the post-capitalism or digital socialism proposed by Mason or Morozov. And education has a crucial role to play in this.

For this purpose, as Xnet (2022) states, strategic steps can be taken to move in this direction: first, we must incorporate human rights and democracy as the foundation and horizon of digitalization in education (establishing legal guarantees for data and content sovereignty of educational communities; guaranteeing educational and pedagogical sovereignty over the corporate and commercial interests of large technology companies; and promoting and encouraging within the educational community the knowledge of digital rights as fundamental human rights). In the second place, we should consider the public administration as a competent subject that guarantees digital rights (starting with the proactive promotion of democratic digitalization and digital rights in education with the deployment and practical use of auditable digital infrastructures; or ensuring that all software technologies promoted and/or financed by the public administration are open source, among other measures). In the third place, we should critically consider all parties involved in digital society and education to ensure digital and pedagogical sovereignty, including technology companies, non-technology companies and organized civil society (such as UNESCO, the OECD, the World Bank or Big Tech) as agents that also intervene with their own agendas directly or indirectly in digital education. Furthermore, it should be based on an integral digital concept and digital literacy; incorporate, finance and provide the digital infrastructures of educational centers as the axis of educational policies and strategies, and support open knowledge.

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<sup>1</sup> The “edTech” sector will reach 10 billion Euros by 2030. In 2018, it already set a record: 8.200 million, up from 1.400 million invested in 2014, according to a Barclays report on EdTech (García, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> “Digital capitalism is the phase of the economy in which the market is driven and energized by digital platforms that generate new cycles of capital accumulation” (Rivera, 2019, 79).

<sup>3</sup> The programs and algorithms that bring to life the platforms accessed through an application have been built on the assumptions of the rational behavior of a person that not only seeks its own interest, but also distrusts others (Alvarez, 2019). New technologies are guided through financial interests that make them essentially a tool for consumption (Meirieu, 2020). The use of artificial intelligence started out more focused on building tools for war than for the welfare of humanity (Noah, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it increases the degree of exploitation and the transfer of costs to the workers, since through teleworking, capital not only appropriates an increasing amount of time of our lives, but also part of our domestic space and a set of objects and tools that until yesterday were for personal use, in addition to that, they facilitate the segregation of workers who lose social support and union relationship because of competition between them, etc..

<sup>5</sup> “Universities were born in Europe from student associations —*universitates*— and they owe their name to these associations. The life of the student was, above all, a way of life, in which studying and listening to lessons were certainly determinant, but no less important were the meeting and the constant exchange with the other students, who often came from the most remote places and gathered according to their place of origin in nations” (Agamben, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> Online education is the solution, as it is more efficient, more comfortable and more sustainable, says Juanjo Amorin, founder and president of Edix, an online education institute that offers in Spain the first careers focused on training digital professionals in the world of education, such as Digital Educator or EdTech Expert. According to Amorin, the solution lies in redefining our educational model through technology. Every day we will realize that this is a kind of career path where you create your own MBA, your own career, because technology will allow for tailored, on-demand training, says Amorin (Gonzalez, 2020). Fang (2020) also advocates the “uberization of education” through digital networks as a form of “liberation” and “on-demand” response.

<sup>7</sup> As Lafuente (2020) states, soon algorithms will know before we do what we are going to do. They are not looking into our future, but they are conditioning our present in order to make us behave, when the time comes, in the way as envisioned by the designers.

<sup>8</sup> Such tracking, monitoring, and classification of the tendencies of students using personalized learning, and the predictive analytics it entails, could be considered discriminatory given the possibility of perpetuating old biases and accentuating social stratification (Regan & Jesse, 2019) or prejudging students and increasing selection.

<sup>9</sup> This was announced in 1998 by the then president of Coca-Cola, within the framework of the Global Alliance for Transnational Education (GATE): “From an employers’ point of view, education is one of the largest and fastest growing markets (...). The sector resists technology, its costs are rising and there is too little competition. There is a widening gap between the demand for training and the capacity of higher education. Due to all these reasons, employers consider education as a large market to be conquered” (Sanchez, 2020).

<sup>10</sup> The big data is the so-called gold or new oil of the XXI century (Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

<sup>11</sup> Advanced artificial intelligence, which is built from humanity’s massive data collection, should be publicly owned (Morozov, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Putting the infrastructure and ownership issue at the center of the contemporary digital debate will not be easy.



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## THE PROJECT “EXTENSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHT TO EDUCATION” AND THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION: LIMITATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES

The Project “Extension of the Human Right to Education” arises from the articulation of multiple social actors linked to the field of education – universities, unions, national and regional non-governmental organizations, social movements, teachers and students, in 36 countries (up to the time). The objective is to “mobilize the world community and the United Nations” and, more specifically, submit to the General Assembly of the United Nations a document containing suggestions and alternatives for the progressive extension of article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR from now onwards), so that education is capable of strengthening peace and social justice.

In this essay, I intend to raise some questions that allow us to reflect on the limits of the UN in actually absorbing these recommendations, which involves not only possible conflicts of interest on the part of its member states, but also the very worldview of the UN, as an international bureaucracy emerged from a western hegemonial context.

Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, the UDHR enumerated the human rights already mentioned generically in the organization’s founding Charter. Among them is the right of every person to education. In order to guarantee this right, article 26 states that education must be free, at least at elementary and fundamental levels, and that “higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit”.

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Lindgren Alves (2013, p. 24) draws attention to the Western character of the UDHR, highlighting its Enlightenment heritage, like that of the UN itself. The author states the following:

Adopted in this way, without consensus, in a forum then composed of only 56 States, Western or “Westernized”, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was not, therefore, “universal” even for those who participated in its creation. Under these conditions, those who did not participate – the vast majority of today’s independent States – had more reason to label the document as a “product of the West”. (Alves, 2013, p. 24, free translation).

The mention of merit as a form of access to higher education in article 26 is an example of the liberal and western character of the UDHR. Meritocracy, as an expression of the universalist ideology, which supports the modern world-system (Wallerstein, 2007, p. 38), makes invisible the discrimination and exclusion of groups based on color, origin, gender, social class, disabilities and other markers, hindering their access to human rights, such as education, while legitimizing the privileges granted to those who ascend to certain positions supposedly by “merit” (Wallerstein, 2007, p. 40).

Universalism, operationalized, among other ways, by meritocracy, is important for the formation of a qualified technical staff capable of ensuring the efficiency of the capitalist economy and, therefore, the accumulation of capital – which is the ultimate purpose of the system (Wallerstein, 2007, p. 40). However, this meritocratic universalism is preceded by an anti-universalism (Wallerstein, 2007, p. 40), which ensures that universalism only applies to a specific privileged group of people while other groups are subject to subordination and exploitation inherent in a system based on capital accumulation and inequality.

In Brazil, a newspaper with large national circulation recently published an article with the following headline: “Blacks face extra barriers to enter a course of international relations”. In this specific case, knowledge of several languages and geographic distance – most courses are concentrated in the richest regions of the country – are pointed out as the main obstacles to the black population. In the same article, attention is drawn to the fact that, despite the quota policy adopted in public universities in Brazil between 2004

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and 2012 – when it became mandatory – the representation of blacks in universities is still low in relation to whites.

Obstacles in access to higher education for certain groups are structural and of an economic and social nature, intrinsically associated with the past and present colonialism and with the international capitalism system. As such they are made invisible by the liberal western order what is consistent with the text of the article 26 of the UDHR when it legitimizes meritocracy as an expression of universalism. The CoVID-19 pandemic made clear the precariousness of the right to education, especially among excluded groups and individuals, in the context of a system in which inequality is a pre-condition for its existence. More than an economic system, the world system (Wallerstein, 2007) needs to be understood in the Gramscian sense, which implies a symbiotic relation between an economic mode and a certain structure of hegemonic ideas (culture). Modern Western liberalism provides the ideological apparatus for capitalism, by naturalizing individualism, competition, meritocracy and the superiority of white western men. It is within this ideological framework that the United Nations operates.

From this perspective, it is important to question the notion of humanity underlying the Western liberal paradigm and what are the limits of universalism in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In 1976, the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights came into force, aimed at regulating the application of the rights recognized by the Universal Declaration (Alves, 2003, p. 48). It is important to note that, according to Lindgren Alves (2003), the creation of two separate pacts to deal with human rights was a requirement of Western countries, as they understood that they were dealing with two distinct categories of rights, the first one (civil and political rights) which were subject to jurisdictional collection and the second one (social, economic and cultural rights) which was not.

As a result, basic rights, such as the right to adequate food, to adequate housing, to education and to health, continues to be denied to subaltern and exploited groups in a very unequal system. That impedes them to exercise their individual rights and guarantees as well. This cycle reveals the continu-

ous reproduction by liberalism of the separation between two classes of human beings (Grovogui, 2006). On the one hand, the white western man, who has always been given the titular of human rights; on the other hand all the others who have their humanity more or less denied on the basis of the intersection among their color, gender, sexual orientation, origin, economic status and so on.

Those “subhuman” people are also represented by Paulo Freire (2019) in the figure of the oppressed, those subjects dehumanized and made to be less, a “distortion of being more, which is the “vocation” of all people, but denied to the oppressed “by the injustice, the exploitation, the oppression, and the violence of the oppressors” (Freire, 2019, p. 40).

Given this, the questions that arise are: How to define education? How to extend the human right to education in the context of a capitalist western neoliberal order? If education is to be defined in terms of emancipatory education that enhances the capacity of oppressed individuals and groups to claim the humanity that is systematically denied to them, as well as their economic and social rights beyond a legal abstraction, then the human right to education requires the disruption of the world-system in which the relations of inequality and subordination are structured. Considering the cultural and epistemological hegemony of the Western liberal paradigm reproduced by modern institutions – school, church, family and international institutions such as the UN – it remains to be seen to what extent the voices of peripheral groups and individuals on the matter will be taken into account by the Organization and by its member states.

It is important to point out that even though the UN General Assembly is made up of a majority of states from the Global South – using the term as the UN applies it to identify developing countries – the interests of those states and national elites do not necessarily reflect the interests of groups and individuals from the Global South. The concept of the Global South that I’m referring to here is not necessarily defined by state borders or by geographic criteria but by an identity built from the awareness of a common past (and present) of colonial exploitation and subordination as well as of resistance. However, this does not mean that the Global South is a homogenous or fixed identity. On the contrary, it is made

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of diversity and even contradictions, which makes the concept much more complex. That is why we have many “souths” within the South (Alden, Morphet e Vieira, 2010) and many “souths” within the North too.

That being said, I stress the importance of this broad articulation of social actors in more than 36 countries, many of them in Africa, Asia and Latin America, to discuss education as a human right in a critical perspective. The above limitations do not mean that they should not present a document to the United Nations, especially if we recognize not only the power of states in a territorialized world largely defined in terms of national frontiers, but also the important role of the UN in promoting and disseminating norms (in a broad sense) in such a world. Therefore, my argument is that this should be one of several goals of this big initiative. I believe that the greatest achievements of the project “Extension of the Human Right to Education” are to amplify the voices and perspectives from the Global South on the right to education, to promote the exchange of experiences and partnerships among social actors, for the creation and implementation, at the local level, of strategies for the promotion of critical education that reaches the most excluded and enhances their capacity to organize themselves politically to claim their humanity and their vocation to be more.

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## **CHAPTER IV**

### **SELECTED TOPICS & POLITEKNIK ARTICLES**



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# THE EXTENSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHT TO EDUCATION - UDHR ARTICLE 26

A POLITICAL AGENDA | A DRAFT

## **Framing**

The reflections and proposals presented here on the extension of the human right to education are in the context of the project “Extension the Human Right to Education”, which has now been established as an international network for almost a decade and connects organisations and individual activists on all continents of the world and brings them into dialogue with each other. The task and achievement of this project and network is to conduct an open dialogue in a radically democratic approach on the conditions and content that should be considered essential for a globally viable understanding of education and at the same time be able to transform this into an ongoing process of joint, democratic debate: Education is not static, but always a process in which all people can and must be involved. Although states and political organisations are responsible for the organisation of educational processes and must ensure that this is possible free of charge, the debates about education and its content must be conducted by all people in free and open discussion.

This draft presented here should therefore only be understood as a suggestion, as an impulse for everyone, not only in the network for the extension of the human right to education. It is an invitation to talk with each other, to develop ideas and perspectives that can then be presented to the United Nations. Also, in the context of a possible extension and or-

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ganisational change of the United Nations, it is an attempt to also represent those whose voices have not yet been heard.

### **Introduction**

The goal of Education should be enveloped in the essence of Human Rights, it becomes a very important aim of Human Rights to extend its components towards the education scenario. For instance, to protect the right to dignity and optimum development we must ensure that every child gets *Quality Education* which will not only protect their rights but also will promote the need registering oneself in schools and colleges. Therefore, we must need to pay attention to the constant calls of involving Human Rights into the present education curriculum.

Education is an absolute prerequisite for human life. Educational opportunities and educational processes must always be accessible to all, orientated towards the enjoyment of individual life as well as that of the community and society. Education must always be understood as an open and opening process that also includes the debate about education itself.

This requires a fundamental change in awareness and, in some cases, radical changes to power structures and opportunities for participation - as well as enabling these through education. Global problems require global solutions, which can only be achieved through philosophies, ideas, values and norms that are respected by all cultures and societies, as all people have a responsibility to the best of their knowledge and ability to promote a better social order both locally and globally (preamble to the human duties). This requires recognising the diversity of life forms - a diversity that is an enriching moment for humanity as a whole and for each and every individual.

Education means extension the nature given to all people equally through a culture that is directly one's own, but which can and must be opened at any time and in any direction. In the hope of enabling world-encompassing thinking - also and always in critical debate. It is a prerequisite for a life that is lived in freedom and yet is aware of the commonality in all differences. Seen in this light, education is inextricably linked to human dignity, i.e. also to being able to develop and realise one's own life in freedom and with others as one's

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own design. With knowledge and skills that relate to shaping the world and one's own self.

States and political organisations must ensure that education is open and accessible to all people. Education is not a private matter, even if it affects individuals and enables them to change. However, this must be ensured for everyone. Education must be freely accessible and free of charge at all stages of life to enable democratic participation.

### **Education then means:**

*Openness of thought and feeling*

*Knowledge of the natural foundations of our existence, globally and individually. The ability to deal with these foundations, especially in times of a global climate crisis that poses an existential threat to the lives of all and each and every one of us.*

*Education means being able to dispose of the cultural prerequisites of our existence, knowing them, including their historical development, being able to accept them, assimilate them and change them. These cultural preconditions must be seen in a comprehensive way; access to scientific and technical knowledge must be given, also and especially to be able to master and control technical developments. In this respect, education always has a democratising dimension.*

*Education goes hand in hand with openness to other ways of living, to different cultural ideas, to an exchange that enables shared experiences. No culture should be privileged in principle, not even one's own, but should always be understood as a model of living, thinking, acting and feeling that faces up to critical questions.*

*Education is realised as care by people for each other and around each other, always in the interest of their development and their good life.*

*Education means being able to speak. Without having a language at their disposal and without practising it, people cannot speak for themselves and their concerns. This means that people's languages must be recognised and legitimate, but that everyone must have the opportunity to acquire one of the politically and legally relevant languages - or to find the opportunity to present their own concerns in one.*

*Education can only succeed if all people can acquire, assess and apply knowledge. Everyone must be guaranteed the opportunity to acquire at least the basic skills that will allow them to access the available media. Knowledge must not remain exclusive.*

*Religions are among the central themes that enable human self-understanding and coexistence and propose rules for this coexistence. Religions are to be respected - but education also means that everyone has the opportunity to be critical of religions and to lead a life that is guided by secular ethics.*

*Political education is the core of education: human dignity, freedom and solidarity always depend on people being able to think politically and act consciously, also in the knowledge that different forms of life can be lived together in the tension between freedom and self-determination, care and concern for one another.*

### **Explanations and justifications**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is characterised by an important peculiarity when it comes to the question of what is to be understood as education - whereby we disregard the extent to which there are linguistic differences in the meaning of the terms used for education.

Article 26 "Right to education, educational objectives, parental rights" states:

1. *"Everyone has the right to education. Education must be free of charge, at least in elementary and primary schools. Elementary education is compulsory. Specialised and vocational education shall be generally accessible; higher education shall be open to all on an equal basis according to ability and merit."*
- 2) *"Education shall aim at the full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial or religious groups and shall favour the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace."*
3. *"First and foremost, parents have the right to determine the type of education their children receive."*

We are therefore aware that Article 26 urgently needs to be modified and expanded. Firstly, we will take a closer look at the categorisation of Article 26. Secondly, we will examine the questions: What does education mean in the current understanding? What must the organisational / social conditions for education be like? What are the contents and topics according to the key problems and key challenges? Thirdly, this then leads to recommendations.

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## **1 Classification of Article 26**

Article 26 follows Article 25, which regulates the right to an adequate standard of living and comprehensive social security, and - in the second sentence - lays down special protection for mothers and children and once again emphasises equal social protection for all children. Article 27 in turn stipulates the right to participate freely in the cultural life of the community and to enjoy the arts. (The second sentence of the article also defines the rights of originators.) It is also worth noting that Article 24 establishes the right to recreation and leisure.

Why is it important to emphasise this? One might think that the right to education seems rather subordinate, especially compared to the rights that emphasise the dignity of people, their freedom, their security and the possibility of being able to shape their own lives in safety - including in forms of work that apply to these basic conditions.

On the other hand, Article 26, paragraph 2 states that education "shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms". It is about contributing to and promoting "understanding, tolerance and friendship" through education. This makes it clear that Article 26 occupies a central position in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and sets out what it considers to be the basic prerequisite for a human life. Education is an existential element of human life, indispensable and essential, as the preamble speaks when it states and demands that "teaching and education shall promote respect for these rights".

At this point, it should be noted that the right to education is not at all achievable for many people in the "Global South" or, importantly, that this is also discussed differently in many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, whereby terms such as Global South or North may no longer be appropriate, as the social, cultural and ecological upheavals have long since affected all societies - incidentally, also as a result of refugee movements. The essentials (food, health, access to education) are often not available. More than four billion people have less food available than they would need to reach their natural life expectancy. And more than 11% of people in the world hunger. Over 2.2 billion people have no regular access to

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clean water. Due to the suicidal overuse of resources, we are not even able to guarantee a decent life for all. In 2020, around 87% of the world's population aged 15 and over had at least basic reading and writing skills. The illiteracy rate was 13%.

The result: there needs to be a fundamental change in awareness and, in some cases, radical changes to power structures and opportunities for participation - as well as enabling these through education. Global problems require global solutions, which can only be achieved through ideas, values and norms that are respected by all cultures and societies, as all people have a responsibility to the best of their knowledge and ability to promote a better social order both locally and globally (preamble to the human duties). This also reflects the fact that it is necessary to understand the diversity of cultures as a common benefit, even if we live according to very different values and truths - but perhaps share more in common than we realise in the current debate; it rightly points to differences that are ignored and at the same time valuable and enriching for all. To differences in common. This could be a groundbreaking image of humanity for the 21st century. And this does not require consensus, but rather a belief in the commonality of being human - precisely in a world of strangers who can always meet and come closer to one another.

If you then add the InterAction Council's Universal Declaration of Human Duties and make a comparison with human rights, you can see that these are far more comprehensive in their analysis. It is about the fundamental principles of humanity, about non-violence and reverence for life, about justice and solidarity, about truthfulness and tolerance, about mutual respect and partnership. Ultimately, it is about a change of consciousness. In Articles 9 and 10, this leads to a redistribution of wealth and the duty to make serious efforts to overcome poverty, malnutrition, ignorance and inequality. And this for a world in which sustainability is promoted in order to guarantee dignity, freedom, security and justice for all people. And this also means that all people have a duty to *"develop their abilities through diligence and endeavour; they should have equal access to education and meaningful work. Everyone should support the needy, the disadvantaged, the disabled and victims of discrimination."*

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Education is the highest good because it is inextricably linked to a human life that is lived in dignity and freedom. This is not a question of exclusivity, nor a utopian consideration, but a statement about a task that makes human life possible as such in the first place - and thus also an obligation for everyone, for every political community and every individual who must be empowered by the social context of life to be able to lead its own life and that of all in self-determination. Education is about enabling and empowering people to design and fulfil a human life.

## **2 Questions for education**

All of this raises three questions that need to be answered again and again to varying degrees and therefore require a joint dialogue - which already is an extension of the human right to education: this must be a certain one, must not be normatively evaded or restricted. Rather, even the conversation about education must be conducted as a dynamic, open and opening debate in which a habitus of education itself develops. Talking about education is itself an act of education, because only in this way can get social co-operation in understanding and as understanding succeed, starting with getting to know the self and others. Education always means overcoming alienation, including the alienation that is systematically generated in modern societies and economies.

### **So, what does education mean?**

Education is a highly complex event, a perpetual process in which people are always familiarised with other people and the surrounding social forms of life and cultural circumstances, including traditional ones, to gain independence and the freedom to deal with themselves in their context.

Education must first be understood as a process that has to do with the nature of people, their natural constitution, in three respects. And this applies equally to all people. On the one hand, they are given the opportunity and task by nature to develop and unfold, to discover talents and to create something from these in interaction with others that the individual can grasp as the unfolding of a person who is perfect for themselves. A development that can be associated with discontinuities and breaks, sometimes with loss of viability

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ty in old age or through illness. Secondly, this development never succeeds alone, but always together with other people, literally from the beginning of human life, which no one can master alone. Thirdly, this development is linked to the fact that although people have predispositions, they are at the same time dependent on growing up in a social and cultural environment that they can assimilate, right down to the basic structures of their natural circumstances. They need a milieu that enables them to unfold and develop their talents and potential so that they can accept themselves as educated people.

This education of the self therefore inevitably stands in contrast to the fact that people are dependent on education by others, on being accompanied, supported and encouraged on their path of life and learning, on being provided with materials, with knowledge about the world, about people and ultimately about themselves, as well as with skills that they can practise as abilities. Education therefore means self-awareness in a social and cultural environment as well as awareness of and for this environment, human dignity and appreciation of social and cultural circumstances. An awareness that is meaningful for everyone, the basis of a life as a social being that combines freedom and solidarity and recognises responsibility for the natural, cultural and social world and makes this its purpose in life.

Education in this understanding of human life cannot be achieved by a single person. It requires an understanding that people discover themselves as individuals in a world humanity and experience themselves in this, in the experience with others, which they can understand as a moment of their own existence. However, this presupposes that the community of all in general and always in the very specific context of life can achieve both: to be a good environment, protective and supportive, while at the same time systematically and comprehensively opening up learning opportunities.

Education always takes its starting point in one's own living conditions, in the contexts of one's own upbringing, in familiar ideas and patterns. But education means knowing and appreciating these, yet always working to broaden one's own horizons by respectfully engaging with what is initially seen as different or foreign.

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### **What must the organisational conditions for education be like?**

Free access for all and in the greatest possible freedom and independence for all is indispensable. States and political organisations are obliged to guarantee this free access free of charge at all stages of life - access that always ensures that good quality, safe and supportive learning and practice that enables independent judgement is guaranteed in all spheres of human life, cognitive, motor, emotional and affective.

Because education is a genuinely human aspect of life that enables and enriches life, it must be ensured that free education is available at all stages of life. The restriction of free education to the elementary sector must be overcome. Free education must be guaranteed as early as pregnancy, then in primary, secondary and tertiary education. Lifelong learning must be made possible, incidentally also as a moment of qualification to prevent unemployment. And that's not all: people in old age must have access to educational opportunities, because this is how they can support and promote the development of societies. As a radical consequence, such a comprehensive approach to education also includes preparation for dying and death.

Good quality learning means that the learning processes are realised in respect and recognition, in knowledge and initiation of individual abilities and performance potential. Good quality learning and teaching also means that the development of each person is made possible in his or her own time, which he or she can achieve through his or her physical condition.

Cancellations and exclusions from educational processes must be prevented - those who fail to meet challenges must always be given the opportunity to choose a different path that makes an educational world accessible to them.

States and political organisations are obliged to ensure these institutional and organisational prerequisites for education by providing all professionals teaching and educating - all nursery schoolteachers, all social educators and workers, all teachers - with a substantive and comprehensive education geared towards a common learning practice. Anyone who teaches people something that contributes to increasing the happiness of all, as well as individuals, and thus serves peace, deserves respect, recognition and support.



All over the world, elementary education should be offered free of charge and access to secondary schools should be made possible. Privatisation of the education system by the state is inadmissible; states must not withdraw from the task of providing education for all. Private education programmes may be approved under state or municipal supervision if and insofar as they guarantee access for all or offer special services that go beyond the requirements for independent living. In particular, non-governmental organisations or municipal initiatives should be supported, for example if they are active in the field of informal education and can promote communal living. Nevertheless, such initiatives must not be used as justification for restricting state services and benefits.

Educational professionals must have proven their qualifications. At the same time, however, it must be ensured that enthusiasm for education can develop. In everyone, in those who are educated and taught, and in those who, as teachers, make knowledge and skills accessible, provide support in learning processes and give input. The right to education is inevitably also a right to initiate and organise educational processes, to be a teacher. States must open up every opportunity for people to learn to be good teachers, namely those who organise educational processes as an enabler of freedom and self-determination.

Educational opportunities must always be organised in such a way that, on the one hand, they are provided by the state, i.e. free of charge, and meet the basic requirements of quality. On the other hand, regional and municipal responsibility must be given and organised in such a way that all those involved can exercise their responsibility for educational processes. People must be given knowledge about their living conditions and how they can shape them in a way that sustains life. Educational programmes must prevent cultures from disappearing or being damaged. They always include a moment that serves to criticise attacks that could destroy the foundations of life.

**What are the contents and topics that can and must be addressed to overcome the key problems that people are aware of?**

This is primarily about extending the human right to education, i.e. a process that cannot and must not be completed:

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*Openness of thinking and feeling*

The first key problem is to be found in a methodology of thinking, feeling and perhaps acting. Education means being curious and arousing curiosity, openness to questions and knowledge, a desire to engage with others and with oneself. A dialogue that leads to and results in what can be called a common practice of life. Education goes hand in hand with thinking in tensions and contradictions, with the willingness to engage with the unexpected, to understand the other and yet not to exclude it. It also means enduring the fact that lost and suppressed knowledge and skills must be scrutinised and not simply discarded, but always bearing in mind the demands that are associated with knowledge, reason and understanding; demands that cannot be enforced dogmatically, by force or even violence. Education has a tendency towards pragmatic serenity, then above all towards solidarity with one another, recognising lifestyles and ways of life. Seen in this light, education today is characterised by recognising the equality of all, but understanding their differences when they are desired by individuals or groups. Strictly speaking, education is characterised by a democratic attitude. In this sense, education means thinking about or organising life in such a way that people can participate in a common community and a cultural project equally and yet in their own particularities. A project that can be described as humanity, as a sensitivity to the fact that people are connected in a common destiny.

*The natural foundations of our existence*

The second key problem is that their natural foundations must not be destroyed or damaged, the foundations that they find in their environment; natural foundations, as they must also understand them as a moment in their own existence. This indicates that education must provide access to medical and hygienic insight, an understanding of one's own biological processes. Then also knowledge and understanding of the basics of one's own metabolic processes, nutrition, the supply of food, which must not be grown in a destructive form. Education is knowledge about our nature, about water, food and healthy food (which in many countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America is often far better than in the northern world). Education combines technical and economic knowl-

edge about the conditions, possibilities and limits of dealing with resources.

*The cultural preconditions of our existence*

Education means the ability to engage with everything that is given as culture in the broadest sense of expression, and therefore also as forms of dealing with others and oneself - including the long stories that people talk about themselves, their origins and their future. Education is open to social storytelling, and to the idea of putting narrative into practice. It also means developing a feeling for the beauty of life in all its facets, for something good that appeals. Perhaps even for finding beauty. More than that: education means coming to a judgement to recognise beauty and goodness - to preserve and develop it, in the knowledge that beauty and goodness are different, but are nevertheless shared by many when they exchange ideas with each other.

*Education as a concern*

Education with a view to the natural, cultural and social preconditions and conditions of our existence requires the development of a mindset of care. Care, starting with compassion for other people and for nature, requires a gentle, protective, nurturing and encouraging approach to others - and obliges people to show special respect for those who care for the lives of others as well as for cultural and social goods. Education is care - as a gratifying achievement for humanity, an achievement that children develop from an early age. Competitive situations aimed at winning can destroy this elementary care; they should only be used with the greatest restraint and caution in all areas of education, with the intention of improving the happiness of all. As a concern for the common good.

This includes enabling people to gain the ability in their educational process to critically understand and assess living conditions and forms of society that jeopardise or destroy their own life conditions and opportunities. Here, too, the idea of care is a guiding principle.

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*Be able to speak*

Speaking and thinking, speaking and feeling, speaking and acting are closely connected. The ability to speak for others and for oneself is the core of all education. Because it enables us to take sides with people, because it allows us to stand up for ourselves, for others and for the human world. Because it allows us to speak out, sometimes to free ourselves from taboos and sometimes to pave the way for reconciliation in conflicts by remaining silent. Learning to speak leads to the most important virtue of human life, to speaking instead of murderous conflict.

Whenever possible, people should have the opportunity to learn many languages, or at least to acquire one that enables them to make themselves understood in wide circles. Knowing a language that is the official lingua franca of a country also means being able to express one's rights and defend oneself - even against the arbitrariness of an authority. It is therefore essential, especially for people in migration processes, that they are able to learn the language of the country that will become their home. At the same time, education means respecting all languages and recognising them both as a means of communication and in the special features and content that these languages communicate. They are part of the cultural heritage of mankind and at the same time enable us to gain a differentiated view of the world.

*Gain assess and apply knowledge*

Today more than ever, education means gaining access to knowledge. Above all, however, it means being able to assess and apply this knowledge. This presupposes that all people at every stage of their lives have the opportunity to acquire reading, writing and the forms of maths that are indispensable for coping with life independently and leading a respected life that secures their livelihood. They must be able to acquire this knowledge and these skills not only mechanically, not only at the lowest level. Rather, the learning of these skills and abilities must be organised in such a way that the learning itself, and even more so the application, becomes a joy and a pleasure. In their educational process, people must develop the joy of learning, of knowledge and of their skills, with a view to others, to shared life processes.

Reading and writing, and sometimes arithmetic, are solitary processes, unlike storytelling, singing and playing together. But this loneliness demands that other people become aware of those who read and write, those who calculate, give them respect and recognition, open a space for them in which they can present themselves with what they have read and written, with what they have calculated.

What applies to basic knowledge, skills, and abilities also applies to all advanced knowledge - in all fields of knowledge and learning. All people must have access to scientific knowledge at every stage of their lives in such a way that they can acquire, deepen and expand it. This applies to the natural sciences in all dimensions, it also applies to cultural studies and the social sciences, it also applies to artistic skills - and finally also to the available knowledge about our feelings.

To this end, it must be ensured that people have access to knowledge in all channels of knowledge transfer. The priority should continue to be books; people need libraries because, according to all available knowledge about learning itself, printed books and printed texts are the best way to acquire knowledge. Open access must always be guaranteed for all knowledge resources and yet the question must be asked whether and to what extent human life is being harmed or made contemptible in some channels.

Seen in this light, education involves people being able to communicate about knowledge and what they have read in joint discussions. Education includes the right and the duty to engage in open dialogue. Education has to do with discourse, admittedly in a concrete sense of the term, as dialogue or multilogue, from which no one may be excluded - unless he or she wants to prevent or prohibit this conversation with one another.

### *Religions*

In many modern secular societies, religious orientations play a subordinate role. Religiousness and religions are at times disparaged and regarded as outdated. There is a tendency to banish religions from public life and declare them a private matter because religions appear irrational and far removed from science. Perhaps they are. But education must make this a topic: because people may not be able to live without religion at all, because religions are about providing an in-

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terpretation of origins and a horizon for the future. Religions also aim to bind people together and give them the opportunity to understand their own life situation. No one should therefore be attacked because of their religion - but education also includes not wanting to proselytise other people.

### *Political education*

Education requires and includes that people regulate and determine the framework and order of their common life themselves. In this respect, education is always a political process, focussed on both individual freedom and independence on the one hand and on the shaping of a common context of life on the other. For this reason, education must always include the question of how this can be regulated, whether and how forms of rule can be organised in such a way that they remain available to those who submit to an order - if they want to do so themselves. Again, education is a democratic process, even if it remains a process in which each individual experiences him or herself in his or her own particularity and experiences it with others. And this takes place in formal, non-formal and informal education, for which places must always be available and must be made available.

### **3 Future - Education and freedom belong together!**

Article 26 needs to be reviewed to ensure that it also adequately reflects and captures the educational understanding of the "global South", other cultures, societies and in the context of religions. This as well means that we must modify our own neoliberal understanding of education. This is and will be the greatest challenge for the future. It is an essential struggle for education in the face of the massive trivialisation of education and personal development geared towards neoliberal capitalism, global instabilities and the extreme increase in authoritarian societies and existing isms (colonialism, post-colonialism, imperialism, sexism, racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and more). This review is also so urgently needed because education is not only trivialised, its content reduced to the simplest and often meaningless and increasingly often false information and disseminated, but because the necessary and required scientific knowledge and technical modes of action are increasingly less embed-

ded in cultural, social and ethical considerations. All too often, comparative studies of education systems follow performance indicators in which marketability is perceived as the sole determining factor. Such observations and analyses - which are certainly relevant - must not be carried out in an exploitation-oriented manner but must focus on people's entire way of life.

Ultimately, it is about shaping our societies and therefore also education, which goes hand in hand with freedom. Because education and freedom belong together. These increasing trivialisations could also be evidence in education that it is no longer about people in their "wholeness" (sic!). And this is nothing new! Freire, Illich, Nyerere and others were already calling for this in the early 1970s. There is still a need for historical and contemporary liberation and peace education. Because the main aim of education is to liberate people through education. It is about passing on the wisdom and knowledge accumulated in a society from one generation to the next and preparing people for their future participation in this society in a spirit of freedom. And we must also ask ourselves whether there can really be a universally valid image of education.

Analytical thinking and the ability to make judgements, the knowledge of the complexity of nature and mankind are at the centre of education; this turns away from the destruction of the body and nature and its global exploitation of resources. To summarise, this means that this understanding of education includes education as world orientation, education as enlightenment, education as historical awareness, education as articulation, education as self-knowledge, education as self-determination, education as moral education, education as poetic experience and as passionate education. It is about an educational transformation combined with justice and dignity. This liberal education begins at birth and ends at death, for a lifetime. And that is also the beauty of education. Perhaps it is part of the centre of education to understand it as an aesthetic process, as the beauty of humanity.

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This is a machine translation of our German draft with DeepL, i.e. the text has been translated automatically and has been checked and confirmed by a friend of us. We ask you to bear this in mind if there are any unsuitable formulations.

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## MARKET CONFORMITY OF EDUCATION

Education has never been free of economic implications. However, the most recent developments of neoliberal capitalism in the field of education are so affected by valorisation processes that one can no longer speak of merely a quantitative increase in the economic aspects of the educational field. Rather, pedagogy itself is changing in its basic constitutive structures and principles and being realigned. This contradictory character tends to be resolved unilaterally in the current “Post-Fordist Education Industry” (Kunert & Rühle, 2022). Thus, education is reduced to marketability.

Based on Heinz-Joachim Heydorn’s (2004) considerations on educational theory (the theory of *Bildung*), the chapter focuses on the systematic commodification of education on the level of education policy, as can be seen in the influential initiatives of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The valorisation of education through the creation of education markets and the competition-driven reduction of education to its economic dimension go hand in hand with the investment-logical (Esping-Andersen, 2002; Heckman & Masterov, 2007) production of specific subject dispositions, which, in pedagogical-anthropological terms, correspond to the ideal of human capital (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1963; 1972). Using regulatory theory analysis (Aglietta, 1976; Hirsch, 2005), it can be shown that these devel-

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opments do not occur by chance. Rather, the varying political-economic approaches taken over the course of history represent necessary reactions to the changing, crisis-ridden accumulation conditions of neoliberal capitalism.

### **1. On the Contradiction of Education**

The conditions, opportunities, and perspectives of education are closely linked to the genesis and current form of bourgeois-capitalist societies and must be analysed. Given the valorisation of knowledge for the sake of the neoliberal-capitalist exploitation process, educational processes are also experiencing an 'upgrade' that extends beyond the educational area. Driven by the media coverage of the first Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey results in 2001, an almost-general consensus has developed that education is supposedly the key to solving all current and future social and economic problems. Within this ideological horizon, education promises to reduce inequality of opportunity and increase individual participation and personal success, just as it is a prerequisite for democratic participation, economic prosperity, overcoming various crises, and scientific progress. The fact that the concept of education remains as vaguely defined using empty phrases regarding 'participation', 'success', 'prosperity', or 'progress' is typically not even noticed.

Just as economic issues have always been essential to pedagogy, ideas about the concept of education that ignore utility are oversimplifications. Education is characterised by the constitutive tension outlined above, which was a crucial point in the early stages of debates on the theory of education. Education enables maturity and responsibility (*Mündigkeit*)<sup>1</sup>, meaningful self-determination, and individual development courses, as well as making people exploitable by preparing them for socially required utility profiles. This tension is rooted in the nature of education itself and has been explicated many times in educational science, arguably most profoundly by Heinz-Joachim Heydorn (2004c). Since the middle of the eighteenth century, because of extensive developments in the fields of technology, science, culture, and economics, trust in the development of reason; and the associated gradual realisation of the role of moral and human

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conditions during the Enlightenment, pedagogy had played an increasingly important role.

Education and vocational training are becoming a functional moment in which to adapt people to the emerging bourgeois-capitalist order and, thus, a means of securing and legitimising rule. "The 'pedagogical century' is a century of economics; through it [the pedagogy; authors], the bourgeois class wants to make itself indispensable in order to finally share domination, it wants to achieve this in all modesty" (Heydorn, 2004c, p. 57)<sup>2</sup>. This privileges securing a class-based education and was justified by a power- and domination-abstracting perspective. A person's utility is not only an objective social purpose; rather, it also serves the development of the individual and their subjective potentials. Thus, social and individual interests merge.

The contradiction between the Enlightenment's claim of liberation mediated by education and its real historical development, which becomes manifest in the establishment of bourgeois-capitalist power relations, arise not only in the problem of mediation between theory and practice. It has its roots in the pedagogical theory of the Enlightenment itself, which, in its scientific structure and its gesture towards liberation, was subject to political and economic directives.

Maturity and responsibility are trimmed to suit the requirements of bourgeois society and therefore only realised in a stunted form as a necessary precondition for the capital relation. "Thus, an unsolved contradiction is noticeable from the outset: Every person is capable of education, and everyone should remain where he is; every person is thus indeterminable and everyone completely determined" (Heydorn, 2004c, p. 58). Nevertheless, the idea of the (self-) liberation of people from conditions of dependency and oppression, as well as the associated significance of educational processes, is irrefragable, and along with the claim of a self-determined subject, it provides the prerequisite for both bourgeois-capitalist society and the possibility of transcending it.

The contradictory nature of education (*Bildung*) has its point of origin in the structure of capitalist society. Because he is free from the means of production and legally liberated to sell his labour-power, the "free wage labourer in the double sense" (Marx, 1976, p. 272) is emblematic of the dialectic of

Mündigkeit (maturity and responsibility) in terms of educational theory. On one hand, it is a precondition for the capital relation (i.e., for the fact that labour power can be offered and exchanged by a legally recognised individual, whereby the claim to maturity and responsibility is based on the interest in exploitation. At the same time, however, this claim must be channelled in such a way as to suppress the recognition of the origin of the production of surplus value and, thus, the possibility of overcoming the capital relation.

“Mündigkeit, initially a process of collective liberation, through which education becomes a historical power, a means of unmasking in order to elevate the reason of the human race, reverses its meaning. The full development of the principle of individuality, by which charismatic maturity replaces collective reason and becomes the justification for class domination, indicates the process of decay. Originally it was decisive that the individual could only mature with everyone or not at all.” (Heydorn, 2004d, p. 63)

With the dialectic of Mündigkeit, which is, at the same time, a means of and perspective on human self-assertion in the process of enlightenment, as well as a functional moment in the preparation for societal requirements and a necessary prerequisite for the capital relationship (see also Koneffke, 2018d, and Kunert, 2018c), the tension contained within education, as the medium for the realisation of Mündigkeit, also becomes apparent.

Critical educational theory has emphatically pointed out this contradictory moment, which is constitutive for education (Bildung), and has thus set every conception of modern pedagogy in theory and practice the task of relating to the dialectics of education. Pedagogy cannot avoid the connection between the capitalist logic of valorisation and the corresponding conditioning of people to their economic functionality and education, even if it positions itself against a market-conform reduction of people and their social relationships and in favour of a contribution to self-determined subject development beyond market imperatives.

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## 2. Regulation Theory and the Crisis of Capitalism

The establishment of a competitive orientation, which is currently being observed, as well as the efforts in the pedagogical field, which amount to marketisation, operate under the heading of an educational reform that is described as unavoidable and overdue and that appears to arise naturally from the necessary societal changes/transformations. However, this is actually an order imposed on society and enforced by particular interests. The instrumental-affirmative educational ideal is designed to generate human capital and lifelong self-adaptation. It is supported and hegemonically implemented by a complex network of educational policy and science initiatives, studies, statements, and laws. This network involves not only nation states and associations of states but also nationally and internationally active organisations, think tanks, lobbying associations, and foundations.

To not only describe the developments affecting the entire educational field but also explain their causal context, a comprehensive approach based on capitalism theory is necessary. We therefore draw on the theory of regulation, which was founded in France in the mid-1970s by Michel Aglietta (1976; 1979) and was further developed in Germany and elsewhere. Following Marx's critique of political economy and in contrast to other sociological approaches based on modernisation theory, it is explicitly dedicated to explaining historically specific forms of capitalist development. Educational policy initiatives that increasingly adapt education to so-called market demands can thus be deciphered as necessary reactions to the crisis-ridden conditions of capitalist accumulation.

According to theory of capitalist regulation, the capitalist exploitation process is fundamentally a crisis-like process, as has been impressively demonstrated by numerous oil, economic, and financial crises. At the same time, this process is continually stabilised by the societal structures and forms of state organisation that are developing in each case and in different forms. Regulatory theory therefore asks how a society can be kept together in the face of crisis and social disintegration, which have their roots in the mechanisms of economic reproduction (Hirsch, 1990, p. 18). The specific formations that develop in the course of capitalist history, which are called accumulation regimes in the theory of regulation,

are each associated with particular conditions for, forms of, and distribution mechanisms for the production and realisation of surplus value, which are summarised in the term accumulation process. To stabilise the relatively permanent but ultimately temporary form of the accumulation process, a corresponding mode of regulation is necessary. The network of societal relationships, consisting of the way in which surplus value is produced in terms of production technology and the organisation of labour; how the values thus produced are distributed among the social classes and consumed by them; how the relationship between capitalist and non-capitalist production (e.g., care work) is structured; and how these structures and processes are held together institutionally, administratively, and normatively can be summarised using the concept of an accumulation regime:

“The accumulation regime is a mode of systematic distribution and reallocation of the societal product, which, over a longer period of time, establishes a certain correspondence between the changes in the conditions of production (the volume of deployed capital, the distribution between sectors and the production standards) and the changes in the conditions of final consumption (consumption norms of wage earners and other social classes, collective expenditure, etc.)” (Lipietz, 1985, p. 120).

To be relatively stable and durable, accumulation regimes require hegemonic societal regulatory mechanisms. As a result of contradictory class and group action, accumulation regimes are thus the historically particular social formations of the relationships between production, accumulation strategy, and corresponding regulation, as well as the hegemonic structure. The inherent compulsion to generate surplus value remains fundamental to the process of accumulation, although the way in which surplus value is generated and used takes different forms over the course of history, depending on, among other things, the available technologies and social power relations.

The antagonistic socialisation conditions created by private production and commodity exchange go hand in hand with political and social struggles and processes of negotiation, which are reflected in the actions of individuals and collectives and must be regulated in order to stabilise the existing

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social formation. The concept of regulation thus reflects the need to ensure more-or-less comprehensive social cohesion and economic, social, and cultural reproduction. "A mode of regulation is a totality of mediations that contain the dislocations caused by the accumulation of capital so that they are compatible with social cohesion within nations" (Aglietta 2000, p. 11). Assuming that neither the mechanisms of the market nor those of the state apparatus of violence are sufficient, in themselves, to guarantee social stability and development, the concept of regulation also includes the network of social institutions, political administration, and cultural norms in order to explain how social coexistence can achieve relative stability under capitalist conditions of production. Thus, the theory of regulation attempts to revisit the relation between objective social structure and conscious social action, a problematic gap in the Marxist tradition of theory and elsewhere (Hirsch, 1995, p. 48). In the course of history, the context of regulation takes on various contours in the form of particular modes of regulation (Hirsch, 1990, p. 37). However, even within a historically specific formation of capitalism, the respective components of these particular modes of regulation are not uniform and homogeneous. For example, the areas of production, labour power, money and credit, law, competition, and informal norms and values, which are reflected in the education and training system and the media, are regulated.

The dynamics of economic, technological, and social relations inherent in the accumulation process ultimately come into conflict with the institutional conditions of the regulatory system. Very early, Marx pointed out the changes brought about by material contradictions and the fact that "in the pores of the old society a new society has evolved, which feels the political husk — the appropriate covering of the old society — to be an unnatural fetter which it must burst" (Marx, 1968, p. 151). The crisis of the strategy of accumulation, or the weakening of the process of valorisation in the context of a historical form of socialisation, also calls into question the existing hegemonic structure, notions of compromise and order, and the social mechanisms of integration and exclusion, which affects the functioning of the mode of regulation. The crises of a capitalist societal formation are therefore not one



dimensional but, rather, a network of causes and effects that require a new societal framework (i.e., the implementation of new economic-technical, social, and institutional mechanism of production and reproduction, the development of which, however, is significantly influenced by the old pre-conditions that have collapsed due to the crisis).

In the last third of the twentieth century, the Fordist accumulation regime, named after American automobile industrialist Henry Ford, was gradually replaced by a post-Fordist regime, or neoliberal capitalism. Although the crisis and overall social restructuring processes of the previously dominant Fordist accumulation regime that began in the 1970s are characteristic of all capitalist countries, the standardised term post-Fordism suggests a coherence that runs the risk of obscuring the subtle differences and contradictions in modes of accumulation and regulation. Given this problem, it seems appropriate to speak of post-Fordism if it is understood not as a closed term but, rather, as a label for relatively permanent modes of accumulation and regulation as well as ideological structures. The changes associated with the crisis of Fordist forms of socialisation affect society as a whole, not only the areas of production and consumption but also political and administrative control as well as values.

Hirsch emphasises that the emergence of the post-Fordist accumulation regime and the internationalised “competitive state”<sup>3</sup> (1995) is not a natural development. Rather, it had to be enforced, sometimes on a massive scale, by “neoliberal governments” and “multinational capital that has become more powerful and more independent of the individual states”. As a result of the slowdown in productivity increases, new production techniques and forms of labour were established to create new opportunities for the exploitation of capital. In this respect, the process of adaptation to the changed possibilities of capital accumulation is by no means based on economic constraints, as often put forward; rather, such arguments, which are formulated with the intention of creating hegemony, reveal their ideological function of concealing interest-based causal connections with the help of laws of motion that are labelled unchangeable and unavoidable. Nevertheless, even in this context, it would be very short sighted to speak of a controller of the change process of capitalist ac-

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cumulation and regulation strategies, as these developments are characterised by diverse, sometimes unpredictable social, political, and economic negotiation processes as well as multiple interdependencies.

The central regulatory element of neoliberal capitalism is economic competition, which is both an instrument for the distribution of social resources and a justification mechanism for the inequality associated with this distribution. One of its manifestations can be described by the term flexibilisation (cf. Sennett, 1998; Lessenich, 2012, p. 160), which refers to several levels of change. It encompasses working conditions, forms of production, and international dynamics as well as demands on individual patterns of work and leisure behaviour and therefore affects the mode of capitalist socialisation.

Changes in labour and wage relations are becoming visible at various levels and are no longer only aimed at the appropriation of one-dimensional labour power that is precisely tailored to the work process. Rather, they are aimed at the entire subject potential, with the purpose of its exploitation. The increased significance of knowledge production and human capital marks a qualitatively new dimension in the subsumption of labour power under the capital relationship. This is not merely about the valorisation of individual skills but, rather, people in their entirety. As a core element of the capitalist crisis management strategy, this goal of utilising the entire personality or all human subject potential is dependent on corresponding implementation measures in education and learning processes. The central importance of human capital for the accumulation process of neoliberal capitalism is reflected in an education and training system that is adapted to these changes.

Flexibility is the magic neoliberal formula that seems to provide a resolution to all social issues and a remedy for all problems, at least those relating to the economy and the labour market. In addition, other characteristics are important, such as the internationalisation of production, referred to as 'globalisation'; deregulation; market liberalisation; and financialisation processes, the introduction of new (computer chip-supported) production techniques (Toyotism; Revelli, 1997), and new forms of work organisation and control (new public management). At the level of the welfare state,

state security systems are being made more flexible, which is merely a euphemism for the fact that they are being restricted, abolished, or privatised. To ensure that one's own location remains attractive to companies in the face of international competition (this primarily means being cost-effective), labour law and social policy safeguards, such as protection against dismissal, are being dismantled, and an activating labour market policy based on personal responsibility and working with incentives and sanctions is being implemented.

At their core, the processes behind these terms are aimed at implementing the market and competition principle in all areas of society. At the discourse level, they are intended to suggest the naturalness of political and economic developments and propagated in the media as supposedly unavoidable necessities given 'economic compulsion'. They are aimed at enforcing the 'spontaneous' but, in fact, actively created, order and, just as paradoxically, the absence of the state regarding economic policy developments. The proximity of the political orientations and strategies of the governments of Western industrialised nations and supranational institutions, such as the OECD, the World Bank, or the International Monetary Fund (IMF), to the ideas and dogmas of neoliberalism since the 1970s is obvious. These organisations can be seen as key initiators and practical drivers of neoliberal reforms.<sup>4</sup>

### **3. Establishing Competitiveness and Market Conformity of Education**

Every accumulation regime is dependent on a certain type of person who "conforms to the production process" (Gramsci, 1967, p. 383), with corresponding subject capacities, and tends to produce precisely this type of person through education and training processes. The post-Fordist subject, who is driven by activation policy and responsabilising regulation as a response to the crisis of the Fordist accumulation regime, is characterised by massive adaptations in terms of their own permanently optimised usability and, in line with neoliberal ideology, also sees themselves as a human resource to be exploited or human capital that promises a return. The education and training system is given the role of producing the corresponding dispositions in terms of the competitive location, so that education, as a central location factor, is re-

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duced to ensuring the lifelong self-adaptation of individuals. Some of the educational policy developments flanking the new post-Fordist mode of regulation are outlined below as examples. From an educational perspective, the enforcement of a human capital orientation and social investment policy strategies as key factors in educational policy reforms and the creation of the conditions for the direct valorisation of education are central.

One of the fundamental theorems that ideologically accompanies the increasing competitiveness and marketisation of education is the so-called human capital approach, which originated in economics, specifically the Chicago School of Economics. The human capital theory, which was developed from the 1960s onwards by Gary S. Becker and Theodore W. Schultz, among others, focusses, roughly speaking, on examining the overall social effects of investments in the education and training of individuals (Becker, 1993a; Schultz, 1963). Linked to this approach is the claim of spreading the human capitalist view (i.e., the economic explanation of the totality of human behaviour). “The combined assumptions of maximizing behaviour, market equilibrium, and stable preferences, used relentlessly and unflinchingly, form the heart of the economic approach as I see it” (Becker, 1976, p. 5). Accordingly, the Chicago School approach is concerned not with describing or even explaining an economic phenomenon with the concept of human capital but, rather, with asserting itself and determining the way in which people perceive themselves. This monopolistic claim of extending economic views and ways of thinking to all areas of society, establishing them there, and moulding these areas according to these views is also known as economic imperialism. Gary Becker even proudly describes himself as an economic imperialist: “Economists can talk not only about the demand for cars, but also about matters such as the family, discrimination, and religion, and about prejudice, guilt, and love. Yet these areas have traditionally received little attention in economics. In that sense, it’s true: I am an economic imperialist. I believe good techniques have a wide application” (Becker, 1993b, n. p.). In economics, this one-dimensional thinking can now be considered hegemonic in the field of educational economics. Ultimately, economics, unlike the other sciences, tends to ex-

tend its ideological logic to all areas of human life and claims, not to interpret or explain reality but to create it according to its own standards.

In line with the core of the economic-imperialist human capital approach of analysing the effects of investments in education and training, the OECD defines human capital, following Schulz, “as the knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being” (Keeley, 2007, p. 29). The human capital approach therefore assumes that a person’s resources or human resources, their wealth of knowledge, their talents, their experiences, and their habits, in other words, their entire personality, are reflected in their working capacity and can therefore be utilised economically.

As human capital is not a renewable but, rather, a raw material that must be produced, it is assumed that investments in value-creating human resources are worthwhile in terms of maintaining the competitiveness of an individual, a company, or a state. These investments can be made at the level of society through education policy expenditures and, sometimes, also at company level through training programmes. Above all, however, individuals should be encouraged to invest in themselves or their own children. In addition to the question of the returns to be expected as a result of investments in the education of individuals, the human capital approach, in this sense, attempts to provide an “economic explanation of human behaviour” (Becker, 1976), whereby, based on these one-dimensional economic attempts at explanation, the assumption known from various neoliberal approaches on the part of individually rational-benefit-maximising actors (i.e., *homo oeconomicus*) is assumed and corresponding, economically purposeful-rational action designed for self-exploitation is generated at the same time. However, this causal relationship between investment and return claimed by human-capital-orientated approaches is highly questionable (Radtke, 2005, p. 356).

Although human capitalist approaches and perspectives only became firmly established with the triumph of post-Fordist neoliberalism, the associated strategies, justifications, justification patterns, and objectives have not changed, in many respects, since the 1960s. Even on an advi-

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sory basis and in a report on the 1961 OECD conference entitled *Economic Growth and Investment in Education*, education is regarded as “an independent factor of production in its own right” (*Wirtschaftswachstum und Bildungsaufwand*, 1966, p. 23). This report states that “investment in education is becoming increasingly favourable in relation to capital investment or, in other words, that the relative marginal utility of education is increasing” (*Ibid.*, p. 42). The only prerequisite for this is to optimally utilise the “production factor teacher” (*Ibid.*, p. 44) and the “raw material pupil” (*Ibid.*, p. 45). In view of the “unutilised talent reserve”, however, the OECD apparently still considers the exploitation of human capital to be too low: “The talent reservoir certainly contains far more talent than has been tapped from it to date” (*Ibid.*, p. 46).

From a human-capital-oriented perspective, the task of the education system is to generate precisely those characteristics and skills that allow people to optimally utilise themselves. This (self-)utilisation potential is thus generated by processing the material available or investing in the resources found. As with any investment, it is assumed that these investments will be profitable. Regarding human capital, profit can therefore also be defined as the difference between what was invested and the amount realised when the goods are sold. The process of converting human resources into human capital, which sometimes still takes place under the pedagogical labels of education and training but is often bluntly referred to as the processing of raw materials as human capital becomes hegemonic, is ideologically flanked by the promise of generating individual and societal returns. While, until the Fordist era, educational institutions were more indirectly related to economic imperatives in terms of adapting people to and their own normative orientation towards the valorisation system, the relationship between pedagogy and economics under neoliberal capitalism has become a direct one through a successive alignment of functional logics.

The process of the capitalisation of the education system initiated by the European Union as part of the Lisbon Strategy has had a lasting impact. The goal of making Europe the “most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economic area in the world” (European Council 2000) was institutionalised at the university level with the Bologna Process, which was co-

ordinated by the EU; at the school level with the nationwide introduction of comparative studies; and in the preschool sector with the implementation of educational plans. The OECD enforces its understanding of education at the national level through broad-based and recurring studies, such as PISA or Education at a Glance (OECD, most recently in 2024).

Both the OECD PISA studies relating to general education schools and the OECD Education at a Glance reports, which cover the entire education system, are intended to survey the performance of the education systems in OECD countries and make them comparable with one another in order to adapt the education policies of individual governments to the OECD's ideas with the help of widely publicised rankings, which act as both an incentive and a means of exerting pressure. The understanding of education and training on which the studies and reports are based as well as the associated ideas about people were already laid out in the 1960s – and thus not coincidentally parallel the emergence of the human capital theory – in the above-mentioned report on the OECD conference on “Economic Growth and the Cost of Education”, and they defined the future direction of change. This view, which reduces the importance of education to its ability to adapt, is a recurring theme in OECD publications to this day. The fact that the process of focusing education on its utilisation-logical aspect, with the aim of producing human capital, does not take place without interruption and resistance is made clear by the fact that this view, although already prevalent in the 1960s, was only able to establish itself sustainably during the 1990s. International organisations such as the IMF, the WTO, and the OECD; globally active corporations; national foundations; and employer-friendly interest groups have all been using publicity to justify the privatisation of the education sector on the grounds that it is inferior and uncompetitive, and they have used various instruments to anchor it in the education system. This development is therefore being driven largely by supranational organisations and institutions, the educational expertise of which can be described as highly questionable and which, as a rule, have not been democratically legitimised regarding these massive interventions.

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As a part of social investment policy strategies, they are echoed at the political decision-making level. The views expressed under this label, for example, by Danish welfare researcher Gøsta Esping-Andersen and US economist James Heckman, call for a consistent expansion of public early childhood care services and the removal of ‘barriers to female labour force participation’, with the costs to be incurred being seen as necessary investments by the state to respond to the demands of a competition-driven knowledge society in terms of activation policy:

“To be a post-industrial “winner”, strong cognitive abilities and social skills are becoming a must; those without will likely find themselves trapped in a lifetime of low wages and precarious employment. [...] A concerted child-focus is [...] *sine qua non* for a sustainable, efficient, and competitive knowledge-based production system.” (Esping-Andersen, 2002, p. 27 f.)

Esping-Andersen attributes the economic effectiveness of Europe to the successful implementation of his ‘Social Investment Strategy’, which must begin in early childhood (Ibid., p. 45, 57) and is intended to increase the employment rate of women (ibid., p. 67, 30). The combination of increasing the female employment rate with the possibility of accessing the potential of early childhood human resources, which is realised via the promising instrument of social investment, largely replaces traditional conservative family models as a regulatory measure, contributes to a human capital-oriented view of childhood, and cements the underlying competition-driven image of mothers as an “untapped reservoir of productivity” (Lange, 2010, p. 106).

For the EU Parliament, there is “general agreement that measures that are only applied at a later age no longer have similar success in terms of ‘social investment’ starting as early as possible. Heckmann’s [sic] argument is best known, according to which investments in early childhood pay off more than investments in any other phase of education” (EU Parliament, 2013, p. 17). Because there is apparently ‘general agreement’ on the importance of early childhood ‘measures’ according to the ‘well-known argumentation’ of James J. Heckman and Dimitriy V. Masterov (2007), the EU Parliament’s



ideas apparently also prohibit any discourse on the question of the meaning and purpose of the intended measures. They do not even seem to need a factual argument or other ideological justifications. They are simply set as irrefutable.

In addition to the hegemonic consolidation of the market conformity of education through the education policy programmes and measures outlined above and the implementation of pedagogically questionable concepts, the neoliberalisation of the education sector also creates the conditions for the valorisation of education in a narrow sense. Education becomes a direct component of the sphere of capital valorisation. It is seen by the public less and less as a public good that is democratically organised and provided by the state and more and more as a commodity subject to private economic mechanisms. This commodification of education is directly linked to the political control and regulation mechanisms of neoliberal-capitalist-orientated institutions.

The goal of these interventions is to create new areas of capital utilisation to open growth markets and generate private-sector profits. "Schools are becoming appendages of the advertising industry", Hirsch says, summarising these developments, and "universities are becoming outsourced departments of corporations" (2005, p. 209). In this scenario, the state has the task of laying the foundations for the utilisation of the previously 'insufficiently developed' education sector by establishing education markets for and opening education markets to private companies. The state not only creates new opportunities for the exploitation of capital in an area that has hitherto not been geared towards generating profit but also favours the one-dimensional, formal orientation of educational activities towards the predetermined demands of the labour market. In addition, the way in which education is organised in the various areas of the education system, in this context the market-driven transformation of the form of education through the artificial creation of competition between the respective educational institutions and the beginning of access on the part of private sector companies to this area, has an impact on the content dimension of education. Pedagogical action is becoming increasingly exhausted by the utilisation-oriented allocation of human resources. The market and competitive opening of the education system to

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capitalist companies affects all educational fields, from early childhood education to the school and vocational school system, universities, and adult and continuing education.

The groundwork for this approach is being laid in the form of the targeted underfunding of the public education sector. The OECD openly formulates the hegemonic strategy of securing public approval or at least passive acceptance of shifting the burden of education to private households by cutting public funding for the education sector and an associated calculated reduction in the quality of education:

“To reduce the fiscal deficit, very substantial cuts in public investment or the trimming of operating expenditure involve no political risk. If operating expenditure is trimmed, the quantity of service should not be reduced, even if the quality has to suffer. For example, operating credits for schools or universities may be reduced, but it would be dangerous to restrict the number of students. Families will react violently if children are refused admission, but not to a gradual reduction in the quality of the education given, and the school can progressively and for particular purposes obtain a contribution from the families, or eliminate a given activity. This should be done case by case, in one school but not in the neighbouring establishment, so that any general discontent of the population is avoided.” (Morrisson 1996, p. 28)

In the current hegemonic understanding outlined here, education is completely reduced to economic requirements. Because investment in education must pay off, its content and form are adapted to the interests of capital in order to secure competitive advantages as a decisive location factor. This concerns “the question of an education that ensures the maximum efficiency of people in a technological society, a society that is based on adaptation, change and mobility within largely determined social boundaries” (Heydorn, 2004a, p. 251). To this end, the idea of competition should not only be adopted by educational institutions but should, at best, be internalised by each and every individual.

#### **4. Market Conformity of Education: The Post-Fordist Education Industry**

The tension that is constitutive of education, as outlined above, tends to be dissolved by various attempts to reduce education to the aspect of usability. Education is increasingly becoming market compliant. Overall, these developments can be interpreted as a comprehensive process of the capitalisation or economisation of education, the result of which can be described as a “Post-Fordist Education Industry” (Rühle, 2018; Kunert & Rühle, 2022; Kunert, 2025). This term is used to focus on the crisis-related changes in the historical formation of contemporary capitalism in the field of education. The critical education theorist Heinz-Joachim Heydorn uses the term “education industry” (Heydorn 2004b, p. 235), although he does not develop it into a systematic category in order to outline the technocratic education reforms initiated since the 1960s in reaction to the ‘modernisation backlog’ of the German education system, which, being cloaked in supposedly emancipatory vocabulary, robbed education of its humanistic, liberating dimension and exposed it even more strongly to the exploitation imperative. Following from this, the concept of the post-Fordist education industry is developed below as a category of reflection for the interaction of private sector, state and academic activities with regard to educational planning and policy.

The market conformity of education manifests itself in various dimensions within the post-Fordist education industry, some of which were presented above. The anthropological basis for this conformity and, at the same time, its target is a human-resources- or human-capital-oriented perspective that amounts to a post-Fordist mode of subjectivation. As a central location factor of the international competitive state, education has the primary function of ensuring the lifelong self-adaptation of the subject to market requirements. By replacing terminology and content with the concept of qualifications and competences, not only is the erosion of education ensured, but its ongoing measurement and evaluation are facilitated, which is necessary for political interventions. Additionally, education is commodified and channelled into the sphere of capital exploitation. Accordingly, current developments are characterised by education’s orientation towards

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economic purposes (i.e., the production of specific subject capacities, with the aim of strengthening the (national) competitive location), as well as the commodification of education, which, now trimmed in terms of form and content, can be traded on the educational markets created in all educational fields in this context in a way that promises profit.

Given the previously outlined increase in the importance of knowledge as the most important productive force and the associated efforts to utilise this accumulated and flexibly usable knowledge, the importance of education and training processes is also increasing. Knowledge is seen as the key to individual success and prosperity as well as a guarantee of societal competitiveness. If knowledge therefore becomes the basis for added value potentials and a guarantor of competitive advantages, then it is not surprising that education and training processes are receiving increased attention under post-Fordist capitalism. From an exploitation-oriented educational-economic perspective, these education and training processes are optimal if the knowledge carriers acquire the necessary, mostly standardised, superficial content. This content is designed for rapid and flexible applicability in a self-directed manner. Accordingly, this new mode of post-Fordist socialisation is accompanied and secured via strategies of responsabilisation, adaptation, and activation; the market-like organisation of educational processes; and the privatisation and monopolisation of knowledge.

The aim of the neoliberal activation policy programme of capitalisation through subjectivation is to produce subject dispositions that not only meet changing social requirements independently, effectively, self-directedly, and by contributing all their potential but also lead to extensive identification with given norms and basic motives, such that the social prerequisites of this self-initiated, self-responsible utilisation of the human being are not called into question. Confronted with constantly changing demands, the normalised, fungible, and fluid subject, which is identical to others but not to itself in terms of the logic of exploitation, meets the expectations of working autonomously, flexibly, and creatively on set tasks. On the other hand, as a person called upon to engage in lifelong learning, they must continually fail to optimise themselves into something else, with this failure being

experienced as self-inflicted. As a result, the nature of social subjectivity is increasingly changing to the extent that market-rational behaviour not only dominates the sphere of work but also extends to all areas of life, including relationships with family and friends, education, and leisure time, and thus becomes the foundation of all social relationships.

A necessary condition for the generation of the neoliberal self-valorising subject is the appropriation of institutionalised and, increasingly, also informal learning processes over the entire lifespan. Regarding the conception of education, this means, on one hand, that an understanding of education that can paint such self-directed external guidance as an increase in freedom and autonomy for subjects must become hegemonic so that rejection and resistance to this appropriation of subject assets can be minimised and the subversive moments that remain in education can be suppressed. On the other hand, this means tailoring education based on its economic exploitability, which is expressed in the commodification and privatisation of education by both the private sector and the state.

As a necessary component of the establishment of the new mode of socialisation, education is increasingly being organised one-dimensionally in terms of capital interests, the market, and competition. As a tradable commodity subject to the right investment strategies, it is becoming the decisive location factor in the post-Fordist competitive state. At a practical educational level, the power to shape the future is gradually being transferred to private-sector companies, which are increasingly penetrating the education market prepared by education policy and redefining educational processes for profit. Pedagogy makes a considerable contribution to theory and practice as a consensus-building element and, as an instance of socialisation, to securing the prevailing power relations. It is therefore also interesting to the regulation and accumulation regime from the perspective of hegemony theory. In contrast to its tradition, this development divests pedagogy of its emancipative momentum and contributes to the shaping of subjects who act and think in a self-responsible, self-valorising, conformist, self-regulated manner. The current hegemony of positivist empirical educational research, which has become almost unchallenged, represents the preliminary

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peak of disciplinary self-expropriation in this context. This hegemony withdraws to the supposedly neutral standpoint of testing, measuring, and evaluating a practice for which it is not responsible.

### **5. Conclusion**

The changes in the field of education mentioned in connection with its increasing marketisation are not new phenomena that emerged with the transition to the post-Fordist regulatory phase. Education has never been free of economic implications. From the perspective of regulation theory, the varying political-economic approaches adopted over the course of history represent reactions to changing, crisis-ridden accumulation conditions. However, the most recent developments of neoliberal capitalism in the pedagogical field are affected by valorisation processes to such an extent that it is no longer possible to speak of only a quantitative increase in the economic aspects of the field of education. Rather, the educational sector and the pedagogical itself are changing and being realigned in terms of their basic constitutive systems. These developments are taking place – as the critical-materialist approach chosen here points out – neither without contradiction or conflict nor as a natural or causal necessity. Historically and systematically, education, as a dialectical category, can only be understood in the context of its tension between liberation and adaptation. This contradictory character on the part of education tends to be unilaterally resolved in the post-Fordist education industry. In addition to the constitution of the education system, this also affects the educational and educational science discourses and the field of pedagogy as well as pedagogical practice, which are focused on the production of a new educational subject. Increasingly deprived of its dialectics, education itself becomes a central element in the implementation of neoliberal hegemony in social conflict and negotiation processes.

The radical criticism of the valorisation of human beings and the depotentialisation of their potential for subject development is not the sole responsibility of educational theory and practice. It can only be understood as a task for society.

“An educational concept is only progressive to the extent that the forces that advocate it are also engaged in a direct political struggle to change society. Only then will the pos-

sibilities of education be actualised, education will become a significant moment in the debate. Education on its own is capable of little, it is not a trick of reason.” (Heydorn, 2004d, p. 71)

In the tense relationship between education and domination, it is therefore important to consciously utilise the room available to manoeuvre because the concrete and practical shaping of this contradiction still takes place within the related pedagogical situation, which is framed by social conditions and directives but is not determined to the last detail.

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## THE FUNCTION OF EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM IN CAPITALISM

The human formation model is one of the most basic features that constitute the economic, social and cultural structure of societies. The human formation models of societies are a reflection of cultural, economic, political and historical factors. Every society desires and implements the formation of its individuals in line with its own values and goals. Education systems, economic conditions and social rules play an important role in this process. The proper functioning of the process of raising children (pedagogy)<sup>1</sup> is important for the formation of a healthy social structure.

The widespread use of schools and the process of making education compulsory took place after the industrial revolution. With the modern era, schools have become the main institutions of education. Following the transition to compulsory education, most of the out of school learning was tried to be included in the school. Since compulsory education, which should have been recognised as a right from its inception until today, is treated as an obligation in accordance with the needs and aims of the ruling classes, it is discussed not only as a matter of education but also as a matter of freedom. To put it in other words, education is not only limited to providing knowledge and skills, but has also become a factor affecting the freedoms of individuals. Education has emerged as the primary mechanism of the capitalist social construction process and has gained an institutional structure over

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time and has been recognised as a fundamental human right. During the years when compulsory education became widespread after the Industrial Revolution, for example in Prussia in 1819, it is seen that education was established to fulfil five main objectives. These were; to train obedient soldiers for the army, to train obedient labourers to work in mines, to train civil servants who would be subject to the government to the maximum extent, to train civil servants to work in institutions, and to train citizens who think alike on important issues. Thus, the aim of compulsory education is not to increase the intellectual development of children, but to entrench a system of socialisation based on 'submission' and 'obedience' (Hern, 2008:74). To maintain the mechanisms of oppression and exploitation of the capitalist order, governments have used education as an effective tool to ensure social consent and the continuation of the existing order.

Under the capitalist system, 'the socialisation process of the school produces citizens who will submit to the authority of the state and work as loyal workers in the new industrial society, and the process of socialization makes people accept their (existing) social position and makes them dependent on an irrationally organized consumer society" (Spring, 1997:26).

The Latin origin of the word *education* reveals two different concepts: *educare* and *educere*. Despite their similar pronunciation and spelling, these concepts, which are quite different in terms of meaning, express two different understandings/approaches to education. According to the term *educare*, education means training, disciplining, shaping, molding, and feeding the educated person with knowledge in connection with a job or profession. This approach is intended to familiarize students with the system already in place, and written confirmation of the acquisition of a qualification is a necessary condition of the curriculum, in the form of a certificate, a diploma or a certificate of having studied the subject. According to the term *educere*, education refers to the process of bringing out the creative potential within the individual, rather than feeding him or her with external knowledge and making him or her learn. In this sense, education as *educere* means to become competent, to become autonomous, to transcend oneself, to develop the different possibilities, talents, skills, thoughts that students have because they are valuable

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as human beings, and to allow the individual to discover both the world and himself/herself (Bellington, 2011:379-382).

Based on the origins of the concept of education, it is possible to evaluate the process of commercialization/monetization of education as the dominance and spread of the concept of 'educare' over time. Marx (2013:49-92), in the first volume of *Capital*, describes how the historical development of capitalism has fostered the opposition between use value and exchange value embedded in commodities through concrete examples. Starting from Marx's analysis, the concept of 'educere' refers to the use value of knowledge and the concept of 'educare' refers to the exchange value of knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

In determining educational policies, the capitalist state generally prioritizes its economic interests and the preservation of social order. For this reason, education systems are primarily structured to raise individuals who are suitable for the needs of the capitalist economy. Educational institutions thus become profit-oriented enterprises, while students inevitably become customers. During this process, the free thinking, intelligence and creativity of individuals are suppressed, and the aim is to provide them with knowledge and skills in line with the needs of the current economic-social system.

"In order to transform general human nature in such a way that it becomes a developed and specialized labor force, equipped with the abilities and skills required by a particular line of work, an education or training is needed, which will cost the equivalent of a commodity in one form or another" (Marx, 2013:174). Education in the capitalist system is primarily aimed at qualifying the labor force and increasing economic productivity (the reproduction of surplus value).

Schools and other educational institutions seek to prepare the potential labor force by providing students with the skills and knowledge that capitalism needs. However, the quality of the workforce is often determined by class differences in society. Children of the working class are often directed to work in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs, while children of the upper classes are prepared for more skilled and high-income professions.

Paulo Freire, author of *"Pedagogy of the Oppressed"*, points out that education in schools, which is based on a system and method that conditions students to obedience and docility, is

a policy of the state, the main reason why states adopt compulsory education is that they know better than anyone else that school has important functions for the continuation of the capitalist system. Since capitalism demands a specific character trait in workers, the education system trains people to obediently conform to the tedious, monotonous hours of the factory shift and the regulations within the factory. The education provided in schools trains students to be like workers, punctual, docile, passive, willing to accept their jobs and positions. The education system does not only train the labor force as individuals with the knowledge and skills required for production. It aims to raise labor power in accordance with the class position it will have in the production process and in social life, as individuals who have adopted the dominant values and are at peace with the system (1995:59-63).

From a capitalist perspective, the main purpose of education is to provide the trained manpower required for the tasks within the social division of labor. In this process, individuals are selected and shaped according to the needs of the system rather than their own needs. The education system is designed to meet the demands of the capitalist society's labor market, and individuals are provided with the knowledge and skills to meet these demands. Hence, the educational process becomes a tool that serves the sustainability of the economic system rather than the personal development of the individual. Through education, the longevity of class differentiation and individual competition is ensured. In this way, the idea that the existing capitalist social division of labor is legitimate, natural and even inevitable, and that it is very difficult to change it, is taught to students starting from the school desks.

### **Education System and Curriculum**

Education is one of the most prominent tools in the capitalist system for the preservation of social order and the maintenance of existing social structures. The ideology and values of the system are transmitted to individuals through education. The content of education, educational policies, curriculum and textbooks are shaped for this purpose. Especially curriculum and textbooks have a decisive influence in this process.

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The curriculum or teaching programs are the fundamental educational plans of the state that determine the content, conditions, methods and techniques in which a teacher will teach a subject at school, and what will be emphasized and what will be emphasized. Through the curriculum, certain standards and goals are set in educational institutions. Curriculum, in summary, is a set of systems in which the courses, subjects, goals, values and behaviors to be taught are implemented in a planned manner in the education and training process. The curriculum is a text that stands out not only for the knowledge, values and skills it includes, but also for what it excludes, omits or ignores.

Textbooks are of great importance for the successful implementation of the curriculum. Textbooks are the tools that transfer the content of the curriculum to students and are at the center of the teaching process. "The curriculum turns education into a political tool by integrating an ideology with defined values. Any kind of knowledge presented outside the curriculum is worthless and ignored because it is not validated. Therefore, the curriculum plays a specific role in the formation and maintenance of social hierarchy. Knowledge and values given in the curriculum are 'predetermined, neutral and unchangeable' rather than variable, fluid and open to dialectical challenges" (İnal, 2008:5).

Pedagogy combines student interaction with teachers' practices, textbooks with curriculum, celebrations with rituals, and the discourses of educational administrators and advocates of educational policies. Therefore, the concept includes the classroom and the school, but in general its content goes beyond such concepts (Ewing, 2010:24). The capitalist state makes it easier for labor power to be produced as a commodity and thus capitalized by determining the content of education in line with economic and social needs, preparing the curriculum to be taught in schools, shaping education policies accordingly and partially financing education.

Along with capitalist development, the questions asked by science are not questions for the general interest of society, but questions aimed at increasing the profitability of the capitalist class. The competition of capital to get ahead in the race and increase surplus value has heightened the importance of the information needed by the market, and as an inevitable

consequence of this situation, the educational process has also begun to transform into a field where the information needed by the market is produced (where exchange value is at the forefront). In this process where knowledge is increasingly under the control of the market, the knowledge produced in educational institutions has also been commoditized.

The capitalist economic system also shapes education in accordance with its own needs. Education in this system is used as a tool to train individuals in accordance with the demands of the labor market. Educational institutions train individuals equipped with technical knowledge and skills to ensure the continuation of capital accumulation. This results in the commodification of education and the determination of its content in line with market rules. For example, in Türkiye, the rapid increase in the number of private schools is an inevitable consequence of the process of commercialization and marketization of education. On the other hand, in the commodification process of education, disciplines such as science and mathematics, which are profitable for capital, are developed, while social sciences are ignored, and some departments in universities are closed or their quotas are reduced.

The purpose of education is the compulsory shaping of individuals from an early age according to predetermined standards. Raising individuals who obey the rules of the system without objection is important for ensuring the reproduction of the system. The fact that society consists of obedient individuals facilitates social control. Because it is much more difficult to mobilize obedient, unquestioning people to change the order. Books written about the basics of education widely agree that schools reproduce the dominant order in society (Ewing, 2010:34), both in terms of the creation of productive forces (for example, working class jobs for lower class children, administrative and professional occupations for upper class children) and the maintenance of social stratification, political hierarchy and cultural hegemony.

The structural and process reorganization of the education system according to the conditions of the time and the redefinition of its content through the curriculum is an important part of the changes taking place in the social system as a whole. For example, it is desired for individuals to be forced

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to succeed in exams from the time they start school, and to adopt a lifestyle based on competition and rivalry throughout their lives, starting from the education and training process. Educational content at all levels of the education system, from pre-school to higher education, is determined through curriculum and textbooks for this purpose and educational policies are formulated accordingly. The magic slogan used to formulate these policies is 'equal opportunity in education'.

The phrase 'equal opportunity in education', used as a euphemism for the real social function of education, is based on the assumption that everyone living in society theoretically has an 'equal chance' to access education. Nevertheless, the conditions of deep economic and social inequality inherent in capitalism clearly show that it is not possible for individuals belonging to different social classes to have equal opportunities to access education on equal terms.

Offering equal educational opportunities to all does not necessarily mean that everyone enjoys the right to education on equal terms. Different socio-economic living conditions, mother tongues, differences in abilities and health conditions may require that individuals be provided with different educational opportunities. Therefore, to ensure access to education as a whole, it is more accurate to adopt the concept of 'right to education' rather than 'equal opportunity in education'. As the capitalist system intensifies educational inequalities and injustices, the struggle for the right to education aims to fight these inequalities and ensure quality and equal education for all. This struggle requires education to be provided as a public service by opposing the commodification and commercialization of education.

The official curriculum is the content and educational objectives set by the state and compulsory to be taught in schools. This curriculum is prepared according to certain standards and criteria and is transmitted to students by teachers. However, in addition to the official curriculum, there is also a hidden curriculum in the educational process. The hidden curriculum includes the hidden messages and norms in the education system that fall outside the official curriculum and are embedded in students' subconscious. This curriculum has an important role in shaping the mindset and behavior of students, but often goes unnoticed.



Because the hidden curriculum contains elements that reinforce existing power relations and hierarchies in society. For instance, issues such as gender roles, class distinctions and ethnic differences are transmitted to students through the hidden curriculum, thereby perpetuating social inequalities.

According to Apple (2006:57-70), the hidden curriculum indicates the social relations that legitimize certain understandings (such as work, authority, social rules and values) that preserve and perpetuate capitalist logic and rationality, especially as manifested in the workplace. For example, while in the official curriculum taught in schools in Türkiye, universal values such as equality and justice are emphasized, there are many examples of hidden curriculum that normalize gender roles or class distinctions.

In capitalism, schools are institutions where individuals are trained with technical knowledge and skills to ensure the continuation of capital accumulation. This situation results in the commodification of education and its adaptation to market conditions. The commercialization and marketization of education services in Türkiye has resulted in the increase in the rate of private education by 8 times, as we have seen concretely in the past 22 years.

The role of the school as an apparatus of the state is closely related to the problems of accumulation and legitimacy faced by the state, as well as to the mode of production in general. At the same time, the school is one of the institutions that enable the ruling class to establish social control and domination over other social classes, especially the working class. The organization of schools in capitalism, from the determination and implementation of the content of the curriculum to the selection of students and the way they are educated, serves the ruling class to establish<sup>3</sup> hegemony over the lower classes.

### **Main Pillars of the New Curriculum**

In Türkiye, especially after 1980, the market and religion based approach to education, which is grounded in the implementation of the capitalist system of exploitation, has been decisive in the formulation of curricula (teaching programs). The laws and regulations that determine education policies have directly affected the content and structure of the cur-

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riculum. Such policies are important in determining which subjects and values will be highlighted in education. In this respect, schools, classrooms, teachers and students, and especially the curriculum, have been at the center of political and ideological interventions and impositions by the government, especially in recent years. In this context, educational policies adopted and implemented by the AKP governments for the last 22 years concretely manifest all the "regressive" reflections of the historically shaped bourgeois ideology in the field of education.

Turkey's education policies have been used as a tool of ideological guidance for many years. The notions of 'education' and 'upbringing', forming the basis of the education system, have aimed to raise students within a certain ideological framework. Curriculums that predominantly emphasize religious and national values have aimed to internalize the existing political-ideological structure instead of developing students' critical thinking skills. This has damaged the scientific quality of education and to a great extent prevented students from receiving an education based on free thinking.

When we look at the current education policies in Turkey, we see that the educational practices are mostly identified with the concept of upbringing and aimed at raising, educating, training and accustoming children and young people within the school system, and ensuring that they behave in accordance with the morals, value judgments, traditions and customs adopted by the majority of the society. In this kind of understanding of education, the wishes of the person being educated and how and in what way they will be educated are not determined by any demand, tendency or will.

The curriculum to be implemented in schools varies from country to country, but in some countries it is formulated by teachers and gains content and form according to the environment of the school and the characteristics of the students. With the recent legal arrangements, this traditional role of teachers has been taken away from them, the curriculum has been centralized and teachers have been excluded from the curriculum development process. The curriculum, which defines how education and training activities will be carried out in schools, how the labor process will be organized, and how course content and formats will be created and organ-

ized, is formulated without including the teachers who will implement them (Buyruk, 2015:162). Similar situations can be seen in all the curriculum changes made in recent years.

The most concrete example of the curriculum being adapted to the political-ideological line of the government, rather than the real needs of children, youth and the country, is the issue of what information will be taught in educational institutions, especially in schools, how and with which tools. According to Apple (2006), curriculum selects which knowledge society considers valuable and important. These selections reflect the ideological structure of the education system. The content of the curriculum is important in terms of reproducing dominant ideologies and existing power relations in the social structure. Therefore, the content of the curriculum is under the strict control of the powers that represent social and political interests.

The curriculum and textbooks cannot be considered as simple and technical education materials outside of power relations. It is obvious that the curriculum and textbooks, which are used as tools for the reproduction of class relations and contradictions in society, are being used to provide a 'pedagogical' looking function for the protection and protection of the ruling system, in this case the one-man regime. Today, the process of fulfilling this protection and safeguarding function<sup>4</sup>, sometimes openly and sometimes hidden, through the transfer of knowledge, thought and practice in educational environments, is being realized through curriculum changes. The current government has prepared the new curriculum in accordance with how it approaches human beings, what kind of people it wants to raise, and what characteristics it aims to see in the people it raises.

The logic on which the new curriculum is built is to construct a conservative society based on the values of the past and history with the expectation of adaptation and adaptability to the conditions of contemporary life. Such a society is grounded in a kind of conflict-free, contradiction-free and tension-free vision of social reality that permeates the curriculum's overly abstract, theoretical and schematic language and logic. In fact, this idealization is inspired by a deep-rooted Islamic engineering that is ingrained in the conservative mind. The curriculum's approach of planning everything,

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leaving nothing blank, drawing a picture as perfect as possible, predicting the future, and reconstructing the past in the present is an attempt to build a kind of totalitarian conservative society through an overarching dogmatism like religion (Eğitim Sen, 2024:16).

Education is being taken further backwards in terms of content with the intervention of politically and ideologically close circles to the government in an issue such as the curriculum, which is closely related to the country and future generations. Indeed, science, history, philosophy and art courses were directly targeted with the claim that 35 percent of the curriculum was 'simplified'. By reducing the number of units and learning outcomes in some courses, a curriculum has been created that is predominantly equipped with both 'religious' and 'national and spiritual' elements and references based on 'one religion, one sect and one identity'.

The curriculum, which was prepared by ignoring the most basic principles of educational science, especially the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, was created in line with the worldview of the political power instead of the needs of education and society. The current curriculum understanding, which is mixed with nationalism, militarism, competitiveness, has no artistic and aesthetic aspect, and relies on religious discourses and rituals based on the Turkish Islamic understanding, in almost all curriculum drafts, especially in history courses, is further reinforced with the planned curriculum changes (Eğitim Sen, 2024:36).

The education system of a country is like a mirror reflecting the reality of its society. In the capitalist system, the contradictory and conflictual character of education is an indication that the school is not a simple instrument of socialization. With the recent curriculum changes, all levels of education, including pre-school education, are being reorganized with 'religious' and 'national' approaches. During this process, schools are no longer considered as educational institutions and the curriculum tries to instill a culture of 'obedience' and 'loyalty' in students. This demonstrates that schools are being turned into 'centers of discipline and reform'.

In capitalist society, the school, which is seen as a 'relatively autonomous' social space, should be seen as a space of

struggle where both 'domination and control' and emancipation are experienced by the masses and where subjects (students and teachers) develop various forms of resistance and struggle instead of passively accepting the dominant ideology. At the same time, this situation requires the components of education (students, teachers, parents, etc.) to act together and in an organized manner.

According to Freire (1995:59), education should be seen as a dialogical process in which teachers and students both teach and learn at the same time, exploring knowledge together. In this way, teachers and students can become responsible for a process in which everyone grows. Justifications based on 'authority' are no longer valid in this process; in order to be effective, authority must be on the side of freedom, not against it.

### **Conclusion**

Determining and selecting the knowledge to be imparted to students and transferring it to them through curriculum and textbooks is political from beginning to end in terms of the education system. This was the case in the past, it is the case today and will be the case in the future. Hence, regardless of what changes are made, it is not possible to evaluate the changes made in the curriculum separately or independently from the political nature of education.

One of the implicit functions of education is to meet and reproduce capitalism's need for labor force. In this respect, while education trains students for various stages of production in line with their abilities, this training process is in many respects seen at a technical level and is closed to questioning. In this process, students acquire knowledge on many subjects but superficially. In the current education system in Türkiye, there are countless examples to justify this situation. Keeping subjects which are not useful for students in daily life in the curriculum, excessive course variety and load, covering too many subjects in the courses and passing them superficially, reducing the hours of courses such as culture-arts, sports, skills, etc. or devaluing these courses can be given as examples of this situation.

We should not forget that the changes in the education system are closely related to the goals and developmental pro-

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cesses of the economic, social and political system in which we live. Not only the economic level but also complex relations such as inter-class power relations, socialization processes, gender inequalities, ideological positions, etc. are involved here. Therefore, the educational system and schools will either be completely handed over to the dominant ideology or children and young people will have to fight for the kind of education they want to receive and the kind of society they want to live in. At this point, it is crucial that individuals understand their social, economic and political realities in a critical, revolutionary way and take action to transform the system in line with their own class interests.

The fight for the right to education must include standing against the commodification and commercialization of education, ensuring that education is provided as a public service and that everyone can benefit from this service in real terms and under equal conditions. Given that this is not possible under capitalism, the struggle for the right to education and capitalism are two diametrically opposed approaches. To reconstruct education as a process that liberates human beings, it is first necessary to understand capitalist society and capitalist education, and to correctly analyze its conflictual and contradictory nature that legitimizes class differences. Such an analysis process should be based on the commodification/capitalization of knowledge and education, and should aim at the complete liberation of humanity from the capitalist system that organizes all areas of life according to its own needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Pedagogy is derived from the ancient Greek word 'Paidagogia', which means to direct or guide children. In Ancient Greece, pedagogues were slaves who supervised the education of the sons (girls were forbidden to be educated at that time) of their masters, in other words, free citizens. In that period, the people who took children to school, carried their bags and took care of them as slaves in charge of the upbringing of children were called pedagogues (paidagogos). The word means 'child education' in Latin.

<sup>2</sup> It is possible to define education as use value (educere) as the search for scientific knowledge and knowledge of the truth, and education as exchange value (educare) as the commodified knowledge and education necessary for the profitability of capital.

<sup>3</sup> Hegemony means the process of presenting the values, norms and beliefs of the ruling class as generally accepted truths. By transferring these values, beliefs and norms to students, the capitalist education system serves to establish hegemony over the lower classes.

<sup>4</sup> According to Freire (1995), education and consciousness are two fundamental concepts that are closely intertwined. These concepts mean that education is not just a simple process of transferring knowledge, but also a process by which individuals critically understand and transform their economic, social and political realities.

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## HUMAN RIGHT TO EDUCATION FOR PEACE NEEDS KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CONTEXTS OF CRISES AND CONFLICTS

All human rights documents of the United Nations emphasize (at least in their preamble) the necessity of peaceful conditions. Especially the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) from 1989 combines the children's right to education with peaceful meanings. In its article 29 the UN-CRC says : «States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to: (...) 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 (...) »

In article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights it is said that education « 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. «

In November 2023, countries adopted at UNESCO the Recommendation on education for peace and human rights, international understanding, cooperation, fundamental freedoms, global citizenship and sustainable development. As well as many other UN-Documents education is understood as a key driver of peace and international understanding. As such, the Recommendation provides the legal foundation for Target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Education (UN-SDG 2030).

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For that Human Rights to Education for Peace need knowledge about the contexts of conflicts in this new age of extremes and crises at the beginning of the 21. Century.

### **Contradictions of Western Hegemony**

More and more people, states and governments around the world have the impression that the so-called global West is making the world the way it likes it – ignoring the fact that large parts of the global south see it differently. Former US President George W. Bush wanted to express his disgust at a war of aggression in 2002. But instead of "Ukraine" he embarrassingly said "Iraq" ("a wholly unjustified and brutal invasion of Iraq...ähh..Ukraine"), reminding the audience of his most glorious exploits in the Middle East 20 years ago (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gshqwGbeLzY>). With hundreds of thousands of mostly Muslim and Arab dead from Libya and Somalia via Syria and Iraq to Afghanistan and Pakistan, the "war on terror" achieved an incredibly high number of victims through direct aggression, regime changes, occupation regimes and daily drone violence – with German Ramstein help and without any single German government politician criticizing the violation of international law or even a criminal court beginning to investigate it. The journalist Julian Assange has been in an English prison for years because he made some US war crimes known. The criminals, the clients and their accomplices did not forgive him. They wanted to make an example of him in front of the whole world and sit in judgment on the person who brought their crimes to the attention of the world. As an Australian citizen, he was threatened with extradition from Great Britain to the USA, while most "Western values" politicians remained silent or looked the other way, thereby betraying democracy and international law.

### **Dominance crisis of the Global West as a turning point**

Just imagine for a moment that, after one of the USA's many wars of aggression and occupation regimes that violated international law, influential social forces in our latitudes had tried, for example, to start not only a total, anti-American economic war, but at the same time every US economy, Science and scientists, arts, culture, music, literature, language,

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philosophy, films, athletes, citizens, everything imaginable American excluded from all schools, universities, museums, libraries, operas, concert halls, sports stadiums, radio, television and any public. Anyone who rightly suspected and disapproved of anti-Americanism in such cases should actually also reject the Russophobic character of many boycott measures against everything Russian at the moment. Anyone who was still surprised that, until recently, in a civilized constitutional state, non-vaccinated people were covered with hatred and agitation in politics, media and science with impunity (as anti-social "social pests", FDP politicians), can see the current treatment of many Russians and everything Russian only feels shame. It is injustice and discrimination that has happened to many Russians in the Western world since the end of February 2022 (in the west of the world, but not in the "rest" of the world, by the way). The legitimate war outrage expressed since February 24, 2022 would be even more credible if it also took into account the over 13,000 war victims of the Kiev military's shelling of eastern Ukrainian cities and villages in Donbass since 2014. When current US President Joseph Biden recently said that "Putin in Iraq" would fail, none of the dozens of journalists around him corrected him. In contrast, the Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman immediately reacted with humorous irritation. She didn't even know that the Russians were in Iraq - she always thought they were in Vietnam. ([https://www.youtube.com/shorts/gHPv\\_U9YxXs](https://www.youtube.com/shorts/gHPv_U9YxXs)) What is also interesting here is that Biden says in the video that Putin has practically the entire civilized world against him ("not just NATO, EU, Japan, but a whole 40 countries"). The remaining 155 states of the United Nations, which he had forgotten, did not seem worth mentioning to him. This is somewhat reminiscent of the EU foreign policy chief 2023 Josep Borrell and his neo-colonial sounding statement that the EU is a "garden" - and around it there is only "wild jungle" (<https://www.nachdenkenseiten.de/?p=91227>). It will certainly be of interest to the descendants of the indigenous people who were conquered, robbed and in some cases exterminated by the European colonizers to hear from EU chief diplomat Borrell: "Like the conquistadors, we have to invent a new world" (cf. *ibid.*). Then at least you know where you stand. This ensures that the global south and therefore

over 150 countries (i.e. over 80 percent of the world's population) no longer want to play this game.

### **Who is ruining who?**

At the moment, two contemporary diagnoses are irreconcilably opposed especially in Germany. The first comes from the German Chancellor and claims global hegemony. Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz said in the German Bundestag on February 27, 2022: "The Russian attack on Ukraine marks a turning point. It threatens our entire post-war order. This is contrary to international law. The world after is no longer the same as before". The fact that the "entire post-war order" was characterized by many wars of aggression that violated international law seems to have escaped the attention of the German head of government. The second time diagnosis analyzes and criticizes the first time diagnosis as not only distorting, but also as indicative of a specific perceptual structure in the global (NATO) North. In contrast, the Brazilian social scientist Giorgio Romano Schutte wrote in the IPG Journal in April 18, 2023 by the SPD-affiliated Friedrich Ebert Foundation on "The End of the West". He concludes: "The war against Ukraine shows that Europe's politicians and opinion makers have no idea about the perspectives and expectations of the Global South." (<https://www.ipg-journal.de/regionen/global/artikel/das-ende-des-westens-1-6647/>) Meanwhile, the current most popular NATO narrative goes something like this: "If the Russians stop fighting, the war is over – if the Ukrainians stop fighting, Ukraine is over." The price of this slogan - which is also regularly used by Chancellor Olaf Scholz - is that we can and should fight to the last Ukrainian and until the entire country is transformed into a battlefield. This is what Chancellor Scholz and others call "logic," while they portray all critics as either naive or as useful idiots bought by the Kremlin (sometimes he calls peace demonstrators as "fallen angels from hell"). Quite apart from the origins of this war, the context, the previous NATO expansion in violation of the agreements in 1989/90, the missile stationings near the Russian border, the proxy war character and the bombing of the eastern ukrainian population by Kiev troops since the unconstitutional coup of 2014 and since then over 13,000 dead before February 2022: A ceasefire and peace ne-

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gotiations mean that there will no longer be any fighting at this point. The negotiations on the prisoner of war exchange, the former grain agreement, the ongoing Russian gas deliveries through Ukraine to Hungary and Austria as well as the preliminary drafts of a peace agreement in March/April 2022 (which was torpedoed by Western powers) prove that sensible negotiations are possible and the everyday massacre can be stopped.

Instead of focusing on the de-escalation, demilitarization and civilization of international relations and conflicts, the highest German diplomat, Federal Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock appeared at an Aachen carnival session in spring 2023. She proudly reported that she actually wanted to appear dressed up in a "LEOPARD" costume, but was afraid that the Federal Chancellery would ban her from traveling abroad for three weeks. The audience from the higher echelons of society was quite amused. And at the beginning of June 2023 the time had finally come. The tabloid BILD made old Wehrmacht nostalgics and other Russian haters rave. It said in big letters: "The whole world was waiting for this. Now the time has come: Ukraine is advancing against the Russians with German Leopard 2 tanks! The German battle tanks were spotted on the battlefield for the first time, taking on the fight against the Russian invaders. The offensive is underway!" (BILD.de from June 8, 2023) This image headline offers the usual fake news from the global north: The whole world expected the deployment of German tanks - when 80% of the world is against arms deliveries and sanctions policy. With its usual sense of invented truth, the paper was in the average bubble of the media mainstream in the global north.

### **85% of the world's population is regularly ignored in Western media**

Based on quantified discourse analyzes of large western information media such as Tagesschau, SPIEGEL, New York Times, Le Monde, CNN etc., the humanities scholar Ladislaus Ludescher can prove that the majority of humanity and its topics and problems have regularly received virtually no coverage in the global news organs for years. "Given that around 85 percent of the world's population lives in countries in the Global South, this results in a contribution scheme with an inversely negative relationship. To put it bluntly: 15 percent

of the world's population enjoys more than 85 percent of the media attention, while 85 percent of the world's population receives less than 15 percent of the media attention." (Telepolis.de from April 22, 2023) When the German Chancellor or the German Foreign Minister fly to Chile, Brazil, South Africa or Vietnam and "explain" to the governments there that an unprecedented, terrible terrorist regime is waging a war of aggression that is supposedly the first since the Second World War and they, the Southern countries should therefore immediately decide on all sanctions and supply weapons against Russia, it will be difficult. The population and governments of many countries in the global south usually do not have as poor historical memory as German government members. They can still remember well the support of West-German governments and industry groups for the US bombing wars in Vietnam and Laos, as well as the West-German support for the military dictatorships and terrorist regimes in their and many other countries, for example in the 1960s and 1970s. But Annalena Baerbock wasn't born then and Olaf Scholz doesn't just have serious memory problems when it comes to CumEx issues. That is why the two still believe that the so-called rules-based world order after the Second World War had not been violated by any war of aggression that violated international law until February 24, 2022. Even die-hard transatlantic scientists seem to sense this contradiction in Western perceptions on the global political level, even though they also overlook the intra-Western contrasts and conflicts. In March 2023, a study (a so-called policy brief) by the European Council on Foreign Affairs (ECFR), a pan-European think tank headquartered in Berlin, published impressive results. According to this survey study with the telling title: "United West, divided from the Rest", the West has moved closer together in the face of the war in Ukraine, but the world is turning into a post-Western, more precisely in a multipolar world and the self-confidence of non-Western states is growing. The (proxy) war between Russia and (NATO) Ukraine is proving to be a turning point in world history.

### **Whose end? Whose beginning?**

The following time diagnosis also shows how desire can become the father of thought: »We are currently witnessing the

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disintegration of the Russian Empire, the post-Soviet space. This process did not take place in 1991, but is happening now.« The person who said this in an interview with SPIEGEL on December 31, 2022 is Stefan Meister. He worked for the Green Party-affiliated Heinrich Böll Foundation in Georgia until 2021 and is now head of the “International Order and Democracy” program of the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) in Berlin. Meister's goal is the complete rejection of the former Federal Republic of Germany's Eastern policy from the 1960s to the beginning of the 21st century, which also took legitimate Russian security interests into account in foreign policy (Bahr, Brandt, Schmid, etc.). He diagnoses: »The collapse of the Russian Empire is taking place before our eyes. Moscow can no longer create stability, not in Central Asia, not in the South Caucasus. And we have no idea how we as Germany and the EU want to react to this in the medium to long term.“ He finally summarizes his ideas under the SPIEGEL headline “Regime change (in Moscow!, M.K.) must be the goal of German policy.” It remains to be seen whether he and those whose interests he represents will not go a bit overboard with this. When paramilitary units from the so-called Wagner Group refused to be integrated into the regular Russian military from June 23rd to 24th, 2023 and threatened to stage a “March on Moscow”, some “regime changers” were already seeing themselves Goal of your dreams. Out of sheer euphoria, the NATO-compliant Bundeswehr professor Carlos Masala, for example, tweeted: “I love the smell of civil war in the morning!”, but later deleted the entry due to mass opposition on the Internet (ZEIT.de dated June 26, 2023). How a scientist can be so semi-senile or so suicidal as to wish for a Russia in the chaos of civil war, with a Mr. Prigozhin near the atomic bomb button, remains the secret of many hawks of war these days. Meanwhile, the World Risk Report 2023 from the World Economic Forum in Davos (WEF) and the Munich Security Report 2023 from the Munich NATO “Security Conference” (msc) can be seen as an expression of the crisis perceptions of the political, economic and military elites of the West. They make it clear – sometimes explicitly and often implicitly – that the hegemony of the Western world order simply no longer exists. No matter which economic, political or military conflict area is used (Ukraine war, Russia rela-

tions, OPEC oil policy, dollar dogma, free trade and protectionism, etc.): “The West” no longer speaks for the majority of all the states of the world and not (any longer?) for the majority of humanity. And he can't keep them all under his control anymore. Even within the NATO West there are major divisions (see US protectionism at the expense of Europe). Although the hubris and arrogance of power still exists, the world rulers (or their political administrators) can no longer do what they want and the majority of the ruled, especially in the global south, don't like no longer to do what they should. It could therefore be that the Olaf Scholz of the early 1980s still had a greater grasp of reality than the same person 40 years later. In 1984, anyway, the then Young Socialist (Juso) in the SPD, Olaf Scholz, had the following to say about the rearmament in Europe and its causes: “Aspects of socialist peace work” should take into account that the USA's deployment of missiles in the Federal Republic of Germany in the early 1980s was a “ increasingly aggressive strategy of the USA” (p. 85). The “cause of the rearmament can be found in the aggressive, imperialist NATO strategy” (p. 88). One sees “the aggressive character of the US military strategy” (p. 89) (Bertram Sauer/Olaf Scholz: Aspects of socialist peace work , in: SPW 22 (1984), pp.85-89). However, Scholz diligently forgot all of that - along with the CumEx discussions with high-ranking bankers. That's perhaps why he no longer notices the contradictions of the Western world and its sanctions policy: “ruining Russia”, supplying weapons, sowing seeds “no matter what the voters think” and then reaping inflation, recession and the dangers of (nuclear) war, while the “great transatlantic brother” makes it clear who is the master of the house through the Nord Stream blow-up and Ramstein arrogance.

A somewhat more self-critical definition of the epoch can be found in the classics: “From here and today a new epoch in world history begins, and you can say that you were there” - wrote Johann Wolfgang Goethe about the so-called cannonade of Valmy in 1792, in which revolutionary France repulsed the Prussian-Austrian invasion army. Goethe's diagnosis was clearly about the impending downfall of his own previous order - namely the feudal order against a bourgeois people's army. The Chancellor, who sometimes suffers from amnesia,

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may have sensed a real “turning point”, but perceived and interpreted it in an extremely distorted way. Perhaps the year 2022 has actually heralded a “turning point” with the escalation of the (proxy) war in Ukraine and the world economic war against Russia. Contrary to the ideas of Meister and Scholz, it could go down in world history as the most visible expression of the beginning of the westernization crisis, “de-Westernization,” the de-dollarization of world trade and the de-Americanization of world capitalism, in short: the beginning Enforcing pluripolarity in the world. Since ruling systems - let alone nuclear powers - only very rarely intend to cede power voluntarily and without violence, this process is likely to be quite bloody. His contemporaries are not exactly to be envied - the closer to the battlefield, the worse. But perhaps the Mexican, Brazilian, Indian, Chinese, Indonesian or South African peace proposals will still be effective (German diplomacy is, as we know, canceled - and that probably wouldn't be the worst news for the survival of humanity).

### **A right to understand the new global world order after western hegemonical defeat?**

We live in an Age of Crises in which ambitious great power politics are accompanied by economic wars, economic decline and social cuts. It is a time when there are mass demonstrations against right-wing extremist activities, but the shift to the right in German politics continues unabated; a time when, according to the UN report, a genocide of Palestinians is taking place before our very eyes (see UN report: <https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/a-hrc-55-73-auf.pdf>); at a time when a negotiated peace in the Ukraine war is still being rejected by the EU and NATO; at a time when the risk of nuclear war in Europe is increasing and at the same time being trivialised by the pursuit of nuclear weapons; at a time when NATO's large-scale manoeuvres are creating a new backdrop of threats against Russia.

From a global perspective, the context looks different again. Former Bundeswehr and NATO general Harald Kujat says: ‘We are actually in a new phase in this new geopolitical world order at the moment. Two blocs are now emerging. On the one hand, there are still the BRICS states, but also this Shanghai Cooperation [SCO] and the inclusion of six other



states since the beginning of the year, including Saudi Arabia, a very close ally of the United States to date, and, as far as I know, over 30 other states that want to join this BRICS organisation, including many South American states. We can see that a very strong bloc is emerging here. On the other hand, the United States is trying to integrate the European states into the Western bloc against China via the NATO bridge. So what we are seeing here at the moment as a result of the war in Ukraine is that this development has taken on a new dynamic. The Ukraine war has contributed to the formation and consolidation of this bloc [...]. This is a crucial point for us, because it is a war that is taking place on European territory. The risk of escalation is not, as many say, that a third world war will break out, but that a major European war will break out, with the further risk that a European conventional war could also turn into a nuclear war. This is a very decisive factor for Europe, but not so much for the United States. In this respect, we have completely different security interests here. But nobody is naming them, that's our problem." (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQXbSJdH4ME>).

Otherwise, the new Cold War in all its facets adheres to the ten commandments of war propaganda, which the British politician Arthur Ponsonby was able to identify almost 100 years ago from research into the First World War. They read:

1. we do not want war!
2. the enemy is solely responsible for the war!
3. the leader of the enemy camp is a devil!
4. we are defending a noble goal and no special interests!
5. the enemy commits atrocities on purpose; if we make mistakes, it is unintentional.
6. the enemy uses unauthorised weapons.
7. we suffer low losses, the enemy's losses are considerable.
8. recognised cultural figures and scientists support our cause.
9. there is something sacred about our cause.
10. anyone who doubts our propaganda is working for the enemy and is therefore a traitor.

We could now argue about which of these ten commandments has not (yet) been put forward in a direct or indirect way by our western political leaders and their media companions, among others.

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Meanwhile, the militarisation of society and thought is progressing. While the arguments of rearmament fanatics are losing substance and popularity, their attacks on dissenters are gaining ever more aggressive and repressive quantities and qualities. This corresponds to the law of ruling interests in favour of the military-industrial complex of the hegemonic power. From a German perspective, CDU politician Roderich Kiesewetter has a clear explanation for the Ukrainian widows and orphans at the end of 2023 as to why their husbands and fathers have to die: Europe's largest lithium deposits in the Donetsk-Lugansk region are an important target in the 'proxy war' for the energy transition. ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Urid8hF54\\_k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Urid8hF54_k)). « If Europe wants to realise the energy transition, it needs its own lithium deposits. The largest lithium deposits in Europe are in the Donetsk-Lugansk region. (...) So we also have completely different goals in the background here.' (ARD report from Berlin from 17.12.2023) How did it come about that such war strategists put our lives in danger?

**One-sided reporting in politics and the media or:  
'In the midst of peace, the enemy attacks us'?**

In March 2021, Ukrainian President Zelensky signed a decree to recapture Crimea. This was followed by a massive Ukrainian troop deployment in the south-east of the country, and from 16 February 2022, the OSCE recorded a sharp increase in artillery shelling of the Donbass by the Ukrainian army. On 24 February 2022, President Putin ordered the Russian army to invade Ukraine in violation of international law.

In spring 2022, the Baden-Württemberg State Centre for Political Education published a brochure on the war in Ukraine. With its title 'Putin's attack on peace', it made it easy to forget that - as mentioned - regions in the Donbass had already been under Ukrainian artillery fire for eight years. In the caricature on the cover of the brochure, a Russian soldier says to his comrades: 'They (the Ukrainians; M.K.) look like humans, but they are bloodthirsty, hate-filled monsters!' This set the bar pretty low for high-quality democratic political education that refrained from war propaganda.

Shortly afterwards, the Federal Agency for Civic Education (BPB) also published a brochure on the subject. It is called: 'What's up? Russia's war against Ukraine'. In it, all schoolchildren in Germany have to learn that 'Russia is ruled in an authoritarian manner', while Ukraine is a 'democracy'. The 14 or so parties that have been banned since 2022 and the banned non-governmental media in Ukraine will certainly have thanked the Federal Centre.

In the chronology of events, NATO is declared to be a defence alliance. The authors leave out the expansionism of the war alliance, which was forced after 1990 against all promises, as well as the wars of aggression that have been in violation of international law for more than 25 years (hundreds of thousands of mostly Muslim deaths apparently do not count). This also makes it easier to report on the fact that Moscow is not allowed to talk about 'war' and there is no need to mention the nice substitute words that have been prescribed in Germany since 1999 (e.g. 'humanitarian intervention' or the 'defence of Germany's security in the Hindukush').

According to the BPB brochure, there are also 'pro-European' and 'pro-Russian' forces in Ukraine that have been wrestling with each other for more than ten years. Here we should pause again: 'Pro-European'? Europe has far more countries than the 27 EU states. On a map of the world published by the Federal Agency for Civic Education, the largest city in Europe is Moscow (8.6 million inhabitants). According to this world map from the BpB, the longest river in Europe is actually the Volga (3,688 km). Whoever is probably the most important inhabitant of the Kremlin: he gets up in Europe in the morning and goes to bed in Europe in the evening. Anyone who pursues political education at the highest level should be more precise here. In the current phase of extreme and dangerous enemy constructions, the aforementioned juxtaposition is simply irresponsible.

According to the BPB, the fact that the Minsk Agreements were signed between 2014 and 2022 is something that Germany's schoolchildren apparently do not need to know, as the government in Kiev openly stated at the same time that it would not honour these agreements, which were also adopted by the UN Security Council (a strategy of arming Ukraine that has since been admitted by former French President

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Hollande and former German Chancellor Merkel) - resulting in the continuous shelling of Donbass with heavy artillery. Incidentally, this was the state labelled 'peace' by the Baden-Württemberg State Centre for Political Education, to which 'Putin's attack' was allegedly directed (did he attack all alone or did he at least have a cook with him?).

According to the BPB brochure, there are 'also people in Ukraine who fight voluntarily'. A reference to what deserters have been facing since 24 February 2022 would have been too much to ask (after all, our leading media are not interested in this either, have so far only known Ukrainian heroic reports and are happy to remain silent about the more than 600,000 men fit for military service who have fled Ukraine). Many have also 'become victims of war crimes'. The alleged war crimes (e.g. Butsha, Kramatorsk, Mariupol, etc.) should indeed be thoroughly investigated by a neutral party.

### **Prospects for peace?**

At the end of its brochure, the BPB asks: 'How can peace be achieved?' Why it does not even mention the proposals presented to Ukrainian President Zelensky by German Chancellor Scholz and French President Macron in Munich in February 2022 before the war (neutrality and autonomy arrangements in the east) remains its secret. The Russian negotiation proposal of December 2021 or the Istanbul ceasefire draft of March/April 2022, which was torpedoed by the West, are also not mentioned (cf. <https://www.nachdenkenseiten.de/?p=91561>).

Now, one can certainly have different, even controversial views on all points of the conflict analysis in the sense of the Beutelsbach Consensus - but unfortunately the BPB does not take this into account. It is therefore not surprising that the 'political reactions to the war' are reported quite casually: 'Germany and other countries are supplying weapons to Ukraine' and 'Germany wants to better equip the Bundeswehr for the future'. 100 billion euros and an additional two per cent of gross domestic product (approx. 70 billion euros annually) for armaments. This is certainly money well spent and will certainly improve the situation in Germany's hospitals, daycare centres, schools, universities and on Germany's roads and bridges. However, the majority of the population is

justifiably afraid of Germany's involvement in the war, the dangers of nuclear war and falling living standards as a result of the sanctions.

### **Conclusion**

So what do Germany's schoolchildren learn from the brochures of the Centres for Political Education? Do not worry. Everything is in order and in the best hands of people who say: 'Of course we are harming ourselves' (Habeck), we 'will ruin Russia' and no longer accept energy supplies - 'forever' (Baerbock) or - as one of the four points of the new 'Scholz Doctrine' of 8 May 2022 - 'all measures must harm Russia more than us'.

Under no circumstances should they learn what the 'turning points' since 1989 involved:

1. promises made by Western foreign ministers to the USSR/CIS after 1990 that NATO would not move eastwards if the Red Army withdrew (see WELT of 18 February 2022).

2. enquiries by Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin until 2000 as to whether the CIS could even become a NATO member.

3. western (US) rejection of eastern attempts at rapprochement to form a common security alliance after NATO and the Warsaw Pact

- 4 NATO expansion contrary to all its own promises since the 1990s.

5. shifting of Europe's borders and questioning of the post-war order, among other things through the war of aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999, which violated international law, the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade and the NATO annexation of Kosovo. NATO's subsequent so-called anti-terror wars, with their millions of deaths, have left no trace of the 'value-based world order' - if it ever existed - other than the added value of the defence industries.

The prehistory of the Ukraine war also includes the fact that high-ranking US politicians, military leaders, intelligence chiefs, scientists and diplomats have been pointing out since the 1990s that NATO's expansion to the east would divide Europe and bring with it the dangers of war - just as Yeltsin and Gorbachev did (see Mikhail Gorbachev, in: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IipaGt9WmcE>). It is bitter, but

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instructive for research into the prehistory of the Ukraine war to read the old documents again (cf. <https://globalbridge.ch/die-mitverantwortung-der-usa-und-der-nato-vor-der-osterweiterung-der-nato-wurde-oefftlich-gewarnt/>). Even the former US Secretary of Defence Robert S. McNamara joined many others in the warnings: (<https://globalbridge.ch/politisch-strategischer-fehler-von-historischem-ausmass/>).

All 'Cassandra cries' have been suppressed - even by most of today's political decision-makers, media reporters and scientific researchers.

The human right to education for peace should include a critical reception of the NATO-narratives that follow the logic of war.

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## EDUCATE IN HUMAN RIGHTS IN PALESTINE

How to continue educating in Palestine after the genocide in Gaza and the West Bank? How to continue believing in humanity and democratic values, in justice and human rights after the Holocaust suffered by the Palestinian population at the hands of an Israeli Zionist regime that has been occupying a territory and imposing an apartheid for 75 years on an entire population, with the complicit silence and active collaboration in some cases of a large part of the West?

The genocide in Gaza and the West Bank is not just the product of a policy of Israel's neo-fascist and ultra-religious extremist leadership. First of all, since this government has been elected by the Israeli population that has kept in power the head of the radical right-wing Likud party, Netanyahu, with three open corruption investigations against him, who governs with other ultra-right (Jewish Power, Religious Zionism and Noam), fundamentalist and radical parties, whose leaders publicly pride themselves on being supremacists and racists.

In the second place, because only an insignificant minority of the Israeli population has openly opposed the colonial plan of looting, expulsion and systematic eradication of the Palestinian population from their territories that the Israeli regime has practiced, no matter who has been in power, for the last 75 years.

In the third place, because this was a plan that had already been designed for years, as shown by Netanyahu's own state-

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ments in an “off the record” interview in 2001 in which he expresses his plans regarding Gaza: “The main point is, first of all, to hit them, not once but several times, so painfully that the price they pay is unbearable. Up to now, the price is not unbearable. [I mean] a full-scale attack on the Palestinian Authority, making them fear that everything is about to collapse.”

And, in the fourth place, because it is the road map of Zionism, supported especially by the United States, which seeks to appropriate Palestine, since, according to this doctrine, it is the land chosen by their god for the Jews and to expel the entire Palestinian population, as clearly expressed by the Zionist regime's own ministers, Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben Gvir, who propose the “Final Solution” in Gaza, demanding the resettlement of the Palestinians outside Gaza. These statements, dated prior to October 7, confirm what Zionism does on a daily basis in Palestinian territory, robbing, displacing, and exterminating the original population in order to end up “killing the Palestinians and taking over the territory”, as Nurit Peled explains.

Even more significant than all these reasons, the model of education that has been designed in Israel for decades, as Nurit Peled, an Israeli academic and researcher of racism in the Israeli education system, has shown: “In Israel there is a racist culture that dehumanizes Palestinians”.

Internationally renowned for her research on the presence of racism and propaganda in Israeli textbooks and the Israeli educational system. In her research, she analyzes how Israeli education is very traumatizing and aggressive from the age of three, so that children live the trauma of the Holocaust and believe that there is another Holocaust around the corner to be perpetrated by Arabs instead of Germans. The school books actually emphasize this all the time. This leads to a nationalism that ends up with many teenage people ready to kill any Palestinian of any age, because they believe that they are the new Nazis who are going to exterminate them. They believe that anyone who is not Jewish is a potential Nazi, explains this Jewish professor and researcher.

“There is brainwashing going on in society, through education and propaganda. There are not many people who know anything about what is happening in the occupied territories,

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nor are they interested in it," she says in an interview with journalist Olga Rodriguez. It seems to recreate the movie "The Zone of Interest" where the commandant of Auschwitz, Rudolf Höss and his wife, struggle to build a dream life for their family in a house with a garden near the concentration camp where he exterminated thousands of human lives. She concluded that the Israeli government "is a government of criminals, fundamentalists and racists. And I don't see anyone expelling them" because opposition politicians speak the same language.

This society ... sick with religious fanaticism and Zionist neo-fascism, has been educated in this fanatical, national-fascist and ultra-religious model from school and by means of educational socialization through systematic propaganda. Therefore, no wonder that while we see Palestinian boys and girls being burned alive and torn to pieces by Israeli army white phosphorous bombs, prohibited by international conventions, Zionist settlers throw parties with their sons and daughters on the Gaza border where they dance armed with assault rifles. It's almost as if at the gates of the Auschwitz concentration camps the German Nazis had staged parties mocking the prisoners who were to be exterminated.

At the same time, other Zionist settlers attack and burn humanitarian aid trucks on their way to the Gaza Strip, destroying food and medicine and thus preventing the arrival of humanitarian aid sent by international humanitarian agencies to Palestinians who are starving to death due to the Zionist army's destruction. They are aware that not only children die of hunger, but that the lack of health care also kills many injured adults. Acute malnutrition already affects 31% of children in the northern Gaza Strip. "This education explains why there are so many people who say 'let's kill them all,' because they are afraid of anyone, anyone," says expert Nurit Peled.

Therefore, it is no longer even a news item or a scandal that the UN's own International Court of Justice in The Hague declared that "incitement to genocide emanates from the highest level" of the Israeli government. It is now becoming normal for Israeli ministers and members of parliament to make statements that are dehumanizing or in defense, directly or indirectly, of the killing of Palestinian civilians. "Incitement

to genocide” with statements advocating “wiping Gaza off the face of the earth” are made with impunity. In fact, Israel's Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu has repeated his call to attack the Gaza Strip with a nuclear bomb and boasted that “even in The Hague they know my position.” These statements by Israeli ministers and politicians come close to those of the Nazi hierarchs of the Third Reich.

The ultrareligious sector operates in a similar way. The Zionist rabbi, Meir Mazuz, just as the Nazis did with the Jews, dehumanizes the Palestinians and says that they are “animals” who should not be helped: “if we were dealing with humans, we would send humanitarian aid to Gaza, but here we are dealing with animals,” he declares. An Israeli soldier repeats these same words in front of the television cameras: “They are animals, you can film them like on the Discovery Channel. The entire Ramallah (West Bank) is a jungle, there are monkeys, dogs, gorillas... but they are locked up and can't get out. Palestinians are animals, we are humans”. Consequences may be seen in the recorded videos of the cold-blooded murder of Atta Mukbil, an elderly and mute man, by a soldier who was enthusiastically congratulated by his comrades while bragging about having “shot him four times”.

Innumerable videos have been spread on social networks showing how the very young boys and girls in the Israeli armed forces celebrate the murder of children. Laughing at the massacres. Videos of Israelis saying Palestinians are animals. In turn, photos have been published showing Israeli children writing their names on bombs intended to kill other children in Gaza as early as 2006. As recently Nikki Haley, US Republican Party politician and Zionist, did the same by signing bombs against Gaza.

What kind of society has been created under the Zionist state of Israel, for the sake of a religious belief or with the excuse of that belief? The fundamental problem is that Israeli children from school onwards are hearing that Palestinians are animals and that none of them are innocent. In fact, Israel can kill any Palestinian and call him a terrorist or a human shield to justify his murder. This is what the so-called “chosen people of Israel” are doing to the children of Gaza, to adults and elderly people, with the bombs that the so-called “country of freedom” of the USA sends them.

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"God created Israel and he gave the Palestinian land to the Jews 3000 years ago by divine command. God says we can steal this territory because he chose it. Saying that the West Bank is an occupied territory is anti-Semitism." Zionist Rabbi Aryeh L. Heintz claims that they are allowed to steal land by "divine command" and that anyone who denies this is an anti-Semite.

The same is stated by Daniella Weiss, Zionist leader of the settler movement, who openly confesses that "God's promise to the Jews is biblical Israel, which has 3000 kilometers of territory... it is a part of God's chosen universe for the Jews. I'm in the business of brainwashing 16-year-olds... You can call it cleansing, apartheid. I choose the way to protect the State of Israel."

This is the same faith of John Hagee, Zionist leader of the organization "Christians United for Israel", speaking of the Greater Israel project, an imperialist project in the style of Nazi Germany's living space, which will invade and occupy a large part of the Middle East: "God promised the Jewish people these lands, all of Israel, half of Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Kuwait and three-quarters of Saudi Arabia." This Zionist fanatic leads an organization with 10 million members in the United States, that is, ten million active voters, and is among the Zionists who influence US foreign policy, for example, he is the one who advised Trump to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of apartheid and who encouraged him to move the US embassy to Jerusalem.

What can be expected from such a mentally, culturally, ideologically and socially sick society? Fanaticized to the extent of promoting and maintaining all the barbarism they are committing in this new holocaust for months and months with total impunity, even diverting social, education and health resources to the military massacre. What can be expected from an international society with representatives who watch with indifference this new holocaust, broadcast live by the victims themselves? What can be expected from the self-styled international community that not only has not prevented the genocide from happening in order to stop such an atrocity, but on the contrary finances and collaborates in it and brutally represses any manifestation of solidarity with the massacred Palestinian people?

That is why the solution cannot come from Israel, the occupying country. It must be a solution established and guaranteed militarily and diplomatically by the only international body with the capacity to do so, the UN. By eliminating, of course, once and for all, the possibility of veto that a few members have. A solution that requires, as demanded by the Uni-Digna university professors' collective, the interposition of an international force to oblige the Israeli regime to accept

(a) To put an immediate end to the violence of occupation, apartheid and colonization of Palestine that it has been carrying out for 75 years, as the violence does not begin on October 7, 2023;

(b) The initiation of new “Nuremberg trials” to sanction the responsibilities of all leaders, officials, military and collaborators in the various crimes and abuses against humanity committed during the entire Palestinian occupation and apartheid and in this genocide;

(c) The restoration of everything destroyed and the recuperation and reparation of everything plundered in these years, at the expense of the Israeli party that caused the damage;

(d) The creation of a single secular and democratic State in the Palestinian territory where people of different beliefs, ideologies and religions can coexist without any kind of discrimination;

(e) The international community should also commit itself to provide economic and psychological assistance to the Palestinian population and to create a special fund for immediate and long-term aid;

(f) An education process of coexistence in equality and mutual respect with other human beings of the Israeli population, and simultaneously of systematic uneducation and unlearning with respect to the prevailing Zionism through a radical change of its educational system and its socialization in the Zionist propaganda.

Every other solution would only be an atrocious extension of Zionist colonialism and of the extermination plan of the Palestinian population that a radically sick Israeli society has been putting into practice.

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## THE EVOLUTION OF EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS IN AFRICA DURING THE ERA OF THE 4TH AND 5TH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTIONS:

# CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### **Introduction**

Education, the foundation of human progress and a lever for economic growth, finds itself at a pivotal moment in Africa. The continent, with its vibrant youth, is evolving into an era where the 4th—and even 5th—industrial revolution is shaking up our benchmarks, making it urgent to change traditional education systems. These revolutions, so to speak, do not simply bring a few superficial improvements; they bring with them the rise of artificial intelligence, big data, the Internet of Things, and other innovations that are, in fact, redefining the skills needed to thrive in work and in daily life. In a way, Africa holds the potential to become a major player in this transformation—provided, of course, that it guarantees access to quality education for all, which is not yet easy given persistent inequalities. Indeed, we note that digital infrastructure remains limited, educational programs struggle to keep pace with market needs, and the integration of local knowledge in this globalized context remains a major challenge. So, how can African education systems, in practice, adapt to overcome these obstacles while seizing the opportunities brought by these new technologies, without losing sight of equity and inclusion? It is precisely on this central, albeit complex, question that this article will attempt to shed light by exploring various issues, strategies and perspectives for developing the right to education on the continent in the era of these industrial revolutions.

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## **PART I.**

### **Colonial Legacy, Economic Crises, and Persistent Challenges for Education in Africa: Overcoming a Complex Legacy**

The imprint of colonization on African education systems is profound and complex, still shaping the continent's educational realities today. Colonial powers often established selective and unequal education systems, designed to train a small and subordinate elite to serve their interests. This approach has left lasting scars, manifesting in a series of persistent challenges

#### **1) Inequalities in Access: A Persistent Gap, Exacerbated by the Commercialisation of Education and State Disinvestment**

Socio-economic disparities in Africa create a growing gap in access to education for young people. Geographic inequalities remain glaring, particularly about access to education in rural and remote areas where infrastructure is often lacking and resources are scarce. Gender-based inequalities further exacerbate these disparities. Girls and women face additional challenges, such as early marriage, teenage pregnancy, discriminatory cultural norms, and gender-based violence. Marginalized groups, such as individuals with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and refugees, are frequently excluded from formal education systems due to discrimination and the lack of appropriate structures.

More seriously, state disengagement has had devastating consequences for education. Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) imposed by international donors were adopted by many African countries, forced by the economic crises of the 1980s and 1990s. These Structural Adjustment Programs frequently led to a severe reduction in public spending on education, resulting in dilapidated infrastructure, a lack of teaching materials, a shortage of teachers, and a drop in teacher salaries. This withdrawal of investment has exacerbated disparities in access to education, especially for the most disadvantaged groups, and has jeopardized the quality of teaching.

The commodification of education exacerbates these disparities. Increasingly privatized for profit and state disinvestment, education has seen its costs rise, making it unaffordable for low-income families. The emergence of private

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educational institutions of varying levels has created a dual system, in which students from privileged backgrounds enjoy high-quality education, while those from precarious backgrounds find themselves in poorly funded and poor-quality institutions.

## **2) Quality of Education: Many Challenges to Address**

Educational curricula are often outdated, failing to reflect local realities or the needs of the contemporary labour market. They sometimes favor memorisation over critical thinking and problem-solving. The lack of qualified educators, unstable working conditions, and low salaries contribute to teacher disengagement and a decline in teaching excellence. Conventional teaching methods, focused on the teacher and the passive dissemination of knowledge, hinder the acquisition of crucial skills such as creativity, innovation, and teamwork. The frequent failure to incorporate local knowledge into curricula is a crucial aspect that is often overlooked.

## **3) The Education-Employment Mismatch – A Real Headache**

Many graduates struggle to find suitable employment, primarily because they often lack the practical and technical skills employers seek. Furthermore, the lack of strong links between educational institutions and the business world seriously compromises the alignment between the training received and real market needs. However, the informal sector, which plays a crucial role in the African economy, is not integrated into traditional education systems – leaving young people ill-prepared to embark on self-employment or entrepreneurship.

Despite these obstacles, it must be recognized—and I would like to add here, from a personal perspective, that despite some imperfections—that since independence, much progress has been made in Africa. Efforts, generally considerable, have made it possible to expand access to education, improve the quality of teaching, and promote gender equality. We are thus seeing the emergence, sometimes haphazardly but encouragingly, of several innovative initiatives led by governments, civil society, and certain international partners.

That said, it appears essential to fundamentally rethink the continent's education systems. To effectively reform the



current model, a comprehensive and coordinated approach is necessary: it involves tackling the roots of inequalities, adapting curricula to the changing demands of the 21st century, and mobilizing essential resources to guarantee, even if everything is not perfect, a quality education for everyone.

## **PART II.**

### **The 4th and 5th Industrial Revolutions: Transformative Potential to Seize, Complex Challenges to Overcome**

The 4th and 5th Industrial Revolutions, driven by an unprecedented wave of technological innovation, offer Africa a unique opportunity to rethink and transform its education systems. However, realizing this transformative potential depends on the continent's ability to overcome complex and multidimensional challenges.

#### **1) Opportunities: A Promising Future for Education in Africa**

Digital technologies offer considerable potential to expand access to education and improve its quality. Tools such as e-learning, MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), and online educational platforms have the ability to overcome geographic and socioeconomic barriers, thus making it possible to reach remote and often neglected populations. Moreover, these technologies facilitate the personalization of learning, adapting content and teaching methods to the specific needs of each student. The integration of virtual and augmented reality also enriches the educational experience, making abstract concepts more tangible and interactive. Furthermore, artificial intelligence helps improve assessment tools, providing better insight into student performance.

#### **2) Developing 21st-Century Skills: A Necessity for the Future**

Current industrial revolutions require the acquisition of new skills, such as critical thinking, complex problem-solving, creativity, collaboration, and communication. It is therefore essential to reorient educational programs to incorporate these skills, emphasizing pedagogical approaches such as project-based learning, collaborative learning, and real-world problem-based learning. Investing in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields is also crucial to prepare young people for the professional challenges of tomorrow.

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### **3) Personalization of Learning Through Artificial Intelligence: A Potential Transformation**

Artificial intelligence has the ability to analyze student data to identify their strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles, allowing for the effective personalization of content and teaching methods. AI systems can also provide real-time feedback, helping students identify mistakes and improve their performance. Furthermore, AI's automation of certain administrative tasks frees up teachers' time, allowing them to focus more on teaching and supporting students.

The 4th and 5th industrial revolutions offer Africa a unique opportunity to build a more equitable, inclusive education system that is fit for the challenges of the 21st century. However, achieving this vision requires strong political commitment, massive investment, and close collaboration between governments, civil society, the private sector, and international partners.

## **PART III.**

### **Strategies and Recommendations for Transformative Education in Africa: An Ambitious Action Plan for the Future**

Transforming education in Africa in the era of the 4th and 5th industrial revolutions requires a bold vision and an ambitious action plan that mobilizes the resources and skills of all stakeholders.

#### **1) Investments in Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity**

Massive investments in digital infrastructure and connectivity are the cornerstone of transformation. Expanding access to broadband internet in both rural and urban areas is essential, adopting innovative solutions such as community networks and satellite technologies. Furthermore, developing strong and reliable digital infrastructure within schools by equipping classrooms with computers, tablets, and interactive whiteboards is crucial. Public-private partnerships are also necessary to finance the development of this infrastructure, involving telecommunications companies, internet service providers, and international organizations. Finally, ensuring access to reliable energy in schools is essential to ensure the proper functioning of digital tools.

## **2) Designing educational programs focused on future skills**

Designing educational programs focused on future skills is essential to prepare young people for the jobs of tomorrow. This involves reforming school curricula to incorporate 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, complex problem-solving, creativity, collaboration, communication, and digital literacy. It is also important to prioritize project-based learning, collaborative learning, and problem-based learning, which will enable students to develop their autonomy and initiative. Integrating digital technologies into educational programs, through tools such as simulations, educational games, and online learning platforms, will promote interactive and personalized learning. Furthermore, special attention must be paid to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) by implementing specialized training programs and encouraging girls to consider careers in these fields.

## **3) Continuing Teacher Training and Developing Innovative Pedagogies**

It is crucial to invest in the initial and continuing training of teachers, who are key players in the transformation process, by training them in educational technologies and innovative pedagogical approaches. This will enable them to acquire the skills necessary to effectively integrate these technologies into their teaching. Furthermore, the creation of communities of practice is essential to foster the sharing of knowledge and experience among teachers, thus stimulating collaboration and the exchange of best practices. Encouraging the adoption of active, learner-centered pedagogies is also fundamental, with an emphasis on methods such as discovery learning, collaborative learning and projects.

## **4) Public-private partnerships to promote innovation and inclusion:**

It is important to foster a collaborative approach to partnerships between businesses, governments, and civil society to finance and implement innovative educational initiatives. By leveraging the skills and resources of each stakeholder, these collaborations can generate effective solutions. Furthermore, supporting education startup incubators and accelerators is essential to encourage the development of technological

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solutions that improve access to and quality of education. The creation of investment funds to support innovative educational projects, mobilizing financial resources from private investors and international organizations, is also a preferred approach.

### **5) Public policies promoting inclusion and equity**

It is imperative to establish public policies that guarantee equitable access to education for all, with a particular focus on girls, people with disabilities, and marginalized populations. Combating discrimination and stereotypes in textbooks and teaching practices is essential to promoting equality. Integrating these principles into educational policies can help create an inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students.

### **6) Role of civil society and communities in promoting education**

The role of civil society and community actors in promoting education relies on collective commitment. It is essential to encourage the participation of parents, communities, and civil society organizations in the management and monitoring of schools, strengthening their influence in the decision-making process. Furthermore, community initiatives aimed at promoting education and combating early school leaving should be supported by mobilizing local resources and skills. Furthermore, it is crucial to strengthen the involvement of the media in raising awareness of the importance of education by disseminating information and key messages related to educational issues and challenges. The education of girls and women is a fundamental element of sustainable development and represents an essential investment. It is necessary to implement policies and programs aimed at eliminating barriers to the education of girls and women, by addressing early marriage and pregnancy, and gender-based violence. It is also important to promote the education of girls and women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, by providing them with role models and career opportunities. Finally, it is essential to raise awareness among communities about the importance of girls' and women's education for economic and social development, high-

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lighting the benefits it brings to health, nutrition, political participation, and economic growth.

Transforming education in Africa is a complex but achievable challenge. By adopting a comprehensive and collaborative approach, mobilizing the resources and skills of all stakeholders, and implementing bold and innovative strategies, Africa has the opportunity to build a more prosperous, equitable, and sustainable future for its entire population.

### **General Conclusion**

In Africa, at the dawn of the 4th and 5th industrial revolutions, the evolution of education rights is proving to be a complex and multidimensional challenge, but also a tremendous opportunity for transformation. The profound consequences of the colonial legacy, with its selective and unequal education systems, have been amplified by more recent developments such as the commodification of education and structural adjustment policies imposed by international actors. These policies have led to a significant disengagement of the state from education, thus exacerbating disparities and jeopardizing the quality of education.

However, technological advances present new opportunities for rethinking and transforming education systems in Africa. Technological advances, the creation of 21st-century skills, and the use of artificial intelligence to personalize learning can increase access to education, improve its quality, and prepare young people for the jobs of tomorrow. To realize this transformative potential, bold and inclusive strategies are imperative. This involves massive investments in digital infrastructure and connectivity, the design of educational programs focused on the skills of the future, ongoing teacher training, the development of public-private partnerships, the implementation of public policies that promote inclusion and equity, and the mobilization of civil society and communities. The education of girls and women must also be a top priority, as it constitutes a key lever for sustainable development. By investing in education, Africa can build a more prosperous, equitable, and sustainable future for all its citizens. It is time to act collectively to transform African education systems and enable the continent's youth to realize their full potential, overcoming the obstacles inherited from the past and seizing the opportunities offered by industrial revolutions.

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## THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN NIGER, BEFORE AND AFTER THE SEIZURE OF POWER BY THE CNSP

To the memory of the children massacred under the fascist bombs  
in Granollers, on May 31, 1938.

The peoples of West Africa, in 2022, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of their Independence, drew up a summary based on different national realities, emphasizing the root causes of the social and economic problems affecting their societies. Niger offers a clear example of these difficulties. In spite of having formidable mineral resources such as uranium, Niger has been ranked at the bottom of the UN Human Development Index in recent decades. This simple observation has prompted Nigerian civil society to ask a number of questions. Particularly, on one side, the benefits extracted from the mining activity by a foreign multinational such as Urano (ex Areva); and on the other side, the extreme poverty that characterizes a significant percentage of the population. While frustration and decades of unfulfilled popular aspirations were mounting, in 2021 Bazoum assumed power from Issoufou who had held it since 2011, believing that he could pursue the same policies as his predecessor. But the world was in the midst of change, especially with the rapid decline of Western influence and the emergence of a more multipolar world. And this brief illusion was soon dissolved when the CNSP took power... This article will approach the Nigerian reality by taking the case of education as a social sector which has historically played a decisive role from the political opposition sector, and which remains an unavoidable actor in the ongoing transformation strategy.

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### **An educational system «under colonial influence»**

Under the colonial administration, educational infrastructures in Niger were almost non-existent. The majority of the indigenous population was excluded from access to education. Nigerian education history is part of the continuity of the colonial administration of French West Africa (AOF). The Niger case was special, as a military administration had been in place since 1900. Its territory was initially considered as part of Upper Senegal and became an «autonomous colony» in July 1922. Since that time, the status was defined in terms of «financial and administrative autonomy», which translated into a policy that favored private education in the hands of missionary schools. The deprivation of generalized access to education for a largely Muslim population was evident, and so was its elitist character and assimilationist approach.

A new period opened with the end of World War II in 1945, bringing an end to forced labor through the application of the Lamine Gueye Law. At that time, a small group of parliamentarians from Africa and the so-called «overseas territories», were elected to represent the colonial territories in the National Constituent Assembly that gave rise to the 4th French Republic. In education, it was necessary for the educated elites, the so-called «evolved»,<sup>1</sup> to play a role in legitimizing the colonial order. However, the creation of the African Democratic Union (RDA) in Bamako in 1946 and its affiliation to a parliamentary group that incorporated the French Communist Party (PCF), made the African deputies the target of attacks, leading later to their division. In the framework of the Cold War, around 1950 the Nigerian trade unionist Djibo Bakary<sup>2</sup> was one of those leaders who rejected the pressure made by the colonial authorities in order to dissociate the RDA from the PCF.

In favor of Independence, Bakary denounced the imperialist intentions behind the FIDES, pointing out the need to defend sovereignty even if it meant renouncing to supposed advantages related to belonging to the «French Community», such as financial aid, development cooperation or the creation of schools. The political movement of Bakary,<sup>3</sup> the SAWA-BA, suffered brutal repression by the colonial authorities and was forced to go underground, precisely for denouncing in no uncertain terms the neo-colonial mechanisms of economic

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domination. In an article published by the militant magazine «Présence Africaine», the true alternative to the FIDES policy: *«proceed with systematic and accelerated health and school facilities, open to everyone»*.<sup>4</sup> The authorities later found their own failure: *«in accordance with the annual report on the state of education as of January 1, 1958, the Niger Territory, strongly Islamized, was not allowing for the rapid expansion of private education»*.<sup>5</sup>

### **How the Nigerian education sector became a political actor**

In 1958 - as historian Mahaman Karimou Kalla recalls - the problems in the education sector were more than worrying: *«when the Republic of Niger was proclaimed in 1958, primary education had only 136 establishments with 345 classes and secondary education had 2 establishments with 17 classes. In 1960, the year when Niger became independent, the figures were 192 establishments and 509 classes at the primary level and 8 establishments and 34 classes at the secondary level, respectively (...). In 1960, the school enrollment rate was barely 3.5 %, and Niger had only 65 schools and 570 teachers. In the secondary school, the balance was barely brighter. In 1958, secondary education had 13 teachers and 546 students. In 1960, these figures were 34 teachers and 1040 students, respectively. During the same period, there were three secondary education establishments: the Niamey College, the Tahoua Normal Course and the Maradi Learning Center, which had a total of 12 classes, 12 teachers and 277 students»*.<sup>6</sup>

In the period following Independence, it might be expected that some governments would adopt ambitious measures, particularly presidents such as Modibo Keita (1961-1968) and Hamani Diori (1961-1974) who were former professors. Nevertheless, in this new context, French economic actors expressed a very explicit fear: *«new decision makers, young politicians instructed in our universities, would like to apply school doctrines. They would tend towards very advanced socialist formulas and would gladly oppose the existing economic and commercial organizations, which they would accuse of all evils»*.<sup>7</sup>

And they weren't wrong. The educational reform was a struggle fully embraced by the countries interested in «advanced socialist formulas», such as in the case of Mali, on the occasion of the educational reform of 1962, which Modibo Keita described as

*«one of the first reforms of the school system known to the African continent (...) The reform of 1962 was voted in order to break with the most negative aspects of the educational system inherited from the colonizer. This highly elitist system no longer corresponded to the needs and aspirations of the young republic».*<sup>8</sup> Also in the Guinea of Sekou Touré, education was a priority, with the objective of «1° to stop rural depopulation by providing schooling for all children from 7 to 12 years of age in their areas of origin by 1967; 2° to train young professionals; 3° to make adults literate and give them the first elements of vocational training».<sup>9</sup>

However, in the case of Niger, National Education was not designed for social sectors whose liberation had been prevented by the colonial administration. Effectively, the policy of Diori was aimed at fulfilling the expectations of the former colonial master, as summarized in a 1960 publication: *«the success of the friendship and coordination mission carried out by President Hamani Diori in all the French-speaking countries of Africa, shows the understanding of African decision-makers of the importance of economic needs»*. Unlike the case of revolutionary Mali, in Niger a similar educational reform was not implemented until 1972, so that expectations of a significant breakthrough during the first government experience in the 1960s and early 1970s were interrupted. In a situation marked by authoritarianism, the Nigerian education sector was the vanguard of the opposition to the policies of Hamani Diori. Their claims were strongly heard, given that Diori's party *«Parti Progressiste Nigérien/ Rassemblement Démocratique Africain»* (PPN/RDA) had no intention of collecting proposals and offering an alternative to a system with educational policies remaining under colonial influence.

Nonetheless, we should point out that the period of Hamani Diori's government can be separated into two phases: the first phase starting in 1960, when he was totally at the service of French interests; and the second phase, at the end of the same decade, when independent decisions – such as the creation of national strategic companies, the rejection of secessionism in the Biafra war, the rapprochement with the Soviet Union from 1969, the defense agreement with Gaddafi's Libya or the negotiation on the price of uranium – showed

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that Niger was moving towards the search for sovereignty. Could it be possible that Diori had in mind the improvement of the education sector in that context? On May 9, 1972, a decree was passed which was described by former inspector of primary education Mahamane Sani as the *«only true profound reform of Niger's educational system»*, and which allowed the creation of

*«the first bilingual schools in Zinder (French/Haoussa) in 1973 and in Tillabery (French/Songhai/Sarma) in 1976. He elaborated the first authentically Nigerian first grade teaching programs (...) and since that time, they are still in force in primary schools. Only a few modifications have been made, whereas teaching programs normally have to be changed every ten years».*<sup>10</sup>

In the 1970s, the «Union des Scolaires du Niger» (USN) came to represent -as historian Tatiana Smirnova states- *«the nation's de facto political opposition»*, following the repression of the Sawaba guerrilla movement by the Diori regime for seven years, from its illegalization in 1959 to its defeat in 1966. Later, the USN played a central role in the manifestations that weakened the Diori government and culminated in the coup d'état on April 15, 1974, and continued to push for its claims in the following years under the military government of Kountché. USN was forced to follow the footsteps of the SAWABA movement when it was disbanded in 1983, *«when the group's leaders were imprisoned or forced to seek refuge in neighboring countries»*.<sup>11</sup>

After the Independences, the opposing approaches to the nation were reflected not only in the ideological struggle, but also in the meddling of the former colonial power, an example of which is the «Françafrique» system run by the criminal espionage network Foccart. In the following decade, another historical stage emerged when the emerging African public sector built in the 1960s was confronted with the aggression of the Bretton Woods Institutions (World Bank and International Monetary Fund). Within the context of the military governments of Mali under Moussa Traoré (1968-1991) and Niger, under Seynou Kountché and Ali Saibou (1974-1993), these neoliberal institutions pushed the implementation of privatization policies: in Niger, state budget cuts had an impact on education through a voluntary retirement program and a ban on hiring new civil servants.

### **The fragile access to education in contemporary Niger**

The 1990-2010 period was marked by two phases: the first phase, during which political multipartism was implemented with the presidential elections of 1993 - in parallel with the reinforcement of neoliberal policies-; and the second phase, after the assassination of President Ibrahim Baré in 1999, which coincided with a new phase where the government was stable between 2000 and 2010 with the presidency of Mamadou Tandja. It is worth remembering that Tandja was a former military member of the small group of officers who, led by Kountché, overthrew the first president Hamani Diori in 1973. But his mandate also ended in a turbulent manner, following a military coup d'état. Nowadays, Tandja's policies are considered by Niger's authorities as a serious background in the defense of national sovereignty. Nevertheless, other observers point out that under the Tandja government, the presence of actors known under the label of «technical and financial partners» in the field of education was extended as a continuation of the previous two decades.<sup>12</sup> In the opinion of authors Villalon, Idrissa and Bodian, those

*«state-led reforms aimed to integrate or 'capture' the education systems that flourished in the informal sector, while imposing a certain degree of formalization on them. Such an approach resulted in the creation of what could be considered as new 'hybrid' systems. These reforms were also made possible due to the changes in the nature of the state and the state-society relationship underway since the 1990s presented for reforms in these countries were unthinkable in previous decades. These new initiatives were made possible and promoted by key players who took advantage of the opportunity offered by the changes in the governance framework».*<sup>13</sup>

That situation, characterized by the lack of access to education and its dependence on foreign actors, did not change substantially with the coming to power of Issoufou (2011-2021) and then of Bazoum (2021-2023). According to data from 2022 prior to the CNSP takeover, *«the education system struggles to cope with the growing influx of young people: more than 50% of children aged 7 to 16 are not in school, which contributes to the high rate of child labor (about 34%)»*. The de-schooling process of young people is reflected in the development of a large-

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ly informal economy, but also in urban unemployment. This «is concentrated in the most educated groups». Moreover, Niger has the highest percentage (69%) among neighboring countries of young people who neither work nor study.<sup>14</sup>

Considering the national reality described above, the General Union of Trade Unions of the Informal Economy of Niger (UGSEIN), created in 2006, has been making efforts to expand the representation of workers' rights in the informal sector, reaching 252,000 members by 2020. However, in 2014, UGSEIN's speech still seemed inaudible in the face of M. Issoufou's government policies. At that time, the criticism of the UGSEIN was focused on calling for

*«the reduction of the price of food and basic necessities, full support for vulnerable groups, the cessation of abusive displacement of street vendors, and the effective consideration of social protection in the informal economy. UGSEIN criticized the behavior of telephone companies, claiming that they have enriched themselves with undeclared work, citing telephone salesmen who work without a contract and receive less than the minimum wage. At the political sphere, the union deplores the growing intolerance that reigns today, a situation that is essentially due to the behavior of political leaders and their General Staffs».*<sup>15</sup>

We must not forget that the lack of dialogue of previous governments was combined with repression against those same social sectors. According to a communication from SYNAFEN<sup>16</sup> in 2013,

*«with the aim of examining the situation born of the peaceful march organized by the Permanent Framework for Reflection and Action of the Teachers' Unions on Friday, February 15, 2013 (...) Denounces and condemns the wild and arbitrary use of public force against citizens whom it has the sacred right to protect ; Recalls that this attitude is neither more nor less than an abuse of power characteristic of a regime with management difficulties and subject to possible legal action before the courts».*

Therefore, dialogue with the education sector only seems to be possible again after the CNSP came to power. On October 29, 2024, UGSEIN was part, along with 8 other unions, of

a negotiation meeting with the CNSP government in order to *«ensure that street and market vendors have a seat at the table and a voice in shaping the policies that impact their lives»*. The contrast is important. One might ask, how will the demands of the education sector be met from now on by the government of Abderahamane Tiani?

**CNSP comes on the scene:  
change of perspective for the education sector**

With the entry on the scene of the government of the National Council for the Safeguarding of the Homeland (CNSP), it became clear that holding an election was not a sufficient guarantee for democratic aspirations in the broadest sense of the term. Indeed, the CNSP stated that its action was justified on the one hand to defend national sovereignty, and on the other hand to fight corruption. Since August 2023, the policy of sanctions, blockade and threat of war against Niger has paradoxically generated sympathy and great optimism among millions of Africans, spreading to neighboring countries, throughout the continent and even internationally. Two years later, that event seems to be shaking the foundations of the economic and social system that had been in place until now. Indeed, as part of the defense of national sovereignty –and in dialogue with social sectors officially involved in institutional events–, the CNSP adopts a new approach whereby the State faces challenges such as: the influence of international doctrine in the fight against terrorism, the rebalancing of relations with the former colonial power, the cultural influence officially established through the creation and membership of the International Organization of the Francophonie, the visions and strategies arising from dependence on “Western” communication, the fight against poverty in the Sahel or the deformation of national education due to the role of financial institutions such as the World Bank... Moreover, the Confederation of Sahel States establishes new dynamics of regional cooperation and transformation of the status quo established over the past decades by the above-mentioned actors and others such as ECOWAS.

The present encouragement of revolutionary figures such as Djibo Bakary in Niger, as well as the recent creation by presidential decree of a Research Committee to make known

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the buried history of resistance to colonialism and neocolonialism, are actions that raise expectations of a similar depth to those occurring in neighboring Burkina Faso with the official tribute to the figure and thought of Thomas Sankara. The defense of Sankarist thinking in Burkina Faso or Bakarist thinking in Niger can only have the effect of deepening the awareness of youth, ideological training and combativity in the field of social movement struggles, as the USN Secretary General, Mouloul Al Hassan, seemed to state at the beginning of September 2024, when he affirmed that

*«The struggle of the CNSP, directed by Brigadier General Abderahamane Tiani, is a struggle that the USN has been carrying out for years: the struggle against imperialism and its local cronies, the withdrawal of imperialist troops from our territory (...) at one time it was only the USN that fought for it (...). Since July 26, with the arrival of the CNSP, we have been speaking with the same voice and the same language (...). Because, if there is a social sector that should benefit from this struggle, it is us, the young people».*<sup>17</sup>

But the people do not live by ideas, but by concrete material progress. On January 15, 2025, on the occasion of a large demonstration of Nigerian students, Mouloul Al Hassan took the stage again to forcefully express the demands of his union:

*«today, as we speak, we are paying the October-December 2022 grant. The Nigerian Schoolchildren's Union will need to ask its partners (from the government) for an exceptional release of 4 billion at the beginning of the year 2025, in order to recover the accumulated arrears. It is a matter of survival for our partners. In the same way that you have thought of Nigerians by reducing costs in medicine, building materials, fuel, think also of reducing the expenses for graduates in higher and state studies, which are 15 thousand CFA francs, but which previous regimes had increased to 40 thousand CFA francs».*<sup>18</sup>

To get a better understanding of how the education sector perceives the situation, we interviewed several actors, who confirmed that the CNSP and education professionals are feeling more confident and have high hopes for the future. Badié, a student and activist in the Union of Nigerian Schoolchildren (USN) at the University of Niamey, sums it up:



«Participants in Niger's education system aspire to excellence. We have to ensure that the next generation is responsible. The authorities are in contact with education actors and the government takes them into account. Any positive proposal is listened to, and the government implements the idea. Before the CNSP, the Ministry of Education had introduced an evaluation for secondary school teachers, the purpose of which was to fire some of them. But the unions condemned it because it was not an evaluation dignified of that name, and demanded the reinstatement of the teachers who had been forced to leave».<sup>19</sup>

### **The Nigerian education sector under the CNSP government: a lever for the Pan-African Revolution?**

In the countries of the Alliance of Sahel States, education is a primary concern closely related to the problem of insecurity. To the extent that national armies succeed in regaining national sovereignty, families are not forced to leave their villages and access to education can be restored, Badié Douratou explains, this situation caused some students to leave their villages and go to Niamey to continue their studies. Maman Ganaou, a researcher and trade unionist with the Workers' Trade Union of Niger (USTN), stresses that *“school dropout rates in rural areas have been brought under control thanks to the work of certain associations, of which we are members, in the fight against child labor. It must also be acknowledged that in certain areas where insecurity persists, many schools have closed, and with the support of technical and financial partners, there has been a regrouping of schools, but it is not enough”*.<sup>20</sup> Some forecasters predicted that the CNSP government would not be able to withstand the blockade and sanctions, but despite these problems, the education sector has continued to function.

With regard to the effects of the blockade, Maman Ganaou stresses that *“as the Nigerian people in general have experienced it, the education sector has also experienced it with resilience. Without a doubt those sanctions impacted our economy, but did not severely impact the education system, because the CNSP authorities and the transition government made that sector their priority. I will mention as an example the teachers' salaries, which are paid on a monthly basis, and the school supplies, which were*

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*made available to the schools on time. As a result of the blockade of the borders by ECOWAS, school supplies were delivered by air for the 2023-24 school year". An impression shared by Badié Douratou, who states that «with the arrival of the CNSP in July 2023, we managed to have a full school year»*

«when ECOWAS acted by imposing a blockade against our country, it did education no favors. Because, regardless of the problems, education should never be the object of a blockade. At the same time, I would say that the blockade did not have a great impact on higher education. This was noticed when PhD had to be defended, because normally professors from neighboring countries and from the region are present in the jury. And for the training modules, the solution was found by scheduling professors from Niger instead of using professors from universities in Ivory Coast or Togo. Furthermore, the delays in the start of the 2024/2025 school year were due to flooding. This delayed the start of the new school year by 26 days: instead of starting on October 2, it started on October 28».

Badié Douratou stresses that

*«with the CNSP, we have seen an evolution with respect to the educational system. First of all, the duration of the daily studies has been reduced. Previously the schedule was from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm and from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm. Today, in order to allow students to do practical activities, only one half-day has been left. Effectively, we have noticed that in the best educational systems, as in China, there is not only theory but also practice. That free half day helps the children to do other things in the afternoons. Low salaries for teachers have been increased. There are also scholarships and social assistance for students».*<sup>21</sup>

In order to understand what transformations are taking place in the education sector with the CNSP government, we also interviewed Moussa Adamou, inspector of youth and sports, engineer-counselor in training and trade unionist researcher.

*“Regarding timetables and the number of school days, there have been a number of reforms: CFEPD22 has been reintroduced, which is new, otherwise the ambitions remain the same.*

*However, there is a particular interest in education and other basic social sectors. Efforts are being made in education, and discussions continue despite the difficulties. Regarding the changes in the vision of the CNSP, in my opinion what should be emphasized is the emphasis placed now on scientific subjects with the creation of scientific colleges and high schools. This is something new, even though it was already on the agenda. But it is much broader this time, with more advantageous conditions than ordinary colleges”.*

Will the CNSP pursue structural changes? Maman Ganaou states that *“the CNSP has placed education as the main priority after security, [since] one cannot speak of national sovereignty as long as education is not guaranteed, and all development necessarily passes through education, that is the vision that the CNSP reserves for education in my opinion”*. For his part, Adamou states that

*«the share of the national budget allocated to education is constantly increasing, and there are initiatives to create a National Education Fund, which would be funded with national resources through various mechanisms. I have no official confirmation of this, but I know that there is no other solution if we want to recover our sovereignty. Evidently, there will be new mechanisms and strategies put in place, because some partners have already left the country, and we need to find additional resources, either nationally or from elsewhere. And I would like to state that the conference recommended that a portion of the mining resources be allocated as a priority to the education sector».*<sup>23</sup>

On the vision that the CNSP has for education, Alhatt Agga, doctor in Educational Sciences and research professor at the École Normale Supérieure of the Abdou Moumouni University, has summarized a list that resembles a program of action:

- “A framework charter for the start of the 2023-2024 school year on September 20, 2023, which aims to provide all Nigerian children with a quality education;
  - Analyze the results of the numerous educational reforms and innovations and suggest an educational system better adapted to national realities;
  - Initiate a curriculum reform which takes into account the social demand for education; in particular, expectations
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regarding the economic integration of young people, acquisition of social values, integrity and hard work, citizenship, patriotism, discipline, creativity and resilience in the face of possible shocks;

- Include in the curriculum the teaching of the fundamentals of religions, particularly Islam, to avoid indoctrination by projects aimed at violent extremism;
- Adapt vocational training and traineeship to the needs of the labor market, in particular by diversifying the supply of promising professions;
- Reinforce the supervision of vocational training centers to improve their efficiency and the competitiveness of their products in the labor market or awaken the entrepreneurial spirit;
- Implement a mechanism to reinforce the authority of teachers in the community, in particular by combating absenteeism and behaviors classified as deviant;
- Undertake reforms aimed at progressively institutionalizing distance education to ensure continuity of schooling in areas affected by crises that make classroom education difficult;
- In areas under threat of terrorism: creation of regrouping centers».<sup>24</sup>

Various testimonies agree on the need to update the battle for cultural decolonization:

“In terms of education, the education system in Niger is externally financed. We must understand that their deficiencies are explained by this external funding. For instance, the history of Sarraounia, who fought against the colonial missions of Voulet-Chanoine, is taught in elementary school. However, when we get to high school and university, we are told that it never existed. Therefore, this funding is incompatible with our system and our needs”.<sup>25</sup>

Lastly, Adamou also emphasizes the need to go further and invest in popular education:

«when we talk about education, we often only talk about schools, but today schools only represent perhaps 20% of young people and children. Who is going to take care of the education of the others? It is the extracurricular system,

which unfortunately has very few resources and is often provided by NGOs and development associations».<sup>26</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In this article we have focused on how the struggles of the education sector played a decisive role in the defense of the interests of the people in Niger, whose demands are resurfacing today in the current process of defense of national sovereignty after the coming to power of the CNSP. Through testimonies from the education sector representing trade union organizations and actors with extensive professional experience, it has become clear that the education sector supported the CNSP's measures in the face of the blockade and sanctions by ECOWAS and other international actors against the Nigerian State. Finally, we have highlighted the vision and role that the CNSP plays in education within the framework of the Confederation of Sahel States and a «Pan-African Revolution» with strong popular support.

Casablanca, May 31, 2025.

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<sup>1</sup> The « evolved », was the term used to distinguish the African elite trained according to the patterns of the « western civilization », whose mission was to assist the colonizers, testifying as representatives of the « advantages » that the colonial empire could offer to the Africans under its domination.

<sup>2</sup> Founding member and then Secretary General of the Progressive Party of Nigeria (PPN) – which would later become the Nigerian section of the RDA- Bakary also stated at a meeting in Cotonou his opposition to the referendum campaign in favor of a « Si » to the « French Community », the project promoted by De Gaulle in 1957 to keep the colonized territories in the orbit of the colonial power.

<sup>3</sup> Co-founder of the General Union of Black African Workers (UGTAN) along with Sekou Touré, Bakary and SAWABA militants were sheltered in Guinea, Mali or Ghana, where they went into exile because of the severe persecution by Hamani Diori's government 4 X.-X.-X.-. (1956). Le fonds d'investissement pour le développement économique et social des territoires d'outre-mer. Présence Africaine, XI(6), 47-56.

<sup>5</sup> Agga, Alhatt. Histoire de l'Éducation au Niger. De la Pénétration Coloniale au Coup d'État Militaire (1898-1974). Editions Universitaires Européennes, 2023. p.886

<sup>6</sup> « Centenaire du Président Diori Hamani : Forger le destin d'une nation », Le Sahel, 17 junio 2016.

<sup>7</sup> « De la loi-cadre à l'indépendance » dans L'Outre-Mer Africain (mai 1960).

<sup>8</sup> Diarra S.O., Diakité Y., Konaté M.K., Lange Marie-France. « Le Mali : politiques éducatives et système éducatif actuel » dans Dans Pilon Marc (dir.), Yaro Y. (dir.), La demande d'éducation en Afrique : état des connaissances et perspectives de recherche. Dakar, 2001, p. 152.

<sup>9</sup> Rivière Claude. Les investissements éducatifs en République de Guinée. In: Cahiers d'études africaines, vol. 5, n°20, 1965. pp. 621.

<sup>10</sup> Mahamane Sani, Moumouni. « L'historique des réformes scolaires opérées au Niger, de 1960 à 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Smirnova, Tatiana. « Student activism in Niger : subverting the 'limited' pluralism, 1960-1983 ». Africa 89.

<sup>12</sup> The participation of the current Prime Minister Ali Lamine Zeine in the Tandja government was even a reason for early and precipitous attribution to the CNSP of an economic policy of continuity rather than rupture. Read the text published by the monthly Le Monde Diplomatique (French version), August 2023.

<sup>13</sup> Leonardo A. Villalón, Abdourahmane Idrissa et Mamadou Bodian, Religion, demande sociale, et réformes éducatives au Niger. Research Report n°6. Abril 2012, introduction.

<sup>14</sup> Agence Syndicale Danoise de Coopération au Développement. PROFIL DU MARCHÉ DU TRAVAIL. NIGER – 2021/2022, p.2.

<sup>15</sup> UGSEIN : « Aidez nous à aider le pays en achetant nos produits et en nous garantissant une protection sociale décente », Le Sahel, 2/5/2014.

<sup>16</sup> SYNAFEN is the « Syndicat national des agents de la formation et de l'éducation du Niger ».

<sup>17</sup> Exclusive interview with Effred Mouloul Hassan, Agence Acopa TV, 3 septembre 2024.

<sup>18</sup> « Manifestation hier matin des Scolaires Nigériens pour le soutien au CNSP », video of Aziz Maiga's youtube channel rally, 15/1/2025

<sup>19</sup> Interview of the author n°1 with Badié Douratou Kadidja, on 24/1/2025.

<sup>20</sup> Interview of author n°2 with Maman Ganaou, 31/1/2025

<sup>21</sup> Badié Douratou Kadidja, cited reference.

<sup>22</sup> In Niger, the certificate of completion of first grade (CFEPD) had been suspended for 12 years.

<sup>23</sup> Interview of the author n°3 with Moussa Adamou, on 20/4/2025.

<sup>24</sup> Interview of author n°4 with Alhatt Agga, 5/5/2025.

<sup>25</sup> Badié Douratou Kadidja, cited reference.

<sup>26</sup> Moussa Amadou, cited reference.



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## SDG4 AND CHALLENGES OF RIGHT TO EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN IN UNORGANIZED SECTOR IN INDIA

### **(1) Introduction**

The SDG agenda:

India is a signatory of many international instruments and covenants to safeguard the right of children, particularly the unorganized sector. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents the highest aspirations for a bright future for the world's children and is a crucial opportunity to realize the rights of the child worldwide. It provides a clear framework for implementation and aims to improve children's lives through a universal agenda with clear goals and targets. Fulfilling children's rights is a prerequisite for realizing the 2030 Agenda.<sup>1</sup>

**Leaving No Child Behind** A critical element of the 2030 Agenda is the commitment to "leave no one behind," especially those in vulnerable situations. This includes children in difficult circumstance. By pledging to leave no one behind, States committed to ensure equality and reduce inequalities, including through eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices. This principle is grounded in the human rights principles of non-discrimination, equality and dignity, and provides an entry point for protecting and promoting the rights of the child. The 2030 Agenda reaffirms States' obligations regarding children's rights by framing implementation in line with obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human

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rights. The application of human rights standards and principles, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, are also a crucial means through which the SDGs can be achieved.

It's a matter of serious concern that despite constitutional guarantees and international covenants a significant number of children from migrant labours are being deprived of education and schooling in India. Covid-19 led lock down made it more difficult to children of vulnerable migrant labours to realize the right to education in public schools.

Census 2011 highlights the massive challenge in ensuring seasonally migrant children from around 10.7 million households in rural India to complete elementary education. The three states of Bihar, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh account for half of the 12.82 million children who have never enrolled in schools; and eight states—Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal account for two-thirds of the 35.62 million children who have dropped out.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately there is no exact number of migrant labour and their children out of school as the identification and documentation of such migrants are not done either in home state or host state of employment. It was a great deal of disastrous upheaval during Covid-19 outbreak when millions of unorganized labours were pushed to their village. On 14 September 2020, Labour and Employment Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar stated in Parliament that information collected from state governments indicated an estimated 10 million migrants had attempted to return home as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and consequent lockdown. He later stated in Parliament on 15 September 2020 that no data was maintained on the number of migrants in the country who had either died, or become unemployed, as a result of the pandemic, “while state wise data was “not available on assistance provided to migrant workers,”. India as a nation responded to the “unprecedented human crisis” through the various governments, local bodies, self-help groups and non-governmental organizations and professionals.<sup>3</sup>

Hence this internal policy envisages a road map for All India Primary Teachers Federation (AIPTF) for taking proactive initiative by it teachers, union leaders, volunteers, CSOs SMCs

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and parents to ensure the identification and mainstreaming the migrant children in schools and also to do advocacy for creating awareness and interfacing the welfare schemes to such families.

## **(2) The Unorganized /Migrant labours:**

It is grossly estimated that there are 44 Crore labourers working in unorganized sector in India. Unlike organised sector the migrant and unorganized labour faces many difficulties like irregular employment, minimum wages, and lack of safety measures, employer-employee relation, intermittent wages and exploitation like bonded labour. The living condition of migrant /unorganized sector labour are always unhygienic unprotective and unsafe to live.

Despite of the fact that there are many statutes and laws for the unorganized workers, they are still not provided with social security benefits.

Under section 2(m) of the Unorganized Workers Social Security Act, 2008, the term 'unorganized worker' means a home-based worker or a self-employed worker or a wage worker in the unorganized sector. It includes a worker in the organized sector who is not covered by any of the acts pertaining to welfare schemes as mentioned in Schedule II of Unorganized Workers Social Security Act, 2008. Unorganized workers take over the Indian labor market and represent 90% of the total Indian workforce.

## **Supreme Court on the right to work across the country:**

*In 2014, the Supreme Court in Charu Khurana v. Union of India (Civil Writ Petition No. 73/2013) held that the concept of domicile/residence had no rationale and was in violation of Articles 14 and 15. This reasoning was based on extending an earlier decision on higher education to the present case involving access to employment. In the earlier case, in 1984, a Bench of three judges of the Supreme Court held in Pradeep Jain v. Union of India (Civil Appeal 6392 of 1983) that in case of admission to higher educational institutions, classifying candidates based on their place of residence would be in violation of equality guaranteed by Article 14. The court concluded that – residence requirement within the State shall not be a ground for reservation in admissions to post graduate courses. This was affirmed by a Constitution Bench of*

the Supreme Court in 2004 in *Saurabh Chaudhri v. Union of India* (Civil Writ Petition No. 29/2003).

In another case in 2014, the petitioner, who was a make-up artist, was denied membership of a trade union (Cine Costume Make-up Artists and Hair Dressers Association) on the ground that she was a woman and had not resided in the state (of Maharashtra) for five years. This affected her ability to work as the union had a monopoly over accreditation of make-up artists in the state. She challenged the membership rules of the union as being in violation of Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution. The Court held that the provisions of the rules relating to gender and domicile/residence requirement were in violation of Articles 14, 15 and 21. It quashed the impugned rules and directed the Registrar of Trade Unions to ensure that the petitioners were allowed to register as members of the said trade union.

### **(3) Categories of Unorganized/migrant labours:**

Unorganized workers have no formal employee status and their workplace is scattered and disintegrated. They are subjected to indebtedness as their income does not meet with their living needs. These workers face exploitation, harassment, discrimination by the rest of the society.

As per the Economic Survey 2007-08, 93% of India's workforce include the self employed and employed in unorganized sector. The Ministry of Labour, Government of India, has categorized the unorganized labour force under four groups in terms of Occupation, nature of employment, especially distressed categories and service categories.

**3.1. Under Terms of Occupation:** Small and marginal farm labours, landless agricultural labourers, share croppers, fishermen, those engaged in animal husbandry, beedi rolling, labeling and packing, building and construction workers, leather workers, weavers, artisans, salt workers, brick kilns and stone quarries, workers in saw mills, oil mills, etc. come under this category.

**3.2. Under Terms of Nature of Employment:** Attached agricultural labourers, bonded labourers, migrant workers, contract and casual labourers come under this category.

**3.3. Under Terms of Especially Distressed Category:** Mahauts, scavengers, carriers of head loads, drivers of animal driven vehicles, loaders and unloaders come under this category.

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**3.4. Under Terms of Service Category:** Midwives, Domestic workers, Fishermen, Barbers, Washer men, Vegetable and fruit vendors, News paper vendors etc. belong to this category.

In addition to these four categories, there exists a large section of unorganized labour force such as street shoemakers, tailors, Handicraft artisans, Handloom weavers, and physically handicapped self employed persons, Rickshaw pullers, Auto drivers, Carpenters, Tannery workers,.

- Though the availability of statistical information on intensity and accuracy vary significantly, the extent of unorganized workers is significantly high among agricultural workers, building and other construction workers and among home based workers. According to the Economic Survey 2007-08 agricultural workers constitute the largest segment of workers in the unorganized sector (i.e. 52% of the total workers).
- As per the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO), 30 million workers in India are constantly on the move (migrant labour) and 25.94 million women workforce has been added in the labour market from the year 2000 onwards. All the more every day 13000 Indians turn 60 years and they are expected to live another average of 17years. The problem is that the existing social security laws cover only 8% of the total work force of 459 million in India.
- The latest report of the NSSO uploaded by the close of May 2011 about the casual workers in India between 2004-05 and 2009-10 compared to that of the period between 1999 – 2000 and 2004-05 very clearly shows that there is significant increase in the number of casual workers and decline in the number of regular workers.<sup>4</sup>

#### **(4) The Migrant children:**

In India every citizen has a right to migrate to any part of country in quest of better job opportunities, education, leisure, marriage and for any prospects. The Constitution of India guarantees all citizens the fundamental right to move freely through the territory of India. The principles of free migration are enshrined in clauses (d) and (e) of Article (19) (1). However all migrations are not for better prospects and by choice but many times the challenges of living conditions and survival threats, natural disasters, riots and epidemics

etc are the factors which push the vulnerable people to rush to other places for jobs and survival.

As per NSSO-64th round, out of the total migrant households, 62.7 percent of migrant households have at least one child aged between 0-18 years. Amongst migrant households, 56.6 percent and remaining 43.4 percent households are from urban areas. This indicates that more migrant children reside in rural areas as compared to urban areas. The need to focus on the situation and vulnerabilities experienced by migrant children becomes critical given the magnitude of the child migration.<sup>5</sup>

#### **(5) The increasing trend of migration:**

As per Census 2011 data, every fifth migrant in India is a child tallying a total population of 92.95 million migrant children. Studies indicate that migrant children between the age of 6-18 years are more vulnerable with higher probabilities of child labour and discontinued educational opportunities. 22.1 percent of migrant children between this age group are not enrolled in any educational institution. Education department's official documents identify migrant children as the ones who are more prone to dropouts and are often the '*hardest to reach*' or '*the most vulnerable category*'. *Unfortunately the identification of migrant children have never been a priority either by local authority, Labour department or Education department.*<sup>6</sup>

As per Census 2001, child migrants (0- 19 years) form around 13 percent, (60.25 million) of the total population of children while it has increased to 18.9 percent (92.95 million) in Census 2011. Analysis of Census 2011 data reveals that nearly every fifth migrant is a child. Moreover, the decadal growth in child migrants for the Census period 2001 to 2011 is significantly higher (54.3 percent) than the growth for the Census period 1991 to 2001 (35.9 percent). It is also evident that the growth of child migrants was significantly higher than the growth of child population during the same period i.e. 18.5 percent between 1991-2001 and 6.3 percent between 2001- 2011. According to Census 2011, a majority of child migrants (0-19 years) were enumerated in rural areas (56.0 percent) compared to urban areas (44.0 percent), similar to Census 2001 (59.9 percent child migrants enumerated in rural areas).

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## **(6) Education level amongst Child Migrants**

Contrary to common belief, both migrant boys and migrant girls (0-19 years) have higher literacy rates (58.7 percent as per Census 2001 and 63.4 percent as per Census 2011), compared to non-migrants (49.4 percent as per Census 2001 and 57.7 percent as per Census 2011). While literacy amongst child migrants in the age-group 0-14 years is greater (52.3 percent) compared to non-migrants (48.4 percent) as per Census 2011, the literacy rate amongst 15-19 years old migrant children is lower (87.5 percent) compared to non-migrants (89.2 percent). However, more migrant children (22.5 percent) are completing secondary schooling in comparison to non-migrant children (15.0 percent) according to Census 2011 analysis.<sup>7</sup>

## **( 7) Reasons of migration**

As per Census 2011, 0.26 percent of all migrant children in the age group of 0-14 years are engaged in work/ employment while an additional 0.05 percent is engaged in business. Though this appears to be a small percentage, this equates to significant number of children (i.e. 1,97,64,550) working in this age group of 0-14 years. Data from Census 2021 might be able to present the latest picture and the impact of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016 on the incidences of child labour.<sup>8</sup> (ibid)

## **(8) A Fact sheet on migrant labour**

- As per Census 2011, there are 455.78 million migrants in India. Women form a large majority of migrants (67.9 percent) and marriage is a prominent reason for their migration.
- India is home to nearly 92.95 million migrant children (Census 2011).
- Across India, every fifth migrant is a child (Census 2011).
- More girls constitute child migrants (50.6 percent) as compared to boys (Census 2011).
- Five out of 10 migrant girls constituting 6.39 million, in the age group 10-19 years, were reported to be married in Census 2011.
- Rural to rural migration is the most common stream of flow for child migrants, while urban to urban migration

has emerged as a second preferred movement by child migrants in Census 2011, contrary to rural to urban migration in Census 2001.

- Larger number of migrant children are located in rural areas (56.0 percent) compared to urban locations (44.0 percent) in Census 2011.
- Vast heterogeneity exists amongst migrant households and migrant children.
- Young migrant children (0-5 years) are less likely to be stunted, underweight and less likely to suffer from diarrhea compared to non-migrant children (NFHS 4, 2015-16). (ibid)

### **(9) Impact of Migration on Children**

The impact of migration on children of migrated families is a serious policy concern for the authorities involved in child welfare and development. Migrant children may be affected by poverty, poor living conditions, isolation from mainstream society, break in continuity of education and low self-esteem related to trauma of moving from a known environment to an unknown one. Migration has differential impacts on children of different age groups, such as;

I. The Children of migrant labours in 0-6 years of ages are deprived of health, nutrition and pre-school education. They lack birth certificate, immunization, health facilities etc., resulting in acute malnourishment, sickness and mortality. They also lack access to Anganwadis, crèche, safe drinking water, sanitation, etc.

II. Children of 6-14 years are increasingly school dropouts having no access to schools in the place of work, and denial of schooling leads to engagement of children in various other activities that include work on site with the members of the family causing health hazards, exploitation and abuse.

III. The migration workers generally stay at the site of the work along with their family for limited periods of time varying from three to six months and then move to another construction site. In this field the general pattern of migration is that “women and children have always featured as ‘associated’ migrants with the main decision to migrate having been taken by the male of the household”.

IV. Migration has hardly any connection with academic calendars of school education and migrant children can be admitted at any time in the schools.

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V. Frequency of migration varies on a large scale based on the skill sets of parents and their requirement at the sites of construction.

VI. Geographic scope of migration for the construction workers vary widely and can be intra or inter-state in nature.

With increased mechanizations the work at the sites is restricted mostly to the male members. The women folk usually either stay at home or sometimes even work within the local community outside the construction site. All these constraints contribute to manifold challenges. Mid-term admission of any child in any school becomes extremely difficult. Escorting the children to school and ensuring regular attendance is problematic. All these challenges ultimately result in failure of the RTE Act, 2009 in most cases for this segment of society.<sup>9</sup>

### **(10) Challenges of Education of the Migrant Labour Children**

After the formation of the National Policy on Education (NEP) in 1986, serious attempts were made for the Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in India. Flexible schooling options for disadvantaged sections of children in the form of the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative & Innovative Education Scheme (AIE) under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) were initiated. The traditional reasons for exclusion from schooling, such as caste, gender, remoteness of location etc., have been attended by these schemes. But another category of disadvantaged section of children who have not received proper attention even under these schemes is the migrant labour children. Due to drought and other environmental issues the rural livelihoods collapsed in many parts of India and hundreds of thousands of families are being forced out of their homes and villages in search of work every year. The migrants are forced to take their children also along with them. They become drop-out of school ending their opportunity for education. As a result of large-scale enrolment drives the names of many migrant children are now on school rolls, but in reality they are often out of school, migrating to other work places with their parents. The environmental degradation and drought have led to more migration from North Indian states to states like Kerala, where



there are more employment opportunities. The education of children is one of the most important issues related to migration. Most of the migrant labourers shift their place of employment from one to another. On account of this mobility in employment these children are difficult to trace, and are therefore easily left out of the standard systemic intervention of the education system.

In India the Right to Education is a fundamental right after the 86th Amendment to the Constitution in 2002. Through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) programme, the government is working to achieve Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE). In spite of all these developments one category of children who are not being properly attended is migrant labour children. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and the state education departments do not even have sufficient data with respect to this category of children. Urgent steps are thus needed for uplifting their education.<sup>10</sup>

### **(11) Education as a Human Right**

In all societies and throughout human history education has been regarded both as an end in itself and as a means for the individual and society to grow. The recognition of education as a human right is the outcome of the realization that education is indispensable to the preservation and enhancement of the inherent dignity of the human being. Several international, regional and national legal instruments recognize the right to education.<sup>11</sup> (ibid)

#### **11.1. The National Policy for children 2013**

Declaring its children as the nation's "supremely important asset" in the National Policy for Children, 1974, the Government of India reiterated its commitment to secure the rights of its children by ratifying related international conventions and treaties. These include the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its Covenants, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Women

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and Children, the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Inter-Country Adoption, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The National Charter for Children, 2003 adopted on 9th February 2004, underlined the intent to secure for every child its inherent right to be a child and enjoy a healthy and happy childhood, to address the root causes that negate the healthy growth and development of children, and to awaken the conscience of the community in the wider societal context to protect children from all forms of abuse, while strengthening the family, society and the Nation.

To affirm the Government's commitment to the rights based approach in addressing the continuing and emerging challenges in the situation of children, the Government of India adopted the National Policy for Children, 2013.

### **11.2 National Education Policy 2020.**

Principles of this Policy: The purpose of the education system is to develop good human beings capable of rational thought and action, possessing compassion and empathy,. However, at the same time, there must also be seamless integration and coordination across institutions and across all stages of education. Alternative and innovative education centres will be put in place in cooperation with civil society to ensure that children of migrant labourers, and other children who are dropping out of school due to various circumstances are brought back into mainstream education.

The second is to achieve universal participation in school by carefully tracking students, as well as their learning levels, in order to ensure that they (a) are enrolled in and attending school, and (b) have suitable opportunities to catch up and re-enter school in case they have fallen behind or dropped out. For providing equitable and quality education from the Foundational Stage through Grade 12 to all children up to the age of 18, suitable facilitating systems shall be put in place.<sup>12</sup>

### **(12) International Covenants**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, "Everyone has the right to education." In addition, it says that it shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental

stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit, and technical and professional education shall be made generally available. The UDHR also stipulates that education should be directed towards the full development of the human personality and the enhancement of respect for human rights. Finally, it acknowledges that parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. Education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights. As an empowerment right, education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities. Education has a vital role in empowering women, safeguarding children from exploitative and hazardous labour and sexual exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment, and controlling population growth. Increasingly, education is recognized as one of the best financial investments States can make. But the importance of education is not just practical: a well-educated, enlightened and active mind, able to wander freely and widely, is one of the joys and rewards of human existence.<sup>13</sup>

According to United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), a child is defined as “a human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to child majority is attained earlier.” In India also, a child attains majority at the age of 18 years. However, the definition varies in the address of various legal provisions. The working age group of 15 to 59 years as defined by the Census of India is the most commonly accepted and it clearly indicates that the population below 15 years (0-14 years) is treated as “child”. Different Acts under labour laws declare different age criteria but the Factories Act 1948, the Apprentices Act 1961 and the Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act 1986 declare 14 years as the upper age limit of a child.<sup>14</sup>

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## Recommendations

### **The unorganized migrant children Out-of-School, Dropped-out, or Never-enrolled Children**

To make right to education a reality for all in India, examining and addressing the issues surrounding migrant children, dropped-out, never enrolled, and Out-of-School children is essential. Here are some key aspects to consider:

**1. Making schooling available in all settings:** Ensuring access to education is crucial for all children, regardless of whether they have dropped out, never been enrolled, or are currently out of school. Efforts should focus on identifying and reaching out to children who are not enrolled or have dropped out and providing them opportunities to enter or re-enter the education system.

**2. Identification of children and enrolment drive:** Emphasis should be placed on increasing enrollment rates and ensuring that children stay in school until they complete their education. Strategies should target communities and groups with low enrollment rates, addressing factors such as poverty, gender discrimination, and social barriers that hinder enrollment and retention.

**3. Equity and Inclusion:** Achieving universal school education requires addressing disparities and promoting equity and inclusion. Efforts should focus on marginalized communities, economically disadvantaged families, girls, children with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups. Particular attention should be given to removing barriers that prevent these children from accessing education.

**4. Quality Education:** Universal school education is not just about enrollment numbers but also the quality of education. Efforts should be made to ensure that children receive high-quality. Improving teaching standards, infrastructure, learning materials, and curriculum relevance is essential to quality education.

**5. Multi-stakeholder Collaboration:** Addressing the challenges related to dropped-out, never enrolled, and Out-of-School children require collaboration among various stakeholders. The Government, educational institutions, civil society organizations, community leaders, parents, and teachers must work together to identify barriers, implement effective interventions, and monitor progress toward achieving universal education.

**6. Implementation Gaps:** Inadequate infrastructure, lack of qualified teachers, and bureaucratic inefficiencies hinder the effective implementation of educational policies and programs.

**7. Strengthening Infrastructure:** Expanding the reach of schools, improving facilities, and providing safe transportation options.

**8. Teacher Training and Recruitment:** Enhancing teacher training programs and ensuring adequate recruitment and retention of qualified teachers.

**9. Article 26 of UHDR:** Massive campaign should be organized to influence UN to amend article 26 so as to make right to education as state responsibility only.

**10. Research and Data:** Ongoing research and data collection are crucial for understanding the factors contributing to the dropout, never enrolled, and out-of-school rates. Regular monitoring and evaluation of programs and policies can provide insights into their effectiveness and guide future interventions.

**11. Regulatory activities:** State should oversee the implementation of RtE 2009 and be responsive towards regulatory role.

**12. Adequate resources:** Adequate resources should be made available for accomplishment of SDG 4 goals within the stipulated time.

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<sup>1</sup> Child Rights and the 2030 Agenda for 1 Sustainable Development Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner.

<sup>2</sup> Ensuring education for migrant children, The Indian Express, Sept 17, 2021.3

<sup>3</sup> The Wire, 14 Sept. 2020, Centre Says It Has No Data on How Many Migrant Workers Dies In the COVID-19 Lockdown.

<sup>4</sup> Unorganised labour force in India. <https://vikaspedia.in/social-welfare/unorganised-sector-1/categories-of-unorganised-labour-force> Unorganised labour force in India. <https://vikaspedia.in/social-welfare/unorganised-sector-1/categories-of-unorganised-labour-force>.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*

<sup>6</sup> Pandey Pooja in voices India, TOI, Always on the move: The troubling landscape of the right to education for migrant children in India, April 19, 2021(Always on the move: The troubling landscape of the right to education for migrant children in India (indiatimes.com)

<sup>7</sup> Understanding Child Migration in India, Research Brief 2020, Young Lives Research to Policy Centre, UNICEF for every child.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*

<sup>9</sup> The Human Rights issues related to Right to Education of the children of Migrant Labours in Kerala, National Human Rights commission, Major Research Project, Final Report MANAV ADHIKAR BHAWAN, C-BLOCK, GPO COMPLEX, INA, NEW DELHI – 11 0023, INDIA November 2018.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*

<sup>12</sup> National Education Policy 2020, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt of India, New Delhi

<sup>13</sup> UNIVERSAL Declaration of Human Rights, United Nation 1948.14

<sup>14</sup> UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), UN 1989



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## THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INSTRUMENTALISATION OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC BY THE BUSINESS AND THE POLITICAL ELITE IN SOUTH AFRICA: **PROFITEERING FROM DISASTER**

### **Abstract**

This paper's crux is to analyse the manifestation of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa from the lens of disaster capitalism, particularly the economic consequences precipitated by the pandemic, which hit the poor and working class the hardest. The paper argues that disaster capitalism unfolded in the South African case through the declaration of a national state of disaster and the establishment of emergency procurement regulations skilfully used to administer economic shock therapy (through PPE procurement corruption) on people experiencing poverty and the working class. The article also analyses the economic crisis precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated regulations, such as the national lockdown. The article will further examine how PPE and other COVID-19-related procurement irregularities were orchestrated through a public-private sector dialectical relationship in disaster profiteering. The paper's central thesis is framed by the theory of disaster capitalism, which denotes that catastrophic events are instrumentalised by a national political and corporate elite into exciting market opportunities to accumulate wealth. In other words, these disaster events are construed as windows of opportunity to capitalise on catastrophe (Naomi Klein, 2007:6-7). This paper presents a context-specific nature of disaster capitalism through a case study research design that analyses secondary

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documentary data. The paper employs document analysis as a preferred research methodology, and the findings will be analysed using the content analysis approach.

### **Introduction**

This paper presents a theory-informed analysis of the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for the underclass (the poor and unemployed) and working class in South Africa through the lens of disaster capitalism. Politico-economic analyses of the COVID-19 pandemic have focused mainly on the global north, especially North America and Western Europe. Therefore, an analysis of the global south is justified, in alignment with the worldwide scope of the pandemic and its economic consequences that have impacted the south disproportionately (Fihlo and Ayers, 2020:84). According to Schuller and Maldonado (2016:62), disaster capitalism can be defined as a concerted effort by both transnational and national government institutions to convert catastrophe or cataclysmic events into an opportunity to serve an array of private and neoliberal capitalist interests. Klein (2007:6) and Storey (2008:74) concur that disaster capitalism is a window of opportunity for the enforcement of neoliberal capitalist interests and increased involvement of the private sector in the provision of services formerly provided by the public. The COVID-19 pandemic and emergency procurement regulations provided the gaps and opportunity for the corrupt in both the public and private sector to go on a looting spree (Mantzaris and Ngcamu, 2020:463).

In the age of the hegemony of neoliberalism and capitalism, the poor and the working class usually receive neoliberal shock therapy (Cline-Cole, 2020:181). Such therapy can be attributed to COVID-19 regulations including the national state of disaster which restricted movement and assembly, emergency procurement regulations, weak oversight enabling PPE tender corruption accompanied by massive job losses. Naomi Klein (2007:7-8) avers that there are three distinct shocks related to disaster capitalism: first, is the collective shock induced by the disaster event, leaving the public in a collective state of trauma; second, is the economic shock therapy, an array of neoliberal policy instalments; and third is the literal (usually electric) shock (often administered by the police or

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soldiers) on any resistance to the economic shock therapy. A critical assessment of the implications of such events is academically justified and necessary, especially in the South African case wherein there's an overt gap on this particular subject matter from the lens of disaster capitalism (Fihlo and Ayers, 2020:85; Farrell, 2020).

### **A Theoretical Lens**

Although Naomi Klein's book *"The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism"* published in 2007, was not necessarily an academic book, it gained immense traction in the circles of academia. So much so that contemporary academics have employed the concept of disaster capitalism. Assessments or analyses conducted by academics are not only limited to post-disaster settings but also include scholarly disaster analysis in the fields of disaster risk reduction, social policy, industrial sociology, and anthropology (Schuller and Maldonado, 2016; Harvey, 2017; Illner, 2021). Academics have also employed the concept of disaster capitalism as a Marxian-style theory to critique contemporary neoliberal market democracies and their disaster response efficacy (Gunewardena and Schuller, 2008; Perez and Cannella, 2011; Mirowski, 2013; Pyles, 2016). The concept of disaster capitalism is also dominant within social movements and in the mainstream media; there are a plethora of brimming journalistic accounts of profiteering from disaster (Mahlangu, 2020). The concept has established a footing in the academy and has received both plaudits and critiques from scholars.

For Klein (2007:6), disaster capitalism encompasses "orchestrated raids on the public sphere in the wake of catastrophic events, combined with the treatment of disasters as exciting market opportunities." Harvey (2017:334-5) substantiates that this process of disaster profiteering is orchestrated through the government's provision of no-bid disaster response contracts to politically connected private corporations. Loewenstein (2015:21) affirms that "many ongoing crises seem to have been sustained by business to fuel industries in which they have a financial stake. These corporations are like vultures feeding on the body of a weakened government that must increasingly rely on the private sector to provide public services." It is important to note that this study's

theoretical framework is congruent with its unit of analysis and helps narrow and focus the study, enabling a theoretical explanation of the phenomenon under investigation. The study's theoretical foundations are formed by previous research or literature on disaster capitalism and the industry-government relationship that is characterised by negative patron-client relations reinforced by the revolving door between business, organised labour, and government (Perez and Cannella, 2011:47; Schuller and Maldonado, 2016:64).

Disaster capitalism remains a relatively new concept and one that is largely unexplored in the South African case, construed here, as a health crisis that was exploited by a nexus between a state and industry (illicit) relationship that defrauded the public purse. Disaster capitalism during the COVID-19 pandemic is construed as a process permitted by the national state of disaster and emergency procurement regulations which according to Mantzaris and Ngcamu (2020:462) was “Manna from heaven” to corrupt public and private actors. Disaster profiteering can be observed in the litany of PPE and other COVID-19-related tender corruption scandals, which are brimming in the popular news media. As the catastrophic event was instrumentalised to amass profits for the public health bureaucratic elite and politically savvy service providers, the underclass and the working class were hit the hardest by the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic (Farrell, 2020; Mahlangu, 2020). Three million South Africans lost their jobs (Tswana, 2020). It can thus be inferred that the theory of disaster capitalism places the phenomenon under study in sharp focus.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Orientation**

Mirowski (2013:9) posits that the 2007-8 global financial crisis was “the most dramatic catastrophic global economic collapse after the Great Depression of the 1930s.” However, Gürcan and Kahraman (2020:56) contend that the economic crisis induced by the COVID-19 pandemic surpasses that of the Great Depression and the global financial crisis of 2007-8. Klein (2007:18-9) challenges the claim that free-market economics go hand-in-hand with freedom and democracy and that the evolution and progression of free-market econom-

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ics results from embracing modern democracy. She contends that the growth and progression of free-market ideas across the globe is a result of an increase in shocks such as wars, invasions, natural or human-induced disasters, epidemics and pandemics, and economic crises that create a collective shock and a subsequent collective trauma. While the public is in a state of trauma, free marketers, right-wing think tanks, neo-conservative politicians, and prominent corporate magnates collude to profit out of catastrophe and instate neoliberal economic reforms which accumulate wealth for global elites at the expense of the greater majority.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2023), SARS-CoV-2 is the virus which causes COVID-19 – coronavirus (World Health Organisation, 2021:1; Naude and Cameron, 2021:1) which first broke out in Wuhan, China in 2019. On the 30th of January 2020, WHO declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). In South Africa, the outbreak was characterised as a pandemic on March 11th, 2020. The national state of disaster was declared by President Cyril Ramaphosa on March 5th, 2020, followed by a nationwide lockdown. The lockdown regulations were provided for in the Disaster Management Act No. 57 of 2002. The national state of disaster was lifted on the 15th of March 2022 (Saloshni and Nithiseelan, 2022:1). The WHO (2023) reports that as of 23 September 2023, there are 2 248 538 confirmed deaths globally. The African continent surpassed the one million mark of confirmed cases in early August of 2020. In South Africa, the pandemic caused over 100,000 fatalities and more than 3.9 million reported cases (Saloshni and Nithiseelan, 2022:1). The economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic exposed socioeconomic injustices throughout the world and in South Africa as well (Vaughn, 2021:1). Filho and Ayers (2020:88) surmise that “the economic fallout from the pandemics could increase global poverty by 500m people (8% of the world’s population) and push 265m people to the brink of starvation.”

The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced deep inequalities already existent in society, and the impact of the virus mirrored these inequalities. For instance, blacks in the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK) were more prone to infection and death than their white counter-

parts. Inequalities of race, class and gender were evident in the victims of the disaster. Blacks, the lower-income working class and women are seldom in employment wherein it is possible to work from home behind a computer screen, thereby reducing risk; they seldom have health and life insurance and, in most instances, are unable to afford private quality healthcare (Cline-Cole, 2020:181-2; Fihlo and Ayers, 2020:85; Leach, Macgregor, Scoones and Wilkinson, 2021:4). Cline-Cole (2020:180) avers that “while the Covid-19 pandemic might not discriminate, the political economy does, frequently reinforcing existing and sometimes creating new patterns of coronavirus-related inequality.” The preceding postulations have established, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionate intensity.

Ploughing ahead, Naude and Cameron (2021:5) argue that quarantines, curfews, social distancing, prohibition of mass gatherings, the closure of institutions where infections were identified, and the seclusion of cities, towns or households curbed the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in the absence of a vaccine. COVID-19 regulations have produced a paternalistic state with centralised decision-making concentrated in the executive in the form of the National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC). In these circumstances, mechanisms to hold the government accountable were suspended, and disaster profiteering ensued without public interruption (South African Government, 2021; Medical Brief, [n.d.]). Schuller and Maldonado (2016:61) emphasize that “what is most significant to consider here is not the disaster event itself, but rather the disaster after the event that reproduced social inequalities, in large part through the process of disaster capitalism.”

By the end of June 2021, the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) had already spent a total of R350 million in investigations on COVID-19 PPE procurement corruption that arose because of no checks-and-balances in the systems of national and provincial governments, State-owned Enterprises (SOEs) and municipalities. The SIU further reported that it is probing 4000 cases involving 2400 service providers where there is a suspicion of or alleged irregularity. An estimate of the tally of the value defrauded from the government in the unlawful awarding of PPE contracts amounts to R4.8 billion. R4.8 billion, which is alleged to have been illegally channelled out of

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the public purse into private hands through a public-private partnership involving the public health bureaucratic elite and politically savvy businesspeople (Matya, 2021; McCain, 2021).

### **Research Design and Methodology**

As was already alluded to elsewhere in the paper. This is a case study research design, and secondary data is analysed. Document analysis is the preferred research methodology. Documents analysed include newspaper articles, policy reports and government publications. The findings will be analysed using the content analysis approach.

### **Findings and Discussion**

#### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Corruption Scandals: An Illustration of Disaster Capitalism – Making A Killing out of Catastrophe.**

The literature critiqued hereunder focuses on the industry-state dialectical relationship in manifesting disaster capitalism through contraventions of public procurement regulations, the Public Finance Management (PFMA) Act No. 29 of 1999, National Treasury guidelines, misconduct, unethical behaviour, and dereliction of duty in the PPE procurement process. Unsurprisingly, the beast of corruption, economic nepotism and cronyism has far-reaching consequences for the South African economy and its public, democratic, and legal institutions. This is despite the context of the country's supreme guiding document, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996, which mandates a corruption-free and publicly accountable government responsive to the needs, demands and preferences of the people (Farrell, 2020; Mahlangu, 2020; Medical Brief, [n.d.]).

Despite the multiplicity of anti-corruption legislation and other government measures to eradicate corrupt practices, corruption is highly prevalent in South Africa. This scourge of corruption soared after the emergency COVID-19 procurement regulations were put in place. These regulations aimed to create a quick response to the impact caused by the pandemic and to strengthen the public health sector. However, the public sector bureaucratic elite and politically exposed service providers saw a window of opportunity to engage in

self-serving acquisitive corruption at the expense of human lives (McCain, 2021; Dayimani, 2021; Heywood, 2021). The milieu of fear, panic, and uncertainty (Stiegler and Bouchard, 2020) culminated in the easing of procurement regulations concerning PPE and this blind spot was used by society's undesirables to engage in tender corruption by inflating the cost by up to 500% in some cases and providing sub-standard PPE to the government's health sector (Mokoena, 2020:526-7; Vaughn, 2021:5).

In the middle of a health emergency, while the public is in a state of disorientation, induced by the Covid-19 pandemic (accompanied by fear, panic and uncertainty) and the hard lockdown which technically suspended democratic processes, civil and political rights indirectly through quarantines, curfews, and social distancing; politically-exposed business-people, big pharmaceutical behemoths and the global corporate oligarchy identified a window of opportunity to capitalise on catastrophe. The flooding of wealth up to the ultra-rich and away from the underclass and working class was justified as preventing the further spread of the virus. In other words, providing disaster relief through highly inflated no-bid contracts awarded to politically connected service providers (Klein, 2007; Davis, 2020). This demand for PPE and other health-related services was intended to equip the ill-prepared public health sector and combat poverty and unemployment; however, the opposite occurred through a litany of PPE procurement corruption (Farrell, 2020; Mahlangu, 2020). Leach et al. (2021:5) note that "state-led responses to a disease outbreak therefore often replicate biases within development, reinforcing alienation, marginalisation and stigmatisation."

### **Case Vignettes**

The chief financial officer (CFO) of the Department of Health (DoH) in the Gauteng provincial government, Kabelo Lehloenya, alleged that then-premier David Makhura failed to fulfil his duties and responsibilities as the executive head of the provincial government. Lehloenya made these submissions at a Special Tribunal instigated by the SIU to recover public money unlawfully paid to service providers Ledla Structural Development and Beadica 430. Lehloenya espoused that under David Makhura's watch, the PPE

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procurement process had been perverted by improper interests amounting to R42.8 million. In the stage-managed PPE procurement process, the two service providers mentioned above were awarded the contract because of their close ties to Chief Thandisizwe Diko II, the late husband of Khusela Diko, who was on special leave (or suspension) from her position at the time as presidential spokesperson. Chief Thandisizwe Diko II had close ties to Bandile Masuku, the Member of the Executive Committee (MEC) of Health at the time the unlawful procurement process unfolded (Koko, 2021). Khusela Diko's decision to take special leave was encouraged by "allegations that her husband received part of R2.2b personal protective equipment tender awarded to 75 companies by the Gauteng Health Department (Medical Brief, [n.d.])."

The PPE procurement corruption scandal highlighted above-involved price inflation, which resulted in an 800% profit margin for the front companies alleged to be linked to Chief Thandisizwe Diko II. The SIU acquired an order which froze assets worth R36 million, allegedly purchased from distasteful gains involving Diko's front company Ledla Structural Development and the Gauteng DoH (Medical Brief, [n.d.]).

South African Government (2021) reported that the SIU, working collaboratively with the Hawks' National Serious Corruption Investigation, arrested an unnamed man from Mpumalanga on 9 August 2021 embroiled in PPE procurement corruption. The man attempted to offer a bribe worth R50 000 to an SIU investigator to make the investigation into the questionable financial transactions related to the awarding of a tender to disinfect Mpumalanga provincial government buildings (in the Ehlanzeni district) evaporate. The SIU investigation found irregularities in the procurement process from the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport in the district mentioned above. The irregularity emerged after the declaration of a National State of Disaster on March 20, 2020, which necessitated a multitude of healthcare services such as disinfection. The service provider was paid a total of R4.8 million post-disinfection, which was made in multiple instalments. After the first instalment of R1.3 million was paid, a series of large transfers were made to individuals and entities, including two department employees and a law firm based in Mpumalanga. The law firm proceeded to purchase



a property worth R2.2 million, which was registered in the name of a departmental official's daughter (Ibid).

The Hawks arrested two employees in August 2021 from the National Health Laboratory Services (NHLS) who were alleged to have engaged in theft, fraud, and contravention of the guidelines of the PFMA. The two suspects (former employees) enabled the unlawful awarding of a PPE contract worth R14.4 million from the NHLS. The two suspects would appear in the Palm Ridge Specialized Commercial Crimes Court soon after their apprehension to answer questions related to alleged tender fraud. Hawks' spokesperson, Colonel Katlego Mogale, stated that some suspects in the investigation into PPE tender fraud led by the SIU had already resigned from their positions. The call for a comprehensive investigation into Covid-related corruption in the public sector was made in 2020 by President Cyril Ramaphosa (Makhafola, 2021).

Ayanda Matinise, the former messenger of axed Eastern Cape (EC) MEC of Health Sindiswa Gomba, was prosecuted on fraud, forgery, and uttering charges. Matinise forged the signature of the director of supply chain management to unlawfully award a PPE contract worth R23.4 million to a favoured service provider, Falaz Protection Services. Matinise appeared in the Mthatha Specialized Commercial Crimes Court, where he was released on R1000 bail. (Dayimani, 2021b). Matinise was sentenced to a decade behind bars in early 2023 (TimesLive, 2023).

The relaxed public procurement measures introduced by the government shortly after declaring a state of disaster in March 2020 created a window of opportunity for senior government officials and politically connected businesspeople to go on a looting spree during a life-threatening pandemic. The headlines in the media were painted colourfully by a series of PPE (face and surgical masks, sanitisers, gloves, and disinfectants) and other COVID-19-related corruption at different levels of government. This carried adverse effects on the overburdened public health sector. The looting spree was made possible by the government's gamble to relax already weak procurement policies in South Africa (Thinane, 2021:5; Vaughn, 2021:6).

Gürcan and Kahraman (2020:56) affirm that the sheer scale of the economic impact brought by the COVID-19 pandemic

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is one never witnessed before. The thirty-day hard lockdown in 2020, which was emulated by the Chinese government, carried severe economic consequences, including a decline in the fiscus, the shedding of 2.5 million jobs, a seven-percent-age point drop in the yearly gross domestic product (GDP) and other associated social costs. Despite this, senior government officials, political office bearers, and politically exposed service providers engaged in cost inflation and non-delivery or delivery of sub-standard PPE and other COVID-19-related services, regardless of the risk of losing human lives (Mahlangu, 2020; Mmakwena and Moses, 2022:987).

Mmakwena and Moses (2022:987) argue that “the combination of the breadth and complexity of the crisis, the need for a rapid response, and a lack of sufficient state capacity has led to a perfect storm for increased opportunities for corruption.” Sebake and Mudau (2020:490; 462) concur that emergency procurement regulations provided gaps and opportunities for the corrupt in both the public and private sectors to go on a looting spree. It is not public procurement policies that do not exist, but it is the administrative and procurement officers that have mastered the art of manipulating the process of bidding with the intent of personal gain. Mahlangu (2020) reported that the Public Service Regulations and the Constitution clearly speak to ethical (integrity and honesty) standards applicable in the procurement process, the conduct of procurement officers, the quality of goods to be procured for the state, and safeguarding those goods.

It is, however, the non-existence of policy probity in South Africa, which contributes mainly to high levels of corruption in public procurement; policies regulating this aspect still need to be revised. Political office bearers and public office holders in the South African government should create a space of competitiveness regarding the awarding of COVID-19 PPE procurement contracts and refrain from cronyism, which ultimately leaks money out of government coffers into the private pockets of businesspeople intricately tied to the political elite. A fight against corruption cannot only be fought by law enforcement agencies. It also requires ethical practices in the procurement process, which will not permit room for society’s undesirables (Farrell, 2020; Mahlangu, 2020).

## **Conclusion**

The main thrust of this paper is the instrumentalisation of the COVID-19 pandemic by the political and business elite, which is enabled by the national state of disaster and emergency procurement regulations, which provided windows and gaps for misconduct and wrongdoing by both unscrupulous public and private actors. The findings and analysis indicate that out of disaster profiteering, poverty and unemployment worsened, and the socioeconomic circumstances of the underclass and the working class deteriorated, while the opposite occurred for politically connected businesspeople. This line of argument was framed by the theory of disaster capitalism, which enhanced our understanding of PPE and other COVID-19-related tender corruption in South Africa.

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The author reports that there are no competing interests to declare.

## **Biographical Note**

The author is studying for a PhD in political studies at Nelson Mandela University. The author teaches political studies at Walter Sisulu University. The author also writes opinion pieces for *The Sowetan* and *The Daily Dispatch*.

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## **Disclaimer**

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

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## EDUCATION OF CHILD LABOUR IN THE TEXTILE SECTOR IN BANGLADESH

### **Introduction:**

Not all work done by children should be classified as child labour that is to be targeted for elimination. The participation of children or adolescents above the minimum age for admission to employment in work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling, is generally regarded as being something positive. This includes activities such as assisting in a family business or earning pocket money outside school hours and during school holidays. These kinds of activities contribute to children's development and to the welfare of their families; they provide them with skills and experience, and help to prepare them to be productive members of society during their adult life.

Child labour refers to work that children are too young to perform or that by its nature or circumstances can be hazardous. Unlike activities that help children develop (such as contributing to light housework or taking on a job during school holidays), child labour causes harm to a child's health, safety or moral development.

In its most insidious forms, child labour can amount to slavery or practices similar to slavery, including the sale and trafficking of children. In some places, children may be forcibly recruited into armed conflict, used in the production and trafficking of drugs, or offered into prostitution.

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The term child labour is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.

Child labour remains a persistent problem in the world today. The latest global estimates indicate that around 138 million children were engaged in child labour in 2024. Over a third of them about 54 million are involved in hazardous work that directly endangers their health and safety. In Bangladesh, there are 3.54 million working children, of whom 1.78 million are engaged in child labour, and 1.07 million are involved in hazardous child labour, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and the National Child Labour Survey (NCLS) 2022.

Child labour is most prevalent in low-income countries, yet more than half of all child labour occurs in middle-income countries. Globally, child labour is also more common in rural areas, with most child labour taking place in the agriculture sector.

### **Causes of Child Labour in Bangladesh:**

Bangladesh is one of the developing countries that has the largest number of children, who work under difficult conditions. Child labor in Bangladesh is primarily caused by widespread poverty, forcing children to work to contribute to family income or support themselves. Urbanization and population growth exacerbate poverty by increasing competition for resources and opportunities, which pushes families into vulnerable situations where children are compelled to work. The resulting poor living standards, especially in urban areas, create a demand for cheap child labor, creating a cycle of poverty and exploitation.

### **Poverty:**

Poverty is one of the primary drivers of child labour in Bangladesh. When parents are unemployed or earn very low wages, the likelihood increases that children will be sent to work, as they are often seen as needing to contribute to the family income. According to UNICEF (2010), 46% of working children in Bangladesh live below the poverty line, with one quarter living in extreme poverty. Children in poor and extremely poor households are often deprived of basic neces-

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sities such as adequate food, shelter, healthcare, sanitation, and clean drinking water. With the average daily wage being less than \$5 (Al Jazeera, 2020), many families are forced to rely on their children as additional sources of income. As a result, children from poor families are significantly more likely to be engaged in child labour than those from better-off households. Therefore, poverty and poor living standards directly fuel the continued use of child labour in Bangladesh.

### **Urbanization and Population Growth:**

The demographics have a considerable impact on the existence of child labor in Bangladesh. As stated by the World Bank (2018), almost 63% of Bangladesh's population lives in rural areas. People of Bangladesh historically and traditionally have been working in agriculture, growing crops like rice and jute, looking after livestock and fisheries. Agriculture is the most important economic sector of Bangladesh that provides workplaces for more than 70% of Bangladesh's population (World Bank, 2016). It is a custom in Bangladesh to assist parents in agricultural activities; thus, children are a substantial part of labor in rural areas. Due to the fact that the vast majority of rural households depend on income derived from agriculture, the concentration of child workers in rural areas is greater than in urban areas, which means that the demographic situation of Bangladesh impels the child labor.

### **Education becomes a cost to poor families:**

Although education in Bangladesh is free and compulsory up to Grade 8, it often becomes a financial burden for poor families. As a result, many children do not complete primary school and begin working at an early age. According to the International Labour Organization (2013), only 28.6% of working children attend school, suggesting a negative correlation between school attendance and child labour. While tuition may be free, education still involves indirect costs such as stationery, exam and tuition fees, transportation, and school uniforms expenses that many low-income families cannot afford. An ILO survey revealed that 28.9% of respondents cited their inability to cover educational costs as a reason for their children not attending school.

Additionally, the low level of parental education significantly influences decisions to send children to work. Parents with little or no education often do not view schooling as essential and prioritize short-term economic survival over long-term benefits. They tend to see immediate income from child labour as more valuable than the future opportunities that education could offer. Therefore, the inaccessibility and perceived cost of education serve as key factors that drive child labour in Bangladesh.

**Family Circumstances:**

Child labour refers to work that harms a child's physical, mental, or moral well-being. While often hazardous, it is sometimes perceived as beneficial when children help support their families or act as breadwinners. In many communities, child labour is socially accepted, rooted in poverty, tradition, or family expectations. Broken families and lack of parental care also contribute significantly to this problem.

**Demand for Cheap Labor:**

Economic necessity fuels the demand for cheap child labour, trapping many in a continuous cycle of exploitation. In Bangladesh, sectors like agriculture, textiles, and small-scale manufacturing often employ children due to their low wages. According to BBS, child labourers earn an average of BDT 6,675 (around USD 55) per month far below adult minimum wages making them an attractive option for employers and sustaining the cycle of child labour.

**Why parents send their child to work:**

Parents send their children to work primarily due to poverty and economic hardship, where the child's income is necessary for the family's survival and ability to meet basic needs like food, education, or healthcare. Other reasons include a family tradition of child labor, lack of affordable childcare, or, in less common situations, as a means of skill development or to integrate a child into a family business.

**Poverty:** The most significant driver, particularly in developing countries, but also a factor in poorer communities in wealthier nations.

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**Family crises:** Events like a parent's job loss, illness, family breakdown or other sudden financial emergencies can push children into a family's basic needs, such as food, water, and healthcare.

**Tradition:** In some communities, particularly those with a history in agricultural labor, sending children to work is a long-held tradition and a natural, expected step rather than a last resort.

**Lack of alternatives:** In some cases, particularly in rural areas, there may be a lack of access to or affordability of education, making work a more immediate and "natural" option.

**Life skills:** Under the right conditions, working can help a child develop responsibility, money management, and on-the-job skills, preparing them for adulthood.

**Family business:** Children may work to learn the family trade and assist with the family business, which can be beneficial if done in a supportive environment.

**Lack of childcare:** With more parents working and formal childcare systems under pressure, a child may be brought to the workplace if alternatives are unavailable or too expensive.

### **Major Policies to eliminate Child Labour in Bangladesh:**

Major policies in Bangladesh to eliminate child labor include the National Child Labour Elimination Policy 2010, the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy 2015 and National Plan of Action to eliminate child labour 2021-2025. These policies are supported by national action plans and focus on key strategic areas like improving education, health, and social awareness, strengthening laws and enforcement, creating social safety nets, and preventing hazardous labor.

#### **Key policies**

##### **National Child Labour Elimination Policy 2010 (NCLEP):**

This is a core policy that outlines nine strategic areas for action, including education, health, social awareness, and legislation.

##### **Bangladesh Labour Act 2006:**

This act sets legal limits on child labor, prohibiting the employment of children under 14 in regular jobs and outlining conditions for those over 14.

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**Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy 2015:**

This policy specifically addresses child labor in domestic settings, ensuring children are not subjected to hazardous work and receive education and care.

**National Constitution:**

The constitution of Bangladesh also provides a legal framework for protecting children's rights.

**Strategic approaches to eliminate child labour**

- **Education:** Expanding access to quality education, especially for vulnerable children, and offering stipends to help families keep children in school.
- **Social safety nets:** Implementing programs like social protection and universal child benefits to support families and prevent them from relying on child labor for income.
- **Legislation and enforcement:** Strengthening and enforcing labor laws to prohibit hazardous work and hold employers accountable.
- **Social awareness:** Raising awareness among parents and the public about the negative consequences of child labor.
- **Prevention:** Creating and strengthening systems to identify, prevent, and respond to children at risk of child labor, including those in hazardous sectors.

**Child Labour Education:**

Children's basic rights life, development, protection, non-discrimination, best interests, and participation are guaranteed under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) for everyone under 18. Access to healthcare, education, and protection from exploitation ensures a safe and fulfilling childhood.

Education is one of the strongest tools against child labour. Expanding quality schooling and social protection, especially in rural or vulnerable areas, helps children escape poverty and exploitation, paving the way for a brighter future.

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## **How education combats child labor**

### **Breaks the cycle of poverty**

- **Empowers future generations:** Education equips children with the skills needed for better job opportunities as adults, preventing them from being forced into exploitative labor as their parents were.

- **Boosts long-term earnings:** By raising their future earning potential, education encourages families to prioritize schooling as a long-term investment rather than seeing child labor as a necessity for short-term survival.

### **Offers empowerment and protection**

- **Creates awareness of rights:** Education teaches children their rights, helping them recognize and report situations of exploitation. It also promotes a deeper understanding of human dignity, helping to create more just and equitable societies.

- **Provides safe spaces:** Schools offer a safe, structured environment for children, protecting them from the immediate dangers of hazardous work. This is especially critical in times of crisis, natural disaster, or conflict, when child labor rates tend to rise.

### **Serves as a powerful incentive**

- **Motivates families:** Quality, accessible, and affordable schooling can be a strong incentive for families to keep their children out of work. Programs that offer stipends, school meals, or other family support can directly increase school enrollment and decrease child labor.

- **Improves law enforcement:** When compulsory education is a legal requirement, it reinforces child labor laws. The existence of schools makes child labor more difficult to hide, and enforcement becomes more realistic.

## **What Steps Should Be Taken to Eliminate Child Labour**

Eliminating child labour requires a coordinated approach addressing poverty, lack of education, and weak enforcement, while promoting ethical business and community engagement. Governments, civil society, the private sector, and international partners must act together for lasting change.

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## 1. Legal and Policy Measures

- **Strengthen laws and enforcement:** Clearly define minimum working age, ban hazardous child labour, and impose strict penalties for violations.

- **Ratify and Implement International Conventions:** Countries should ratify and enforce key international agreements, such as the ILO Minimum Age Convention (No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182). Bangladesh has ratified both, but ongoing implementation and enforcement remain critical.

- **Ensure birth registration:** Enable age verification and access to education and protection services.

- **Improve labour inspection:** Train and equip inspectors to monitor formal and informal sectors effectively.

## 2. Educational Strategies

- **Ensure Free and Compulsory Education:** Access to free, quality education up to the legal minimum working age is among the most effective tools for preventing child labour. Compulsory education laws should be enforced and supported by sufficient infrastructure, teaching resources, and school facilities.

- **Develop Child-Sensitive Learning Pathways:** Children transitioning out of labour often need tailored support. Flexible learning opportunities, remedial education, and vocational training can facilitate their reintegration into the classroom and prepare them for decent work in the future.

- **Engage Educators in Prevention Efforts:** Teachers can serve as frontline defenders by identifying children at risk of child labour and raising awareness in communities about the value of education and the harms of child labour.

## 3. Family and Community Support

- **Invest in Social Protection Programs:** Governments should strengthen and expand social safety nets including conditional cash transfers, food aid, and health coverage to help families meet their basic needs without resorting to child labour.

- **Promote Sustainable Livelihoods for Families:** Supporting parents and caregivers to secure decent, stable employment reduces reliance on child labour. Livelihood assistance, mi-

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crofinance opportunities, and skills development programs are critical to improving household income.

- **Raise Public Awareness and Shift Social Norms:** Culturally embedded acceptance of child labour must be addressed through sustained public education campaigns. Partnerships with NGOs, community leaders, and media outlets can reshape public attitudes and empower families to prioritize education over work.

#### 4. Responsible Business Practices

- **Ensure Transparency in Supply Chains:** Companies must trace and monitor their supply chains including subcontractors and informal suppliers to identify and eliminate child labour. Effective age verification systems should be mandatory at all levels of employment.

- **Adopt Ethical Employment Practices:** Businesses should offer fair wages and decent working conditions to adult workers to reduce families' economic dependency on child income. This includes ensuring compliance with national and international labour standards.

- **Support Fair Trade and Ethical Consumerism:** Consumers play a vital role by supporting companies that are certified as child labour-free. Certification programs and ethical labels can serve as incentives for companies to maintain responsible practices.

- **Leverage Market-Based Incentives:** Initiatives such as the ILO's Child Labour Platform enable companies to share best practices and implement collaborative approaches to eliminate child labour from global supply chains.

Child labour is a deeply rooted issue requiring integrated action across law, education, poverty reduction, social protection, and business accountability. With strong commitment and coordination, Bangladesh can move toward a future where every child enjoys a safe and dignified childhood.



# EXTENSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS TO EDUCATION II

*“Our first book under the Extension of Human Rights to Education Project (in short: Project Article 26) was published in June 2020. This book contains selected papers from the two symposia held in Germany in 2016 and 2018, as well as selected articles from the article series titled „Ideas and Recommendations on Extension of Human Rights to Education” published in the PoliTeknik journal.*

*Project Article 26, which originated as an idea in the fall of 2015, aims to renew the 26th article of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights with a progressive declaration based on broad legitimacy, bringing it into line with the requirements of the modern age.*

*Today the project is celebrating its 10th anniversary. During this period, many institutions and organizations that supported the project joined us as partners. These are mostly unions from the education and other sectors including public, service, health, agriculture, construction, textile, forestry, and mining sectors. We are talking about approximately 100 unions from around 45 countries across 4 continents, as well as universities, student unions, academics, associations, publishing houses, and other organizations.*

*The 5-year period following the first book witnessed many different developments. For example, we witnessed an extraordinary moment in world history with the Covid-19 pandemic. International multiple crises, ranging from war to the economic crisis, the extraordinary restriction of democratic and social rights at the national level, to the obvious violation of international law, and from there, a new and profound rupture for humanity, the genocide against Palestinians.*

*This 2nd book of Project Article 26, you are holding in your hands, is a compilation of a series of studies conducted to shed light on these periods of multiple crises and to illuminate these periods. Well, what did these studies entail? A digital book initiative to be prepared and published by university students, a conference held in Johannesburg in December 2023, and a lecture series that began in 2022. In addition to these studies that comprise the chapters of the book, the final section includes a selection of articles published in PoliTeknik journals and articles on specific topics. All of these studies have been efforts focused on extending the right to education or offering perspectives and developing discourse in this direction. Now let's take a closer look at these initiatives.”*