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Open and online education for inclusion and equity

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ABSTRACT

Open and Online Education for Inclusion and Justice

Learning for an uncertain future, dealing with global, complex, and transdisciplinary issues, ethical considerations are critical, as is the ability to collaborate, take initiative, and act in society - essential features of learning to address the broad sustainability challenges facing our societies.

This concept paper highlights some global initiatives for a paradigm shift in education aimed at social justice and inclusion. In this context, open, flexible learning and distance education are strategies that enable economic, social, political, and digital equity to enable personalized, collaborative lifelong learning across the lifespan, with health and well-being at its core.

Open, flexible, and distance education is a strategy that enables economic, social, political, and digital justice (Inamorato Dos Santos, Punie, & Castaño Muñoz, 2016; Ossiannilsson, 2018, 2020a 2020b; UNESCO, 2020a, 2020b, 2022). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, published in 1948 (UN, 1948), is a landmark in the history of human rights. All 30 articles contain provisions that enable economic, social, political, and digital justice. Democracy and inclusion are core values. In particular, Article 26 states that everyone has the right to education. The three most important paragraphs of this article are: (i) Education shall be free, at least at the elementary and primary levels. Primary education must be compulsory. Technical and vocational education must be accessible to all, and higher education must be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. (ii) Education must be directed toward the full development of the human personality and toward strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all peoples, races and religious communities and support the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (iii) Parents have the prerogative to choose the manner in which their children are educated. Education is a fundamental human right. It has long held a special place in the hearts and minds of people around the world, and for good reason. Throughout history, it has been a source of personal dignity and empowerment and a driving force for the advancement of social, economic, political and cultural development. But today, education is in crisis, plagued by inequalities, and struggling to adapt to the needs of the 21st century. It is struggling to adapt to the needs of the twenty-first century. The effects of this crisis only reveal themselves over time and often remain invisible. But they are profound and will be felt for decades to come. According to UN Transforming Education Summit (2022), the international community must give this crisis the attention it deserves in order to transform our world by 2030 in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2016). It is therefore necessary to respond with determination, conviction, imagination and solidarity to transform education.

Open education, as mentioned earlier, is a strategy that enables economic, social, political, and digital equity. Open education is an umbrella term under which various notions of open education can be grouped (Inamorato Dos Santos, Punie, & Castaño Muñoz, 2016). Open education enables individuals to take advantage of appropriate and meaningful educational opportunities at every stage of their lives and professional development. This includes access to content, courses, support, assessment, and certification in ways that are flexible and responsive to diverse needs. Barriers related to access or cost, for example, are reduced or eliminated. Open education is now enabled primarily by ICT and therefore offers almost unlimited potential for innovation and dissemination, which in turn contributes

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to the modernization of education. The use of digital technologies for teaching and learning is no longer limited to open or virtual universities, but has expanded to all types of institutions, both the more traditional and the more avant-garde. A joint framework from the European Commission and the Joint Research Center proposes a broad definition of open education that considers multiple uses to promote transparency and a holistic approach to practice within an ecosystem (Inamorato Dos Santos, Punie, & Castaño Muñoz, 2016). It goes beyond OER, MOOCs, and open access to include 10 dimensions of open education. There are four overarching dimensions such as strategy, leadership, technology, and quality. Then there are six core dimensions such as content, pedagogy, recognition, collaboration, research, and access as shown in Figure 1. The most important feature is that it shows the dynamic nature of open education practices and that there is no single right way. Rather, open education practices can focus on openness in certain dimensions of the framework or strive for as much openness as possible in all 10 dimensions. Regardless of whether the first or second option is chosen, open education practices in higher education remain tied to all dimensions, which will always interact with each other to a greater or lesser degree. The framework can be used as a tool for making strategic decisions about pedagogical approaches, collaboration between individuals and institutions, recognition of non-formal learning, and different ways of delivering content.



Figure 1. Framework for 10 dimensions on open education

In 2019, the recommendation UNESCO OER (UNESCO, 2019) was adopted by all member countries, aiming to move open education stakeholders from awareness to implementation. Five areas were highlighted: Capacity Building, Developing Supportive Policies, Effective, Inclusive and Equitable Access to Quality Education OER, Promoting the Creation of Sustainability Models for OER, and Promoting and Facilitating International Cooperation. Three key definitions are established: (i) Open educational resources (OER) are learning, teaching, and research materials in any format and on any medium that are in the public domain or published under an open license that permits free access, reuse, repurposing, adaptation, and redistribution by others. (ii) Open license refers to a license that respects the intellectual property rights of the copyright owner and grants the public the right to access, reuse, repurpose, adapt, and redistribute educational materials. (iii) Information and communication technologies (ICTs) offer great potential for effective, equitable, and inclusive access to, use, adaptation, and dissemination of OER. They can open up the possibility of OER being accessible to anyone, anywhere, at any time, including persons with disabilities and members of marginalized or disadvantaged groups. They can help meet the needs of individual learners, effectively promote gender equality, and incentivize innovative pedagogical, didactic, and methodological approaches. In this recommendation, stakeholders in the formal, non-formal, and informal sectors (as applicable) include: teachers, educators, learners, government agencies, parents, education providers and institutions, pedagogical support staff, teacher educators, education policy makers, cultural institutions (e.g. Libraries, archives, and museums) and their users, information and communication technology (ICT) providers, researchers, research institutions, civil society organizations (including

professional and student associations), publishers, the public and private sectors, intergovernmental organizations, copyright holders and authors, media and broadcast organizations, and funding agencies. To mainstream open education and OER in all member states to create an inclusive knowledge society and achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the following SDGs are highlighted: SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 10 (Reduce Inequalities within and between Countries), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Another important framework for education by 2030 is the OECD Learning Compass 2030, an evolving learning framework that lays out an ambitious vision for the future of education. It offers landmarks for the future we want to see for individual and collective well-being. The metaphor of the learning compass was chosen to illustrate that students must learn to navigate unfamiliar contexts. It defines the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that learners need to realize their potential and contribute to the well-being of their communities and the planet (Figure 2). The basics include literacy and numeracy, social and emotional competence, health, digital literacy, and data literacy.

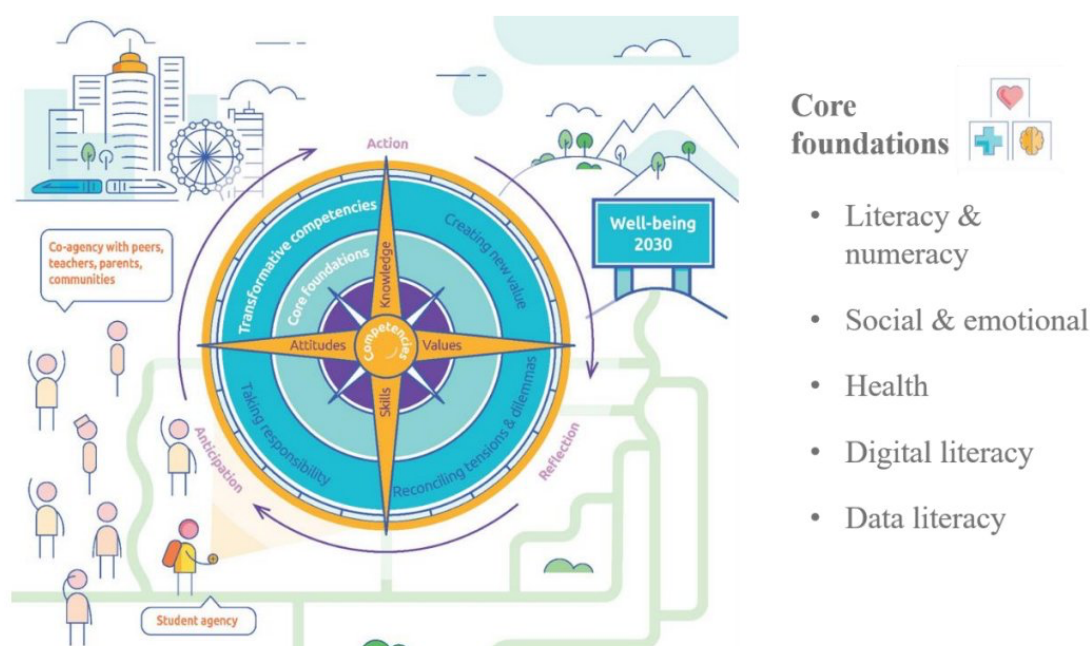


Fig. 2. OECD Framework for education and well-being

Uncertain times require prompt reflexes to survive, and this study is a common reflex to better understand and overcome uncertainty (Ossiannilsson, 2020b). The coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) hit us hard and affected many areas of our lives, especially education. In response to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on education, a study was conducted by Bozkurt et al. (2020) to present the overall view, considerations from the K12 and higher education landscape, experiences, and suggestions from a total of 31 countries around the world with a representation of 62.7% of the total world population. In addition to the value of each case in each country, the synthesis of this research suggests that current practices can be defined as emergency distance education and differ from planned practices such as distance education, online learning, or other derivatives. Most importantly, the study highlights how social inequality, inequity, and the digital divide have worsened during the pandemic and require unique and targeted interventions to address. Support communities and mechanisms exist, but parents are overwhelmed between their daily/professional duties and their new educational responsibilities, and all involved are traumatized, psychologically distressed, and anxious to varying degrees, requiring pedagogies of care, affection, and empathy. In terms of educational

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processes, the disruption of education signifies the importance of openness in education and raises issues that should be considered, such as the use of alternative assessment and evaluation methods, as well as concerns about surveillance, ethics, and privacy that arise from the almost exclusive use of online solutions.

Distance education has accelerated and diversified in the wake of the Covid 19 pandemic, so that today most online courses are offered by individual instructors working with their regular class groups. However, according to John Daniels (2022), this supply of "closed distance education" will not be sufficient to meet the needs of the hundreds of millions of people who will be attending postsecondary school, pursuing a college degree, and continuing their education over the next 20 years. Open distance learning can be delivered at scale through open universities, open schools, and MOOCs, all designed to meet mass demand. The focus is on how these organizations are run. This includes institutional structure and organization, governance, management and administration, and leadership. The three types of providers have different corporate and governance structures: public open universities, open schools under the aegis of government, and commercial MOOCs companies. However, the management and governance challenges of maintaining a 24/7 global operation are quite similar. Their management requires a genuine commitment to the disadvantaged, the ability to secure the trust of governments, an understanding of the opportunities offered by new technologies for distance education, and a thorough knowledge of the institutional dynamics of open teaching and learning systems.

Transforming education requires the collective commitment and action of visionary policymakers at all levels, parents, students, teachers, and the general public (Ossiannilsson, 2022b). The Education Summit UN is a clear roadmap for transformation and proactive engagement of education policy makers at the local, regional, and national levels. This can evolve into a whole-of-government effort that requires a new ecosystem for education, with a clear line of accountability between vision, commitments, resources, actions, and outcomes. And by outcomes, we mean the learners whose lives should be transformed by education. A new approach to government requires a new approach to society as a whole, which requires transformative education. Young people will be at the centre of this effort, contributing their voices, experiences, knowledge, and agency. Also critical are inclusive and participatory mechanisms that accompany and guide national transformation efforts. Students, parents, teachers, unions, employers, universities and civil society must be aware of their respective roles - while being open to change. The summit helped create a new momentum and launch a public movement for educational change that meets people where they are. Going forward, it must be promoted and supported at all levels, led by learners and educators around the world, inspired by civil society, and connected to broader movements for positive change (UN, 2022). Leaders at all levels - meta, macro, meso, and micro - play a critical role in creating a world in which people, and especially leaders, are educated and informed about ethical values and act on those values to help build sustainable, just, and peaceful societies. Equitable access to knowledge resources in applied ethics enables individuals and institutions from developing and emerging countries to become more visible and audible in the global discourse (Ossiannilsson, 2022a, 2022b, Ossiannilsson, Glapa-Grosskalk, Peachey, & Zhang, (2019; Ossiannilsson, Zuhdi & Dobson 2022). For this reason, both the ICDE Global Advocacy Campaign and the Living Letter Campaign were created: Change the Future of Education with Globethics.net in partnership with ICDE to key stakeholders, influential figures, and decision makers to urge them to raise their voices and drive decisions in their areas of responsibility to: (i) ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; (ii) promote ethics and values as a cross-cutting theme in higher education curricula and institutional development; and (iii) support the formation of cross-sectoral alliances and networks in education at regional and global levels. Relating - ethics and values through educational collaborations for the common good is as important as the urgent need to bridge the digital divide and advocate for ethics and values for inclusion in open, flexible, and distance learning opportunities for all.

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