

## The Faure and the Delors Reports and the Post-2015 Development Agenda

# Looking Backward to See Ahead

Towards the end of 2012, Mrs Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, invited a senior group of experts in their personal capacity to revisit the Faure Report (1972) and the Delors Report (1996). This international group, co-chaired by Amina Mohammed, of Nigeria, and by W. John Morgan, of the United Kingdom, was asked to develop a fresh vision for humanistic education in the 21st Century. The group's report is expected to be ready for the Spring Meeting of the Executive Board of UNESCO in 2014.

The purpose of this article is to present the key features of these earlier reports and their relevance to the post-2015 Development

Agenda. They were important statements of educational purpose which still have a significant influence on educational policy and practice, given the need for continuing professional development and for lifelong learning by citizens and on a global scale.



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### The Faure Report

Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow was the report of the International Commission on the Development of Education, convened by UNESCO in 1971-72. It is usually named after Edgar Faure, the Commission's Chairman, and a former Prime Minister and Minister of Education of France. The Commission comprised seven members selected in their personal capacity. It had a broad objective. This was to identify "the new aims to be assigned to education as a result of the rapid changes in knowledge and in societies, the demands of development, the aspirations of the individual, and the overriding need for international understanding and peace" (Faure 1972, p. 269).

It established the concept of lifelong learning, at a time when traditional education systems were being challenged (Delors et al. 1996, p. 249). By focusing on personal development and lifelong education it put learners, not teachers or educational institutions, at the core of education. For Faure, the important thing was not the path followed by the learner, but the outcome of the learning process (Deleon 1996). Rather than restricted reforms, the Faure Commission believed that education needed to be

rethought and fundamentally refocused according to two inter-related notions: the learning society and lifelong education (UNESCO website <http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/50y/brochure/maintrus/35.htm>).

As technological progress and social change accelerated, no-one could expect that an initial education would serve throughout life. School, while remaining the essential means for transmitting organised knowledge, would be supplemented by other aspects of social life, institutions, working environment and leisure, as well as by the media. This analysis led to the concept of a learning society which would integrate education and the social and economic environment. Education would replace teaching by learning and the learner – particularly during his or her adult life – would assimilate and assess directly the knowledge provided by society. This concept is linked directly to the other key concept of the Faure Report – lifelong education.

The Faure Report advocated the right and necessity of each individual to learn for their social, economic, political and cultural development. It considered lifelong education the keystone of educational policies. Although acknowledging the existence of lifelong education practices in diverse cultures all over the world, the report emphasised that lifelong education should be recognized as the basis of educational policies in both developing and developed countries (Medel-Añonuevo et al. 2001, p.2). The Commission did not regard lifelong education as a process of permanent schooling, adult education or continuous vocational training, but rather as "a principle on which the overall organisation of a system and hence the elaborati-

on of each of its parts, are based”(Deleon 1996). This concept was to be echoed powerfully by the Delors Report.

### The Delors Report

In 1991 the UNESCO General Conference agreed to “convene an international commission to reflect on education and learning for the twenty-first century”. Following this decision, The International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century was established two years later. Jacques Delors, former President of the European Commission (1985-1995) and a former French Minister of Economics and Finance, chaired the Commission which comprised fifteen experts, again appointed in their personal capacity. It was a large-scale effort and numerous consultations were held around the world. This included a questionnaire sent to all the National Commissions for UNESCO inviting submissions of existing documentation or fresh material. The response was “very positive, and the replies were studied carefully” (Website of the Delors Commission, [www.unesco.org/delors/wrkofcom.htm](http://www.unesco.org/delors/wrkofcom.htm)). The Commission’s final report, *Learning: The Treasure Within* was delivered to the UNESCO Director-General on 11 April 1996.

The Commission was asked to study and reflect on the challenges facing education and to formulate suggestions and recommendations as an agenda for renewal and action by policy-makers and educators. While the Report was aimed primarily at governments, it also considered international co-operation and assistance in general, and the role of UNESCO in particular. The following question from the Commission’s terms of reference provided the point of departure: „How can education play a dynamic and constructive role in preparing individuals and societies for the twenty-first century?“ This is echoed in the remit of the current Senior Experts Group.

The Delors Commission built on the 1972 Faure Report, taking into account social and economic change, with the concepts of lifelong education and of the learning society proving particularly influential.

The Delors Report proposed an integrated vision of education based on two key paradigms: lifelong learning and the four pillars of learning. It was not a blueprint for educational reform but a basis for reflection and debate about the choices which must be made in formulating policies. It argued that such choices about education were determined by choices about the kind of society in which we wished to live. It considered the purpose beyond education’s imme-

diated functionality, as a fundamental part of the formation of the whole person (Power 1997, p. 118). It is aligned closely with the moral and intellectual principles which underpin UNESCO. As such, its analysis and recommendations were more humanistic and less market driven than other education reform studies of the time (Power 1997, p. 188).

### The Four Pillars of Learning

One of its most influential concepts was that of the “four pillars of learning”. It argued that formal education tends to emphasise the acquisition of knowledge to the detriment of other types of learning essential to sustaining human development. Equal attention should be paid in all organised learning to each of the four pillars (Delors 1996, p. 86):

- Learning to know - a broad general knowledge with the opportunity to work in depth on a small number of subjects.
- Learning to do - to acquire not only an occupational skill but also the competence to deal with many situations and to work in teams.
- Learning to live together - by developing an understanding of other people and an appreciation of interdependence.
- Learning to be - to develop one’s personality and to be able to act with growing autonomy, judgement and personal responsibility.

The last had been a fundamental theme of the Faure Report and Delors commented that: “[The Faure Report’s] recommendations are still very relevant, for in the twenty-first century everyone will need to exercise greater independence and judgement combined with a stronger sense of personal responsibility for the attainment of common goals” (Delors April 1996).

### Learning throughout life

The four pillars of learning cannot be anchored solely in one phase of a person’s life or in a single place. The concept of “learning through life” is seen to address this. The Delors Report considered it necessary to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world, because of its flexibility, diversity and availability at different times and in different places.

Learning through life should go beyond the distinction between schooling and continuing education which was dominant in the 1990s, especially in Europe (UNESCO Institute of

Lifelong Learning (UIL), 2010, p. 23). Instead, learning through life “should open up opportunities for learning for all” and should be used for many different purposes including making it possible to broaden and deepen strictly vocational forms of training, including practical training (Delors et al. 1996, p. 38). This links with another concept put forward by Faure: that of the learning society, in which everything affords an opportunity of learning and of fulfilling one’s potential.

Learning through life is described as “one of the keys to the twenty-first century” (Delors April 1996, p. 8). However, Delors cautioned against forgetting “fundamental truths” (Delors April 1996, p. 8), particularly the need for quality basic education, saying: “Although people need to use all these opportunities for learning and self-improvement, they will not be able to make good use of all their potential unless they have received a sound basic education,” (Delors April 1996, p. 9). The diversification of the types of study available and the paths through formal and non-formal education are essential to learning through life. This marked a shift from the term „lifelong education“, preferred by Faure, to lifelong learning, which is now more commonly used.

### The relevance to the post-2015 agenda

The Faure and the Delors Reports recognized that formal education must have a central place in learning through life. There was no question of dismantling educational institutions, but rather of re-shaping them to support education more effectively in a rapidly changing world. For instance, the Delors report made forward-looking recommendations which resonate with current discussions about the post-2015 development agenda. These include:

- New models of development showing more respect for nature and for the best use of people’s time.
- Measuring development beyond economic growth – Delors recommended a fuller educational assessment taking all its aspects into account, along the lines of the Human Development Report.
- Economic development must be at the service of the more global development of individuals and communities, rather than the reverse.
- Business enterprise should have an important share of the responsibility for making work places open to educational activities aimed at economic growth.
- The concept of education should not be narrowly utilitarian. Education and learning must be more than simply preparation for employment.

- Gathering data at national and international level and the development of indicators which can reveal dysfunctions in education systems. The UNESCO Global Monitoring Report has contributed to this aim.

These recommendations are interesting when one considers some of the key themes that have been placed on the post-2015 development agenda by the international community. These include:

- Sustainable development – this is likely to be a central feature in the post-MDG agenda. Following the Rio+20 conference sustainable development goals are also being developed in close coordination with the post-2015 process. Sustainable development is also prominent among the recommendations of the High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (United Nations May 2013). The concept of lifelong learning envisioned in the Faure and Delors reports may have useful implications for education for sustainable development (ESD), including the need for ESD through life in order to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances.
- Beyond primary education – Education beyond childhood and adolescence is not reflected in any of the MDGs and in only two of the six Education for All goals (goals 3 and 4). Adult literacy remains one of the most elusive EFA goals, with 775 million illiterate adults in 2010, two-thirds of them women. Some argue that in developing countries literacy is the portal to most, if not all, adult education (Bohla 2000, p. 3), making it essential for learning throughout life. Delors also placed a strong emphasis on the secondary school as the crossroads where a diversity of paths within education should begin. A consideration of failure to achieve MDG and EFA targets will be important in deciding the post-2015 goals. It is also worth noting that reviewing the EFA Goals and what may come next is currently far behind the post-MDG discussions (Burnett 2012, p. 17).
- Persistent and growing inequality – the growth of the global economy over the past several decades has done little to address growing inequality among and within nations. MDGs, with few disaggregated figures and a focus on regional and national-level indicators often hide the persistent and worsening situation of some segments of society, particularly among the poorest quintile. The Faure Report in particular was criticised for ignoring persistent inequality in education (Deleon April 1996, p. 14-15). Delors referred to a major danger of the future being a

“widening gulf” between the minority of people who are capable of finding their way successfully in the world and the majority of people who cannot. This focuses primarily on navigating the knowledge society however and does not address fundamental structural inequalities that can perpetuate poverty and inequality.

## Education First

This initiative was launched in September 2012 by the United Nations Secretary General Mr Ban Ki-moon. Its priorities are to expand access to education, improve the quality of learning, and foster global citizenship. Although ostensibly geared towards achieving the 2015 agenda, it is inevitable that this initiative will also focus attention on setting post-2015 priorities (Burnett 2012).

### Priority 1: Put Every Child in School

As we have noted, both the Faure and the Delors Reports considered quality basic education as essential.

### Priority 2: Improve the Quality of Education

There is a mismatch between the competencies needed in today’s world and those acquired through the current education system. Ineffective systems to evaluate the performance of students are common. Testing is often inappropriately used to influence major financing decisions such as eliminating students who cannot progress to the next level rather than as a means to identify ways to help students improve their learning. Delors stressed the need to reform assessment and accreditation systems. However, he cautioned against undue emphasis on education in workplace competencies and education for employment, which detracts from the four pillars of learning.

### Priority 3: Foster Global Citizenship

“[Education] must give people the understanding, skills and values they need to cooperate in resolving the interconnected challenges of the 21st century” (Education First website, <http://www.globaleducationfirst.org/220.htm>). Education First’s proposals for fostering global citizenship resonates with the perspectives of Faure and Delors in various ways. One key point to note is Education First’s apparent exclusive focus on early education for achieving this goal, while Faure and Delors argue that this objective must be realised through a process of lifelong learning. Areas of symmetry between the two include:

- Reforming education systems and curriculum towards the aim of creating global citizens. This resonates with Delors concept of the four pillars of learning.

- Today’s curricula and textbooks often reinforce stereotypes, exacerbate social divisions, and foster fear and resentment of other groups or nationalities. Curriculum is rarely developed through a participatory process. Delors raises this issue, while also suggesting that curriculum should be adapted so that the separation between the classroom and outside world becomes less rigid.
- Helping teachers expand their own skills and outlooks.

One of Education First’s means of achieving its three objectives is to generate additional and sufficient funding for education. The former British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, in his role as the Secretary-General’s Special Envoy on Global Education, has emphasised the need for a Global Fund for Education, so a greater emphasis on international financing for basic education may emerge (Burnett 2012, p.19). The UN is also calling on companies to make commitments that will address one or more of the three priority areas of Education First (UN Business website, <http://business.un.org/en/documents/10572>). A recent Brookings Institution article proposes “establishing a funding mechanism that funds education as a global public good,” with significant private sector contributions, not as part of their corporate social responsibility, but on the basis of a longer-term business case for addressing the global talent gap (Brookings Institute 2012). Education First is referenced in this context.

## Conclusion

The Delors Commission felt that it was not only justifiable but also desirable to raise money from private sources in order to ease the pressure on national budgets for education. It cautioned however that private investment cannot release the state from its financial commitments to education (Delors et al. 1996, p. 166). Delors also stressed closer cooperation with a range of interests (including private business) to support learning throughout life. The continuing development of such partnerships on a global scale is not an easy task, albeit a necessary one. The current UNESCO Senior Experts Group on Education for the 21st Century has not been constituted on the scale of its predecessors and is yet to report. However, it is likely that it will build upon rather than revise radically the significant insights of the Faure and of the Delors Reports and will emphasise that sustainable human and cultural development for the common good is the core purpose of education and of learning.

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