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EMPOWERING EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE, GLOBAL, AND ETHICAL VALUES THAT ACHIEVE THE G20 PRIORITIES FOR PEOPLE, PLANET, AND PROSPERITY

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Education is key to assuring a future of human coexistence, environmental interconnectedness, and sustainable prosperity for all. The resolution of today's global challenges is inextricably linked to providing quality education that embraces sustainability at its core and espouses ethical values such as integrity, solidarity, and sharing. The G20 urgently needs to ensure the adoption of values-centered curricula that align with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which seeks to cultivate global citizenship through a human-centered, ethical, inclusive, and equitable quality education that promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all (UN, 2021).

Global challenge

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented educational disruption. Ninety-one percent (1.2 billion) of students have been affected by school closures across the planet (UN 2021). These closures have particularly affected students in low-income households, reversing years of progress toward equitable quality education (SDG, 4). Simultaneously, owing to climate change, 2020 was the hottest year on record. The pandemic has also manifested systemic social and racial injustices, along with dramatic escalations in economic inequities. If we are to achieve the G20 priorities for People, Planet, and Prosperity, we need to recognize that education is the bedrock of a just society in the post-COVID world.

Education is the key to enabling upward socioeconomic mobility, reducing inequalities,

and reaching gender equality, thus moving toward a more peaceful world (OECD 2018a). Currently, sustainable, ethical, and human core values, investments in education are fragmented, sporadic, and often disjointed (OECD 2018b).

Unfortunately, modern education often reflects the societal obsession with financial performance and material success and discounts the sustainable, global, ethical, and human qualities central to physical and mental well-being and to living a meaningful life (UNESCO-MGIEP 2020). Despite the many advancements toward sustainability and socially responsible global education (UNESCO 2018), most countries' educational policies have not yet recognized or integrated environmental and other pillars of sustainability, for example, environmental sustainability, as core component programs, curricula, and learning outcomes (UNESCO 2021).

As the Fourth Industrial Revolution is rapidly advancing, it is imperative to equip future generations not only with the necessary technical skills but also with human-centered sensitivity (ethical-empathy), concern for the environment (sustainability-regeneration), people-human skills (social-relational), and mindsets (consciousness-responsibility) essential to reducing and reversing harm (Wals 2015).

How do we equip our young people with both the analytical skills to solve society's problems and the essential skills needed to approach these problems and solve them with moral, sustainable, and humanistic results? The G20 Joint Education and Labour and Employment Ministers' Declaration (2021) has identified blending skills with values-based competencies as a priority:

We acknowledge the importance of promoting acquisition by young people of all forms of basic skills, including digital and green skills, technical and professional and transversal skills. This should also include the development of competencies in relation to global citizenship and sustainable development that allow us to respond to the

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complexity of our societies (G20 Joint Education, Labour and Employment Ministers 2021 para. 6).

Effectively integrating a teaching and learning approach to Ethics Across the Curricula (EAC) is both a crucial challenge and an opportunity to educate future generations of world leaders and global citizens. Education in ethics and sustainability for people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership can no longer just be based on contents and skills. This education must integrate mindsets that support global coexistence, interdependence, social environmental justice, resilience, mental health, and general well-being. It must enable students to be explicitly and systematically educated to respect, empathize with, and be compassionate to others. In other words, we need policies that enable national education systems to give students the educational and pro-social values to sustain themselves, others, and the natural world.

The urgent challenge is ensuring access to a quality education that nourishes both the head and the heart of humanity, thereby enabling individuals, organizations, and countries to develop sustainably.

Global solution

The world's commitment to promoting high-quality, inclusive, equitable education and lifelong learning opportunities was expressed in the 2015 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action (UNESCO 2015a). Education 2030 makes a case for a values-based commitment to implementing SDG 4, recognized as the main driver for sustainable development and peaceful coexistence. Achieving inclusive, equitable, quality education requires investing in educational opportunities and programs that promote sustainability values and global attitudes along with other high-level cognitive, interpersonal and social skills. This approach elevates education as a key method for sustainable development, global citizenship, human and ethical relations. These essential

pedagogical priorities integrate skills with values and attitudes that enable healthy, fulfilled and engaged citizens to respond to local and global challenges.

In line with the Education 2030 agenda, we acknowledge that education overcomes gender and other inequities, eliminates extreme poverty, promotes sustainable economic activity, builds human capital, and leads to economic growth. We therefore propose recentering values education and lifelong learning. But this requires more than general agreements. It demands commitments to expanding, transforming, and re-envisioning education in support of sustainable development, global responsibility, human values, and ethical behaviors (Sachs et al 2021). These priorities reflect SDG target 4.7 for sustainable development and global citizenship education: "by 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development."

More than any other targets, SDG 4.7 touches on social, moral, and humanistic (people), sustainability and lifestyle (planet), sustainable development (prosperity), rights, equity, and culture (peace), and global citizenship responsibility (partnerships). These four priorities need to be integrated into national educational policies and the resources, curricula guidelines, and methods systemically used to assess and revise current programs.

1. Empowering Education for Sustainable Development: Sustainable development has substantially advanced in the last twenty-five years and has become central in education thanks to the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO 2005–2014). Today the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is a recognized interdisciplinary learning methodology for integrating the social (people), environmental

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(planet), and economic (prosperity) aspects of formal and informal curricula (UNESCO 2014). ESD is internationally recognized as a key enabler of sustainable development and as the essential element in achieving all the Sustainable Development Goals and its own dedicated Goal 4. The international commitment to a more sustainable world requires different educational paradigms with corresponding approaches, methods, and contents. To educate sustainability changemakers requires changing the old paradigms of education: for example, changing the focus from economic growth alone to integrating knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that empower learners to contribute to sustainable development. The now well-established ESD approach “empowers learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society for present for future generations” (UNESCO 2017a). ESD, together with Global Citizenship Education (GCE), is explicitly recognized in SDG Target 4.7 as a complementary approach to developing crosscutting sustainability competencies and specific cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral learning outcomes to understand sustainability challenges and engage sustainability solutions (SDSN 2020).

2. Empowering Education for Global Citizenship:

Global citizenship education (GCE) is UNESCO’s well-established form of civic learning that addresses the world’s social, political, economic, and environmental problems through learners’ participation in well-rounded cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral learning projects and experiences. GCE and ESD both place importance on acquiring values and cultivating attitudes relevant to addressing global challenges. They also share the same vision: to educate for a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, and sustainable world (UNESCO 2017b). This approach to education is a concrete response to global challenges, such as climate change, human rights violations, forced migrations, inequalities, and poverty, that threaten peace and sustainability. It provides a framework for recognizing that our localities are connected to global systems and shared

planetary resources. It empowers learners of all ages to become conscious, competent, and active promoters of more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure, and sustainable societies. SDG Target 4.7 and the evidence demonstrating the close connection between GCE and ESD is a strong call for ensuring that education goes beyond literacy and numeracy and integrates these skills with building peace and sustainability through greater consciousness of social–environmental justice and global-planetary interconnectedness (UNESCO 2019a).

3. Empowering Human-Centered Education:

To invest in values-based education policies we need to embrace the human-centered values of sustainable development, particularly those that nurture in people their innate capacity to espouse and act on behalf of our common humanity and common future. The current outdated industrial model of education creates a standards-based, outcome-focused culture that is often narrow and fragmented into isolated academic subjects and disconnected from a human-centered approach. Instead, the purpose of education should be revised to focus on people, planet, and prosperity and on enhancing the dignity, capacity, and welfare of the human person in relation to other people and to nature (UNESCO 2015b). With the advancements of science and technology, it is imperative to promote a value-centered, interdisciplinary approach to education that integrates universal values and principles, such as global solidarity, social inclusion, gender equality, and accountability, in the implementation of the SDGs. Education provides meaning that, at its best, supports human flourishing through knowledge and awareness, and being in a positive relationship with other humans, non-humans, and the environment (UNESCO–MGIEP 2021). Hence, the aim of such education is to promote inclusive, equitable, quality education that promotes lifelong learning and opportunities for all. It empowers people to speak from a common universal values narrative, to be wise, ethically intelligent, and in tune with themselves, others, and our planet (UNESCO 2015b). Innovative models of education such as Values-based Education (VbE) originating at West Kidlington School in Oxfordshire, UK, has placed

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human ethical values such as respect, trust, empathy, compassion, peace, and care in its core curricular activities (Hawkes and Hawkes 2018). Focusing on a human-centered education and relational-values experiential learning empowers students to develop a higher level of consciousness. Other innovative educational models, such as the Humanity Awareness Initiative (HAI), have proposed a higher purpose for leadership. In these models, leadership is in service to society, humanity, and the planet and focused on social responsibility toward future generations and integrating wisdom, compassion, and humility in the promotion of sustainability practices (Barrett 2007 2020). Empowering a human-centered approach in education recognizes the powerful transformative force of education in promoting human flourishing, rights, and dignity centered around universal values of social equity and cultural diversity, environmental justice, and shared global responsibility for our common humanity (UNESCO 2015b).

4. Empowering Education for Ethical Leadership: For sustainable development, people need access to quality education that nurtures their capacity to espouse and act on ethical values, education that fosters ethical leadership to achieve the flourishing of our planet. We propose not only providing access to basic quality education, but also nurturing in people their innate capacity to espouse and act on ethical values. Such a transformative addition will empower people and systems to achieve the SDGs by promoting ethical leadership. It will encourage social cohesion, thereby ensuring the flourishing and sustainability of our planet and all its citizens. The outcome of such ethics-integral education is that young people will develop ethical intelligence and the ability to ethically self-regulate their behavior. These ethical priorities center around discovering and embedding community-driven, universally positive human values such as respect, trust, empathy, and compassion.

Besides learning about values and how to internalize them, students are given opportunities, as UNESCO refers to in its Ethics

Education Programme (EEP), to live the values, putting them into action in their own lives, their community, and society at large. The evidence (Hawkes 2005 and Lovat et al 2009) demonstrates that learning about and actioning values help students grow in awareness, develop greater academic diligence, and enjoy increased relational trust. In a word, they flourish. We also suggest tackling world problems by investing in integrity and sector-specific, ethical lifelong learning education. Business ethics and ethical decision making no longer can be relegated to a few elective courses and optional training but must be integrated into every level of education. As science and technology advance solutions to global challenges, integrating the ethics of machine learning and AI, data sharing, appropriation, and privacy is one of the most fundamental and essential pillars of sustainable human development. Governments have the responsibility to integrate ethical education and principles in science education for technological advancements (UNESCO 2019b).

Policy recommendations

In order for leaders of the G20 to promote international, national, and sector-specific policies with these priorities, the following recommendations are made.

1. Integrate sustainable values-based education: Partner with UNESCO to integrate and promote SDG 4, specifically Target 4.7, by 2030. Education for sustainable development will ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. Initiatives such as Mission 4.7 (<https://www.mission4point7.org>) could be expanded to include and integrate sustainable development education (UNESCO 2020).

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2. Integrate digital transformation with values-based education:

Advance learning outcomes in a post-pandemic education that promote digital integration and combine STEM education with people-centered and humanistic values. Promote national and institutional processes to review and promote educational programs embedded with integrity, solidarity, and sharing, along with other ethical, humanistic, and global sustainability values. Revise and reinvest in teacher training programs and provide support to ensure appropriate methods and mindsets to prepare young generations to address climate solutions and peaceful global coexistence.

3. Convene a strategic education task force:

Build on the recommendations of the G20 Education Ministers Meeting (2021) to promote a strategic education taskforce with representative experts who can advance values-based education to offer solutions to post-pandemic challenges, like blended teaching and learning, educational poverty, global cooperation and commitments, and sustainable development. The taskforce could also become and/or promote a clearinghouse for contents, strategies, and effective practices for values-based education.

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