

I. STUDII, CERCETĂRI, ARTICOLE

THE GALAXY OF KNOWLEDGE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract:

Articolul cuprinde o succintă analiză a sistemului educațional global din perspectiva prevederilor relevante incluse în documentul programatic intitulat „*Transformarea lumii noastre: Agenda 2030 pentru dezvoltare durabilă*”, adoptat de Summit-ul ONU la 25 septembrie 2015, precum și în lumina celor mai recente recomandări ale UNESCO menite să asigure educației un loc prioritar în galaxia cunoașterii.

După o suită de observații preliminare sunt înfățișate aspecte și date semnificative privind rezultatele relativ modeste ale punerii în aplicare la nivel global a recomandărilor ONU și UNESCO în materie de educație, sunt sintetizate obiectivele ambițioase formulate în acest domeniu pentru 2030, cu evidențierea contribuției educatorilor în materializarea acestor obiective, în conformitate cu drepturile fundamentale la educație și dezvoltare. În context, este reliefată importanța vitală a reformelor și a coordonării adecvate în toate sectoarele educaționale.

În finalul articolului sunt puse în valoare cele mai noi poziții exprimate de UNESCO în legătura cu acțiunile prioritare de viitor pentru a înzestra educația cu forța transformatoare pe care trebuie să o exercite în procesul global al dezvoltării durabile.

Cuvinte cheie: educație, educator, dezvoltare durabilă, ONU, UNESCO, AS agenda, declarație, diplomație, negocieri, drepturi, promovare, implementare, aspirație, globalizare, strategie, programe, recomandări, tineret, studenți, universalitate.

Résumé:

Cet article comprend une brève analyse du système éducatif global à la lumière des dispositions pertinentes figurant dans le document intitulé «Programme de développement durable à l'horizon 2030», adopté par le Sommet de l'ONU le 25 Septembre 2015 et sur la base des dernières recommandations de l'UNESCO visant à assurer à l'éducation la priorité voulue dans la galaxie du savoir.

Après une série d'observations préliminaires sont présentes des aspects et des données significatives sur les résultats de la mise en œuvre, relativement modeste à l'échelle mondiale, des recommandations de l'ONU et de l'UNESCO sur l'éducation. Sont également synthétisés les objectifs ambitieux proclamés dans ce domaine pour l'an 2030, tout en mettant en évidence la contribution des enseignants dans la matérialisation de ces objectifs, dans le respect des droits fondamentaux à l'éducation et au développement et dans le contexte du développement durable. Sur ce plan est mise en valeur l'importance vitale des réformes et d'une coordination appropriées dans tous les secteurs de l'éducation.

À la fin de l'article, on souligne la position la plus récente exprimée par l'UNESCO sur les futures actions prioritaires pour doter l'éducation avec une force de transformation qui doit être exercée dans le processus global du développement durable.

Mots-clés: éducation, éducateur, développement durable, ONU, UNESCO, ordre du jour, déclaration, diplomatie, droits, promotion, mise en œuvre, aspiration, stratégie, mondialisation, programmes, recommandation, jeunes, étudiants, universalité.

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1. Preliminary considerations

Education is an integral and vital part of what is metaphorically called the galaxy of knowledge.¹ Advancing the right to education for all is an imperative prerequisite for a genuine sustainable development.² While the right to education is codified in national and international legal instruments, the right to development without which sustainable development cannot exist is not yet fully recognized at the universal level as a real individual and collective human right.³

Educators and academics are actively involved in a permanent advocacy for the global recognition of both the right to education and the right to development as fundamental human rights.

In this regard, it is strongly asserted that providing access to education for those in need means significantly enabling human beings to enjoy a spark from non-stagnant galaxy of knowledge.⁴

Many scholars recommend a pedagogical

approach inspired by a greater interest in complexity. Edgar Morin suggested learners to accept the art of becoming a wanderer (or flaneur) or knowledge explorer. This means firmly following one's own path in the galaxy of knowledge which is no longer divisible or classifiable.⁵

Some educators while noting that children have been very busy thinking about what a happy, effective and successful school means, found out that students have a clear preference for a vast galaxy of knowledge and skills.⁶

More specifically, an Indian author wrote: "In the galaxy of knowledge each mind is a star in itself and the minds of our children are the stones necessary for the construction of tomorrow's educated world."⁷

In a pragmatic manner, Bertrand Russell, a famous philosopher and Nobel Prize laureate, stated: "Education should have two objectives: First, to give definite knowledge, reading and writing, language and mathematics, and so on; secondly, to create those mental habits which will enable people to acquire knowledge and form sound judgments for themselves"⁸.

At the global level, one of the major tasks confronting the world community of nations is to intensify its collective efforts to universalize humanism through education and to make the galaxy of knowledge a visible and persuasive reality.

In this respect, since its creation in 1945,

¹ Specialized literature on education is vast. From the most recent and significant books see Nel Noddings, *Education and Democracy in the 21st Century*, New York, Teachers College Press, 2013, p. 192. Todd Whitaker, Jeffrey Zoul, Jimmy Casas, *What Connected Educators Do Differently*, London, Routledge, 2015, p. 172. From the most recent Romanian literature on this topic see Irina Moroianu Zlătescu, PhD, *New objectives for sustainable development, Human Rights*, Bucharest, No 2/2015, pp.7-14. For a more general presentation of human rights see Irina Moroianu Zlătescu, *Human Rights, A Dynamic and Evolving Process*, Bucharest, Pro Universitaria, 2015, p. 466.

² We use in this article a number of official UN and UNESCO documents related to education for sustainable development available at two sites: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/> <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-sustainable-development/>.

³ The Czech jurist Karel Vasak proposed in 1979 the expression "third-generation human rights" including *inter alia* the right to economic and social development and to a healthy environment. See <http://www.upscquestions.com/upsc-civil-services-ias-notes/gs1/three-generation-s-types-of-human-rights>.

Since 1986 the UN General Assembly has adopted on a regular basis resolutions on the right to development. The most recent one was adopted on 17 December 2015 with a recorded vote: 148 in favour to 6 against (Canada, Israel, Japan, Palau, United Kingdom, United States) and 33 abstentions (including members of the European Union). See <http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/ga11745.doc.htm>.

⁴ See <http://www.shabait.com/articles/nation-building/14457-boarding-school-an-all-in-one-industry->

⁵ See <http://www.rivistapsicomotricita.it/tutti-i-numeri/rivista-anno-2014/18-articoli-in-inglese-anno-2014/1019-psycomotor-training-a-borderline-territory>.

The psychologist Y. St-Arnaud (1982) provided an understanding of development within a model called "the galaxy of knowledge", where the main sources of influence are: the philosophical disciplines, the natural sciences and professional disciplines, including major technologies.

See www.barbier-rd.nom.fr/A.P.DEA.Ch.3.html. German philosopher Norbert Bolz optimistically asserted that "the galaxy of Western knowledge expands at the speed of light".

See <http://ozioproduttivo.blogspot.com/2014/10/lignoranza-della-societa-della.html>.

⁶ See http://www.morton.lincs.sch.uk/_includes/attachments/P31/Morton%20CofE%20Teacher%20recruitment%20pack.pdf

⁷ The quotation is taken from the e-version of D. Bhaskara Rao, *Reforming secondary education*, New Delhi, Discovery Publishing House, 2004, p. 232.

⁸ See <http://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/postbag/902484/a-growing-concern>.

UNESCO clearly committed itself to a holistic and humanistic vision of quality education at the planetary level. This vision was inspired by the general conviction about the necessity of the realization of everyone's right to education, and the belief that education plays a fundamental role in human, social and economic development. Current UNESCO's programs reflect this vision illustrated *inter alia* by the project of Education for All (EFA) meant to provide global and regional leadership in education; to strengthen education systems worldwide from early childhood to the adult years; to respond to contemporary global challenges through education, including sustainable development.⁹

In resolution 57/254 adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly on the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2015) it is emphasized that education is an indispensable element for achieving sustainable development. Governments have been requested to promote and improve the integration of education for sustainable development in their respective educational strategies and action plans at the appropriate level.¹⁰

Commenting on these issues, Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO, reminded that she was determined to promote education development as the top priority of the Organization – because education is a basic human right and the foundation for more sustainable, inclusive and just development. UNESCO reinforced its coordination of the global EFA movement and provided full support to member states to reach their EFA goals, winning also greater confidence from traditional and new donors, as well as from the private sector, mobilizing more resources to further support education in developing countries.

In 2012, UNESCO was entrusted by the UN Secretary-General to coordinate his Global Education First Initiative, to spearhead accelerated efforts towards 2015 and to shape an ambitious new agenda to follow. The main purpose of this initiative was to use education as an essential component of the galaxy of knowledge for crafting a more inclusive and

sustainable development strategy.

In order to shape such a strategy UNESCO's General Conference in November 2013 adopted the Organization's Medium Term Strategy (2014–2021) which spells out the major approaches that UNESCO will adopt in education, the natural and social sciences, culture, communication and "the unfinished business" of EFA, such as literacy, teachers and vocational skills development, and will advocate for strengthened action towards empowering learners to be creative and responsible citizens.

The education sector is the largest among UNESCO's programs. It has close to 300 fixed-term staff members in three implementation entities: UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, some 55 field offices, including one in Bangkok, and seven category 1 specialized education institutes.¹¹

2. Modest accomplishments

As the world stands now at a critical juncture, sustainable development demands a different vision about education. In this respect, it is necessary to fully recognize that sustainable development is a constantly evolving concept, characterized by the will to improve everyone's quality of life, including that of future generations, by reconciling economic growth, social development and environmental protection.

Since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the UN Summit on 8 September 2000, significant progress has been made in expanding primary education enrolment. However, even now in some developing countries many children of primary education age do not attend school, while many others could not complete it.

Progress in education has been erratic since 1990. If during the period 1990- 2000, the enrolment rate in the developing countries increased from 80 per cent to only 83 per cent, after 2000, enrolment accelerated, reaching 90 per cent in 2007. But after 2007 the enrolment rate has not increased significantly. Statistics show that nearly one in ten primary-school-age children remained out of school in 2015.

It is also true that the global number of

⁹ See Themes | Education | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

¹⁰ For the full text of the resolution see <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>.

¹¹ All data and information are taken from www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes.

out-of-school children has fallen since 1990, but the pace of improvement has been insufficient to achieve universal primary enrolment by 2015. Currently, 57 million children of primary school age are estimated to be out of school, down from 100 million in 2000. Of these, 33 million are in sub-Saharan Africa, and more than half (55 per cent) are girls.

Moreover, according to UNESCO's estimates, 43 per cent of out-of-school children globally will never go to school. A dramatic example: the conflict in Syria had a devastating impact on children's education. Enrolment rates in Syria fell by 34 percentage points for grades 1 to 12 in the school year ending in 2013.

The estimates based on historical trends indicate that at the global level 91 per cent of youth were expected to be able to read and write by the end of 2015. This still left about 103 million illiterate youth in 2015, which is only 22 million fewer than in 2010. Therefore, achieving universal primary education will require renewed attention in the post-2015 era. The existing stagnation in education progress has a negative impact on youth everywhere.¹²

The former UNESCO's Director-General, Koïchiro Matsuura, stressed: "Education – in all its forms and at all levels – is not only an end in itself but is also one of the most powerful instruments we have for bringing about the changes required to achieve. Education is a motor for change".¹³

This vision about the role of education in the contemporary world is not an utopia, but an ideal to be achieved by collective efforts at the national, regional and global levels.

3. An ambitious agenda

It is frequently asserted that there is no more powerful force than education in order to advance social inclusion and to break the vicious circle of poverty. This idea is adequately reflected in the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This is a dynamic universal instrument applicable to all countries, and its provisions are integrated and indivisible by their content. Agenda 2030 is an historic

achievement generated by tenacious diplomatic and political work involving the UN 193 member states as well as some UN specialized agencies. It contains strong appeals to collaborative action between and within nations and is impressive and commendable by the high level of ambition it reflects.

Among the 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda, education is treated as Goal 4 the text of which UNESCO helped to formulate. By the 2030 Agenda the world looks beyond 2015 to address the root causes of limited progress in youth literacy in some parts of the world. As a programmatic document, it also recommends new approaches to education as an essential component of the galaxy of knowledge from the perspective of fundamental educational needs in the twenty-first century.

The content of Goal 4 is clearly stated: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."

Under this ambitious goal some specific educational targets are listed within the framework of an integrated general list containing 169 targets. In accordance with the first target related to education, by 2030 it is necessary to ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

In the same context it is necessary to ensure by 2030 that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

By the year 2030, it is demanded to ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university. At the horizon of 2030 it is also necessary to substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

In accordance with another significant target, by 2030 it is demanded to eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

¹² All information and assessments about the implementation of the MDGs on education are taken from the report available at [www.un.org/...MDG_Report/.../MDG%202015%20rev%20\(July%2015](http://www.un.org/...MDG_Report/.../MDG%202015%20rev%20(July%2015)

¹³ See www.unesco.org/bpi/eng/unescopress/2002/02-61e.shtml.

In more practical terms, the 2030 Agenda demands that by 2030 it is necessary to ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.

By the same year 2030, it is demanded to ensure that all learners acquire the 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.

Specific situations and needs are not forgotten. Therefore, the 2030 Agenda demands appropriate action to build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

Financial and infrastructural aspects of education are reflected in the 2030 Agenda in a separate target according to which by 2020 it is necessary to substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing states and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programs, in developed countries and other developing countries.

The role of educators themselves is clearly recognized in the 2030 Agenda which stipulates that by 2030 it is necessary to substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states.¹⁴

There is no doubt about the obvious magnitude and topicality of Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda to ensure "inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." In practical terms and for

implementation purposes inclusive education demands a clear recognition of many and frequently impressive differences across the full spectrum of educational processes. But beyond these unavoidable differences, universal values like tolerance and solidarity have to be fully respected, in accordance with UNESCO's holistic and comprehensive vision of education. The major purpose of all activities in this field is to make education a truly transformational force in contemporary societies.

There is no generally accepted definition of holistic education. However, it is recognized that holistic education is a philosophy of education based on the premise that each person finds identity, meaning, and purpose in life through connections to the community, to the natural world, and to humanitarian values, such as compassion and peace.¹⁵

In 2013, UNESCO organized the 1st Forum on Global Citizenship Education, with the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding in Bangkok, Thailand. Similar activities have been organized with the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development, based in New Delhi, whose activities are focused on global citizenship, peace building, sustainable development and youth action for transformative learning. India defined education as "a wealth that grows with giving".

In this context, Irina Bokova said that "Education is the way to disarm the processes that may lead to violent extremism, by undermining prejudice, by fighting ignorance and indifference." In November 2015, UNESCO held the first ever Global Conference of Ministers of Education on education to prevent violent extremism, a significant event which is an integral part of UNESCO's contribution to the implementation of the UN Secretary-General Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. There is also a significant UNESCO Operational Strategy on Youth (2014-2021) for promoting youth civic engagement and democratic participation in decision-making processes.

For the period 2018–2021 UNESCO intends

¹⁴ For the full text of the resolution A/RES/70/1 entitled *Transforming our world the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* see http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/L.1.

¹⁵ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holistic_education. For an interesting analysis of the concept of holistic education see Gerald W Fry, *Holistic education is the way of the future*, *Bangkok Post*, 27 April 2015.

to give increased emphasis to the universality of its education programs in terms of outreach (countries) and content (holistic approach), as well as to innovation in education and the ability to respond through education to contemporary and future challenges.

Appropriate mention should be made about the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs program, which promotes the establishment of UNESCO Chairs and international inter-university cooperation in key priority areas related to UNESCO's fields of competence. This program operates in 124 countries and involves over 650 institutions.

A key strategy for UNESCO in the near future will be strengthening global coordination of the education agenda to ensure better synergies between its partners, acting in areas such as normative function, forecasting of education trends, provision of a platform for dialogue, quality assurance, education planning and policy, as well as upstream capacity development. UNESCO has also entered into new partnerships with the private sector, particularly in relation to the initiative on girls' and women's education.¹⁶

From the perspective of multilateral diplomacy a most significant event took place in 2015. UNESCO together with UNICEF, the World Bank, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women and UNHCR organized the World Education Forum 2015 in Incheon, Republic of Korea, from 19 – 22 May 2015. Over 1,600 participants from 160 countries, including over 120 ministers, heads and members of delegations, leaders of agencies and officials of multilateral and bilateral organizations, as well as representatives of civil society, the teaching profession, youth and the private sector, adopted the Incheon Declaration for Education 2030.

This Declaration sets out a new vision for education for the next fifteen years, while recognizing with great concern that we are far from having reached the major objective of education for all.

The vision proposed by this Declaration is to transform lives through education, defined as a main driver of development. A commitment was

expressed by the World Education Forum, with a sense of urgency, to a single, renewed education agenda that is holistic, ambitious and inspirational leaving no one behind. The Declaration advocates for the provision of flexible learning pathways, as well as the recognition, validation and accreditation of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through non-formal and informal education. It contains also a commitment to ensure that all youth and adults, especially girls and women, achieve relevant and recognized functional literacy and numeracy proficiency levels and acquire life skills, and that they are provided with adult learning, education and training opportunities.

This new vision about education is transformative and universal by its nature and attends to the "unfinished business" of the EFA agenda and the education-related MDGs. It also addresses global and national education challenges. It is inspired by a humanistic approach in the field of education and development based on human rights and dignity; social justice; inclusion; protection; cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity; and shared responsibility and accountability.

The Declaration states in categorical terms that "No education target should be considered met unless met by all."¹⁷ This generous objective demands intensive concerted efforts to change the *status quo* and improve the quality of education and life for all.

4. Educators in action

The Incheon Declaration for Education 2030 contains separate provisions meant to ensure that educators are empowered, adequately recruited, well-trained, professionally qualified, motivated and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems. In this context, it is specifically emphasized that quality education fosters creativity and knowledge, and ensures the acquisition of the foundational skills of literacy and numeracy, as well as analytical, problem-solving and other high-level cognitive, interpersonal and social skills. It also develops the skills, values and attitudes that enable citizens to lead healthy and

¹⁶ Information and evaluation taken from statements made by Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO, available at <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/director-general/>.

¹⁷ The full text of the Incheon Declaration is available at <https://en.unesco.org/world-education-forum-2015/incheon-declaration>.

fulfilled lives, make informed decisions, and respond to local and global challenges.

The implementation of educational programs under the impact of information technology demands reforms. Education reform is the conventional name given to the goal of changing first of all public education. A major idea for all forms of education reform is that even small changes in education may have large social returns in citizen health, wealth and well-being. But to reach its objectives, a viable reform should be based on scientific, humanistic, pragmatic and democratic principles.

In the modern world, it is already axiomatic that all children and adults must have access to high quality and effective education. Moreover, education is frequently seen in Europe and Asia as an important instrument to maintain national, cultural and linguistic unity.

According to recent data, the US public schools lag behind the educational institutions of other developed countries in the areas of reading, math, and science. It appears there is no correlation between per student spending and student performance, as there are other factors with direct impact on education. Top performers include Singapore, Finland and Korea, all with relatively low spending on education.¹⁸

The need to advance more rapidly towards universal tertiary education cannot be ignored in the highly competitive global and knowledge-based economic environment. The financial crises in Asia have deepened an awareness of the crucial importance of the quality of the current workforce and the role of higher education. The process of reforming the overall educational system is culminating in a radical change leading to the gradual transformation of all state universities into "autonomous universities." The difference between state and private higher educational institutions will thus be less evident.

However, one of the major constraints for needy students is tuition fees charged by educational institutes. For a large number of families, especially those in rural areas, the yearly tuition fees for their children far exceed their annual income. And the trend seems to be

one of rapidly increasing these fees, putting post-secondary education out of reach for numerous talented students. This is a challenge for both parents and officials in charge of promoting higher education.

There is no doubt that reasonable systems and transparent procedures are needed for the maintenance of quality standards. Stable funding sources are necessary for research and faculty development. In this respect, there is a prevalent opinion that the state has the prerogative to monitor the quality standard assurance in private institutions, but without intervening directly in their management. These aspects should be anchored in the vision, mission, strategic plans and performance evaluations of universities themselves.

Some universities are criticized for low quality by traditional norms, while others may prove useful and attractive to many students. The opening of branches in different countries by universities from abroad and the establishment of universities by multinational business networks is a most visible part of globalization.

Solving problems confronting private universities requires coordinated action not only at the national level, but also at the regional and global levels. Collective thinking, critical assessment and approaches may offer the antidote to increasing planetary tensions and challenges. Organizations like UNESCO and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (Seameo) are well suited to promote cooperation and dialogue among various cultures, while protecting the national identities of their members.

To remain viable, universities must prepare graduates for lifetime employability. There is no economic development without human development. Certainly, nobody is challenging the private sector to substitute for the government, but it is imperative to convince the government that it is in its interest to support education. Governments cannot continue to have an indefinite hegemony on education. The ability to innovate more rapidly gives private universities a comparative advantage over governmental institutions. They receive an increasing number of international students both from developed and developing countries.¹⁹

¹⁸ See Education reform - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_reform.

¹⁹ See Ioan Voicu, Openig up a galaxy of knowledge,

In accordance with the most recent statistics, there are 4.5 million international students globally, up from 2 million in 2000, and that is expected to swell to 7-8 million by 2025, driven by population and income growth in developing countries. In this context it was rightly pointed out that English-speaking countries have benefited hugely from international students. Those students have subsidized locals, kept courses in the hard sciences viable, acted as informal ambassadors on their return and eased skills shortages. It was pointed out that the fastest growing group of international students in the United States came from China, which grew by over 21 percent between 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. In fact, of the almost 820,000 international students studying in the United States, over 235,000 (29%) came from China.²⁰

Having these realities in mind, it is crucial to put more effort into real partnerships between universities, whether they are bilateral or strategic alliances. Universities can provide an energetic public voice and governments have to gradually accept their legitimate role as the vocal social conscience of peoples.

5. Conclusion

In a recent UNESCO Bangkok's publication, entitled "School and Teaching Practices for Twenty-first Century Challenges: Lessons from the Asia-Pacific Region" some interesting findings have been formulated. The point of departure is the current dialogue on how to best prepare learners for a meaningful life once they leave the classroom. It is obvious that traditional approaches to teaching and learning are being challenged by 'modern' approaches aiming to holistic learning system that aids learners to address the challenges of globalization. The competencies needed today encompass new skills, values and practices, including critical thinking, creativity, communication, respect for diversity, adaptability, entrepreneurship and innovation.²¹ The importance of these competences becomes even more evident if we

take into account the fact that over the next decade, the world will need 600 million new jobs for new workers.

In a consensus resolution on education and democracy adopted in 2014, the UN General Assembly strongly encouraged the 193 member states to integrate education for democracy, along with civic education and human rights education, into their education standards and to develop and strengthen programs, curricula and curricular and extracurricular educational activities aimed at the promotion and consolidation of democratic values and democratic governance and human rights, taking into account innovative approaches and best practices in the field, in order to facilitate citizens' empowerment and participation in political life and policymaking at all levels.²² If the international education community exists as an active force, it is expected to take into account the above recommendations and at the same time to stand strongly united by solidarity to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for children, youth and adults and to encourage long life learning opportunities for all.

The world of education demands significant additional efforts for the implementation of Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda. If by 2030 we have legitimate expectations for real progress in education, creative, innovative actions are urgently needed to ensure that education becomes a truly transformative force in the present world and in the global sustainable development. As pointed out by Irina Bokova, Director –General of UNESCO, "Education has the potential to become one of the most powerful catalysts for development in the years ahead, serving as a bridge from poverty to prosperity, from exclusion to participation, from division to understanding."²³

Educational process cannot wait too long for meaningful reforms. Education must be treated as a permanent priority. Promoting the right to education is a sustainable development imperative. Investing generously through a humanistic education in the minds of the younger generation is a prerequisite to a peaceful future in the vast galaxy of knowledge.

Bangkok Post, 1 February 2004.

²⁰ See Steven Cohen, Executive Director, Columbia University's Earth Institute, *The Globalization of Education and Sustainability Management* at www.huffingtonpost.com/steven-cohen/the-globalization-of-educ.

²¹ See <http://www.unescobkk.org/resources/e-library/publications/article/school-and-teaching-practices-for-twenty-first-century-challengeslessons-from-the-asia-pacific-region/>.

²² The full text of the resolution is available at http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/69/268.

²³ See <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/director-general/>.