

Global Campaign for Education

Briefing paper on key priority areas informed by the Strategic Plan 2023-2027

Education Leadership and Governance

1. Background¹

Learning is an element of life, an organizational system integrating all ecological phenomena that make evolution possible, so learning processes burst into the human being by means of cognitive processes that reflect cultures and societies.

Although learning processes are inherent to humans, they are certainly developed and stimulated through education. Education is aimed at boosting the full development of the human personality, and then providing a holistic meaning, thus becoming a reference point for life and furthermore, a stimulus to it.

The preliminary consequence to be drawn from this statement is that education has an unquestionable ethic, philosophic and scientific legitimacy. Therefore, the right to education is not only a universal human right, but also a foundation of ecology and development.

Education can make the difference between life and death. For this reason, to regard education solely in terms of a social or cultural right, is to deny its entire dimension. Perhaps we are also at a point where we should start discussing learning as a human right because *teaching how to learn*² is probably the most important pedagogical course we should promote.

However, education must face hard challenges from opposing forces that continue to envision it as the market's disciplinary instrument and consequently, as a form of service (not a right) that is subordinated to the economy's interests rather than those of human beings.

These forces are framed into patriarchal structures that bind practically all social, political, economic, and cultural relationships and constitute formidable barriers to progress in the realization of human rights.

¹ This section is based on: Muñoz, Vernor. El mar entre la niebla: El camino de la educación hacia los derechos humanos. Campaña Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación. San José, 2009.

² Learning processes, a referred to the four pillars that the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century pointed out in 1996: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. Cf. Delors, Jacques. Learning: the treasure within; report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century. UNESCO, Paris, 1996.

The social framework of patriarchal beliefs and behaviors has established a conception of State as a stratified, pyramidal organization, which after time has become fertile ground for systems of exclusion that hinder reciprocal and egalitarian dialogue among people.

That patriarchal framework has given form to educational languages, concepts and models and has had a dramatic impact on learning by validating and reproducing, from generation to generation, stereotypes, prejudices, and inequities, sometimes even overriding the will of decision-makers, and subjugating multiple historical and cultural identities to one single educational project³ that is prone, therefore, to institutionalized discrimination.

That framework of inequities and asymmetries, predating education systems, exercises a decisive influence on the organization of schools. It is a system that defines off-balance relationships between people⁴, placing men and women in a hierarchy of domination that has been advanced as “natural” and that goes beyond gender to include sexist, racist and nationalist discourses⁵.

In this framework of asymmetries that the modern state has cultivated, the notion of leadership has traditionally been understood as a command function, in which it is assumed that one person or a small group of people are destined to lead and another majority group to follow or obey. Conventional educational systems have unfortunately reproduced this social model, which from a human rights perspective is unacceptable.

The alternative vision of leadership supposes, on the contrary, building capacities in all people to promote democratic environments in which decisions are made in an informed manner, hopefully by consensus, and with rational rules in which the rights of minority groups are respected.

Leadership should be understood as people's capacities, rather than as an investiture of individuals.

2. The GCE Strategic Plan (2023-2027)

The GCE Strategic Plan (2023-2027) addresses education leadership and civil space as a key political area where all members should work.

Some of the fundamental actions GCE is focusing on are:

³ Bolívar, Antonio. *Ciudadanía y escuela pública en el contexto de diversidad cultural*. Revista Mexicana de Investigación Educativa. ENE-MAR 2004, Vol. 9, Núm 20.

⁴ Peoples Movement for Human Rights Learning (PDHRE). *Transforming the patriarchal order into a human rights system toward economic and social justice for all*. New York. www.pdhre.org.

⁵ Herrera Flores, Joaquín. *De habitaciones propias y otros espacios negados. Una teoría crítica de las opresiones patriarcales*. Instituto de Derechos Humanos de la Universidad de Deusto. Número 33. Bilbao, Spain, 2005., p. 29.

- Promoting collaborative processes between decision-makers and civil society representing learners, parents, teachers, and young people in all their diversity to improve the quality of education and the education system
- Connecting social, economic, and environmental trends to educational and institutional needs and practices and develops effective linkages and collaboration with other sectors
- Ensuring accountability for education decisions, investments, use of resources, and outcomes at all levels
- Promoting democratic governance and social dialogue, including with trade unions representing teachers and support staff and with students' unions.

The proposed actions are embedded in a pragmatic approach aimed at reformulating the relationships between the traditional decision-making mechanisms and people's right to participate in those decisions.

3. Critical challenges

The main structural challenge that the movement faces is the existence of institutional systems historically fueled by power concentration, the supplanting of wills, and the imposition of standards that do not respond to people's rights and needs, especially of those that are traditionally marginalized.

Education can be both the mechanism that reproduces asymmetries, or the vehicle to overcome them. For this reason, it is essential to recall that the fight for the right to education is essentially a political one.

Strengthening and demanding the establishment of collaborative and democratic leadership is the route that the movement should follow, so that decisions and responsibilities can be assumed collectively, rather than individually.

Collective leadership offers better options for educational transformation, if it includes groups that have historically been discriminated against, such as young people, women & girls, LGBTQI+, people with disabilities, and ethnic and cultural minorities.

4. Way forward

GCE intends to develop transversal initiatives, to address new forms of collective leadership in all its actions and in its national, regional, and international advocacy priorities. These initiatives should include the development of guidelines, toolkits, policy briefings, good practices gathering and especially should be based on projects and experiences in which young people and women have central participation.

Gender visions are an essential component within these processes, so that the implementation of the GCE gender strategy will serve as a guide in the construction of democratic, egalitarian, and diversity-sensitive environments.