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Developing a curriculum for ‘learning to live together’: building peace in the minds of people

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Abstract

In this article, Scatolini and Van Maele reflect on ‘learning to live together’, one of UNESCO’s Four Pillars of Education, from their experience as faculty at GROUP T – Leuven Education College’s ‘International Educating Class’ [IEC]. They explore how this pillar can infuse an international dimension into the curriculum and describe how it informed the objectives, contents and method of two core modules of IEC, namely ‘Society, Education, and Intercultural Dialogue’, and ‘Living Together in 2025’. The former module covers the horizontal dimension, focusing on living together across space, whereby students’ attention is drawn to various barriers to educational opportunities and how to overcome them. The latter module takes a vertical approach, focusing on living together across time. By picturing scenarios in the future that are based on robust trends reaching into the past, students discover route planners for navigating the present. Bartholomé offers a concrete example of how he has been seeking to apply the insights gained during his participation as a student in the IEC in ‘Brasil Feliz,’ a multifaceted educational project in Brazil.

Key-words

International educating class, Unesco, Learning to live together, Intercultural dialogue, Scenario thinking, Brasil feliz

1 Internationalization and curriculum development

It is not a new phenomenon that education should have an international dimension. Expansion and colonization have been internationalizing factors throughout history. At this moment, however, technology makes it possible for structures and curricula to cross borders without having to leave one’s place. Time and space are being redefined as internationalization becomes commonplace among education providers.

Educational institutions are internationalizing themselves through different channels; for instance, by reformulating their vision of education and mission statements,

participating in cross-border academic schemes both for students (e.g. Erasmus) and faculty (e.g. Comenius), as well as by integrating international internships into their curricula, organizing and taking part in international conferences and congresses, setting up bilateral projects with partner schools, etc.

In the case of GROUP T – Leuven Education College, UNESCO has functioned as the main source of inspiration (Beelen & Dhert, 2009) for delineating the institute's vision on internationalization. The main elements in this respect have been UNESCO's Four Pillars of education, its understanding of cultural diversity and its view of education as an instrument for positive change and peace. Above all, it is the pillar 'Learning to Live Together' that has informed the international dimension of recent curriculum developments.

1.1 UNESCO's four pillars of education

The 'Four Pillars of Education' were originally set out in a report for UNESCO by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century chaired by Jacques Delors (UNESCO, 1996). These pillars underline the very breadth and depth of UNESCO's vision of education within and beyond schooling. Education, the report holds, must be organized around four fundamental types of learning throughout a person's life: *learning to know*, *learning to do*, *learning to live together*, and *learning to be*. Although they can be defined separately, they form an integrated whole and should ideally be present in all pedagogical encounters and the curriculum as a whole (Scatolini, 2010).

The Four Pillars are programmatic and can be summed up as follows:

- **Learning to know:** 'Learning to know' lays the foundations of learning throughout life. This pillar refers to the basic knowledge that we need to be able to understand our environment and to live in dignity. It is also about arousing curiosity, allowing us to experience the pleasures of research and discovery. It faces us with the challenge of combining a sufficiently broad education with the in-depth investigation of selected subjects. Learning to know implies learning how to learn by developing one's concentration, memory skills and ability to think.
- **Learning to do:** 'Learning to do' refers to the acquisition of practical skills, but also to an aptitude for teamwork and initiative, and a readiness to take risks. As such, this pillar is about the competence of putting what we have learned into practice so as to act creatively on our environment. A variety of situations, often unforeseeable, is bound to arise. Learning to do enables us to turn our knowledge into effective innovations.
- **Learning to live together:** 'Learning to live together' is the pillar that the UNESCO Commission emphasizes more than any other. It refers first of all to developing an understanding of others through dialogue leading to empathy, respect, and appreciation. Yet if we are to understand others, we must first know ourselves. 'learning to live together' is also about recognizing our growing interdependence, about

experiencing shared purposes, and about implementing common projects and a joint future. Only then will it be possible to manage the inevitable conflicts in a peaceful way.

- **Learning to be:** 'Learning to be' is founded on the fundamental principle that education needs to contribute to the all-round development of each individual. This pillar deals with the broadening of care for each aspect of the personality. It deals with giving us the freedom of thought, feeling, and imagination that we need to act more independently, with more insight, more critically, and more responsibly. The end of education is to discover and open the talents which are hidden like a treasure within every person. As a means of personality training, education should be a highly individualized process and at the same time an interactive social experience.

By speaking of learning to know rather than of knowing, UNESCO indicates that this is a never-ending process that is both personal and shared. Education is not only about know-what, but also about know-why, know-how and know-what for. Said otherwise, learners are not called to merely become experts in their field, but also co-workers in knowledge production processes and managers of meaningful, responsible and sustainable development ([Burgoyne & Reynolds, 2002](#)).

1.2 Dimensions of 'learning to live together'

The third Pillar, 'learning to live together,' underscores the broad scope of education. It does this horizontally and vertically, for the learning trajectory entails mechanisms that influence both individuals and communities throughout physical and virtual space as well as chronological and lived time.

Horizontally speaking, 'learning to live together' involves current local, regional and global variables, some of which contribute to the creation of communities, while other ones have fragmentary effects. Vertically speaking, it includes the past and the future, both as weight and as magnet. Consequently, living together also includes cross-generational understanding, since one's own ancestors and posterity may at times be harder to understand than contemporary foreign people.

Even though these two dimensions involved in 'learning to live together' may give the impression of being two discrete realities, they actually reveal how porous and unfinished all educational endeavours are. Education, unlike knowledge and information, is not something that some have and others lack, but a process of which we are all part. Without education, the human person would remain a possibility, without ever becoming an actuality. Humans learn to be humans through being together with other humans (cf. the Bantu 'ubuntu' philosophy). Life is a network. Objective, subjective and interpersonal factors affect the learners' learning process, either positively or negatively. 'Learning to live together' is therefore not a negligible contingency that education providers and educators may disregard at will; it is a human necessity. An adequate curriculum for

'learning to live together' ought therefore to enhance: (a) learners' participation, (b) the coherence between the group's goals and its action, (c) the unfolding of learners' potentials, and (d) the learners' awareness of themselves as well as of the dynamics of their immediate and remote communities (as highlighted by Isaacs in the Dialogos project).

Considering both the importance and the scope of a curriculum for 'learning to live together,' we shall now tease out some of the implications of this task.

1.3 Thinking and acting from the third pillar in and beyond schooling

As the preamble to the constitution of UNESCO reads, its mission is based on the simple conviction that 'since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed'. Not surprisingly, peace education is seen as a central theme for curricula centred on 'learning to live together'. The authors of the Delors report warn that it is not enough to establish communication among diverse groups, for instance, in inter-racial or inter-denominational schools. 'If the different groups are rivals or if they do not have the same status in the same geographical area, such contact may have the opposite effect to that desired - it may bring out hidden tensions and degenerate into an opportunity for conflict. (...) The conclusion would seem to be that education should adopt two complementary approaches. From early childhood, it should focus on the discovery of other people in the first stage of education. In the second stage of education and in lifelong education, it should encourage involvement in common projects.'¹

One way in which UNESCO encourages and promotes peace is through its Associated Schools Project network (ASPnet), among which is GROUP T – Leuven Education College. A curriculum designed from this perspective will be geared towards²:

- eliminating all manifestations of racism, xenophobia, exclusion, discrimination and intolerance,
- strengthening education for democracy, civic responsibility, critical thinking, tolerance and non-violent conflict resolution, and
- raising awareness of human rights in theory and practice, sensitizing students to their own rights and responsibilities, including the rights of others.

In this case, 'curriculum' is not restricted to what one does in the classroom for a given school subject. It may also refer to so-called 'extra-curricular' activities which, together, constitute a planned course of action. Collaborating on common projects from an early age, both inside the school and in the community, is one of the key recommendations from the Delors Commission for 'learning to live together'.³ Hence, not only schools but also theatres, museums or sport clubs could in principle design and implement curricula

based on 'learning to live together'.

There already exist programmes that are based on the idea that we should, on the one hand, understand ourselves, our context and others and, on the other, transform the world together. The goal is simple: 'to enable and encourage people to think constructively about issues, both physical and social and to develop constructive attitudes towards living together and solving problems that arise in their communities through peaceful means' (Verdiani, 2005:8).

There are also examples of integrated curricula that combine specific learning contents with 'learning to live together'. Examples thereof include the ASPnet flagship project 'Breaking the silence' on slave trade⁴, and 'Learning to Live Together: An Intercultural and Interfaith Programme for Ethics Education'.⁵ Across the world, ASPnet schools have designed an array of educational projects from a 'learning to live together' perspective, focusing on themes such as inclusive education and human rights education.⁶

In Belgium, GROUP T – Leuven Education College is in the process of redressing its curricula in view of the Four Pillars of Education. On the level of governance, it has enshrined the Four Pillars principle in its mission statement and articles of association.⁷ Among the members of the institute's board of directors is Zhou Nan-zhao, who sat on the Delors Commission and has remained an influential propagator of the Four Pillars in general and 'learning to live together' in particular (e.g. Zhou, 1998). One of the college's recent initiatives has been a series of educational encounters around the question 'Who believes in indifference?' using interactive theatre as a trigger for shared reflection on educational practice.⁸ At the programme level, its 'International Educating Class' (IEC)⁹ constitutes a clear example of how college curricula can be built around UNESCO's Four Pillars of Education (George, 2009). Two of its modules are dedicated to 'learning to live together': (1) 'Society, Education and Inter-cultural Dialogue', which focuses on the horizontal dimension, and (2) 'Living Together in 2025', which zooms in on the vertical dimension. It is to these two modules that we shall now turn.

2 Thinking horizontally

In the module on 'Society, Education and Inter-cultural Dialogue,' students are invited to become aware of the many levels on which education and schooling take place. This includes the study of ways in which the relationship between the individual and society is envisaged, the intersection, congruencies and differences between education and schooling, and the effects of globalization on social cohabitation. First, the curriculum of 'Society, Education and Inter-cultural Dialogue' draws the students' attention to some of the variables that hinder the provision and attainment of ethically responsible

educational opportunities; we shall call them 'barriers'. After that, it also encourages them to discover ways in which those barriers can be lowered and eventually removed. The international composition of the IEC student population facilitates a multi-sided look at the issues in question.

2.1. Barriers to equality of educational opportunities

Once post-modernism de-centred modernity, its democratic intake on the world became not only a political system, but also an outlook on life. Then, when democracy cross-pollinated with capitalism, consumerism became a lifestyle without which today's world economy would suffer severe losses. Finally, globalization and the birth of the knowledge economy contributed to education's becoming not only one more commodity, but also the key to growth and sustainable development.

However, as is the case with other goods in the global market, education, too, is not always within the reach of all citizens. Despite the changes in the world, many of the old barriers between the weakest segments of the world population and education are still in place. Deep-level continuity seems to be stronger than changes on the surface ([Depaepe, 1997](#)). The following factors are among the many obstacles that prevent equal opportunities in education.

a) Environmental constraints

The characteristics of the terrain can limit the actual learning opportunities of prospective learners. This may be due to either the lack of enough schools in the vicinity or the dangers involved in reaching them (e.g. in case of war-torn areas; Auduc, 1998). In countries with island or forest territories (e.g. in the Maldives or the Amazons, respectively), communication between their different parts often requires resources that are not always available. Boarding schools are at times an option to overcome these constraints, but not everybody can afford them.

b) Social constraints

Stratification

This term is understood here in a broad sense as the categories into which individuals are pigeon-holed. These classifications may be determined by solvency, social approval, status, ethnic background or by a combination of these and other factors. Sometimes, the social (especially ethnic) stratum to which pupils and students are assigned plays a more important role in their educational prospects than the influence of their teacher

(this seems to be the case in both the developed and the developing world).

The effects of social stratification underline the fact that although human beings are born equal in terms of dignity, we are not all equal in terms of our social value. Social standing is one of the most usual obstacles preventing children and students from unfolding their potentials to the full.

Gender

Engendered educational parity is the fifth Millennium Development Goal. Most countries are making efforts to achieve this mark; some are even succeeding in doing so. Notwithstanding the progress made in some parts of the world where girls are increasingly becoming the majority group in formal education, this is not yet the case everywhere.¹⁰ 'In no society do women yet enjoy the same opportunities as men. They work longer hours and they are paid less; their life chances and choices are more restricted than for men' (Colclough et al., 2003:3).

The fact *that* more and more girls are now benefiting from formal education does not mean yet that they are always and everywhere allowed to study *whatever* they wish to or have talent for. The tendency to consider gender as a disqualifying criterion for education may have various causes. For instance, it may be due to *cultural* perceptions (women belong to the domestic sphere), *economical* constraints (educating girls may at times be a bad investment), *religious* interpretations (motherhood is women's primary vocation), the girls' *health* situation (e.g. due to AIDS) and disabilities, etc. (Colclough et al., 2003:12).

C) School-related constraints

Costs of studying

The high cost of education is one of the most common obstacles promoting educational inequality (Auduc, 1998), especially in the area of the internationalization of higher education. Very often, even world organizations meant to be at the service of the education of the disadvantaged contribute to keeping study costs exorbitantly high. Moreover, by establishing a system of scholarships (for instance, under the pretence of safeguarding quality), international organizations and donors continue to hold a grip on the world, determining who 'deserves' education and who does not.

Curriculum

Not all learners are given the same opportunities to study curricula that have been designed taking into account their motivation, needs and talents. This means that even when children or students manage to find a school and are allowed to register, not all of them will be treated as they need to be. Some learners are being provided with more and better 'scaffolding' than others.

Academic standards

Sometimes, learning failure is due to the learning standards, for instance, because they have been established with other learners in mind. In such cases, it is not the learner who is to blame but the policy makers. Standards can prevent learners from benefiting from schooling by disqualifying them as eligible candidates (the entrance criteria are too high) or by making it too difficult for them to succeed (exams are exceedingly hard). Even though it is not *a priori* desirable that standards be lowered, complementary structures ought to be in place to compensate for the lacunae in learners' educational luggage.

Instruction

Teachers and their instruction styles represent another variable that creates inequality in education. Having access to a school does not guarantee that learners will find there (1) the teaching style that befits their learning needs and/or (2) teachers that possess the appropriate qualitative knowledge, skills and didactic material¹¹ to best help them to progress to higher levels of education ([Darling-Hammond, 2009](#)). The concrete infrastructure of daily instruction speaks volumes about the barriers preventing learners from activating their learning potentials. Educational equality or inequality can be measured by comparing schools and countries in terms of 'the number of students per teacher, teacher training, public expenditures and educational achievement' (Colclough et al., 2003:6).

D) Family-related constraints

Parental educational background

Studies seem to be indicating that parents with a stronger educational background contribute to the educational success of their children in significant ways. The educational background of the parents is often proportionally related to their social class: the higher the class, the higher their education and the greater their involvement in the education of their children ([Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003:21](#)).

Poor levels of parental involvement

Children of parents that cannot or simply do not help them with their education seem to be at a disadvantage compared to others. Studies show (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003:17) that at age 7, parents' involvement is an influential variable fostering school achievement. By 16, the class composition becomes more important than parents' involvement. A great many learners will thus be at a disadvantage during their primary education, which will probably mark them for life.

E) Personal constraints

Some of the obstacles that foster educational inequality have to do with the person. Failure to enter the spaces of education or to succeed in them may be due to either physiological or psychological causes, or to a combination of both.

2.2 Creating equality of educational opportunities

Since the axiom 'success breeds success' has been upheld by some studies, at least in some respects ([Salanova, 2010](#)), the aforementioned barriers call for pedagogies that combine realism and idealism or, said otherwise, pragmatism, ethical awareness, critique and inventiveness (Giroux, 126).

Studies about inequality in school performance seem to indicate that the issue of equality of opportunity, understood in a broad sense, is the main predictor for the success or failure of the ideals of education for all. In the words of Darling-Hammond (2009): 'education resources do make a difference, particularly when funds are used to purchase well-qualified teachers and high-quality curriculum and to create personalized learning communities in which children are well known. In all of the current sturm und drang about affirmative action, "special treatment," and the other high volatility buzzwords for race and class politics in this nation, I would offer a simple starting point for the next century's efforts: no special programs, just equal educational opportunity.' However, equal opportunity can only be guaranteed if the barriers that stand in its way are removed. No magical solution can claim universal validity, since different barriers will be more important in certain places than in other ones. That is why we shall now limit ourselves to a few remarks on overcoming the general structural obstacles enunciated above.

A) Overcoming environmental constraints

Current technologies offer means to overcome physical limitations. The old views of education, moulded around the classroom and its factory-like setting, must make way for new ones. The FLACSO¹² is an example of this trend in Latin America, as are Open Universities around the globe¹³. However, similar applications for primary and secondary education are still missing. Sometimes it is pedagogues that stand in the way of virtual classrooms complementing or substituting physical ones. Hence, teacher colleges should no longer educate students (almost) exclusively for the traditional physical classroom environment, but also for more delocalized spaces for teaching and learning (e.g. virtual classrooms). Curriculum developers should also produce material for the same target group.

B) Overcoming social constraints

Redressing class-related inequalities

In order to redress the educational deficiencies due to social class, some support the institutionalization of affirmative action. But there are also voices against such initiatives. For instance, some argue in the USA that even though equal opportunities now exist, non-white and non-Asian students continue to show low levels of achievement. They conclude hence that poor results must be due to genetic predisposition, culture, or a lack of effort and will ([Darling-Hammond, 2009](#)). In Belgium and Holland, it is also being discussed whether 'coloured' schools¹⁴ are conducive to better or poorer school results. However, the problem is not that schools are 'coloured' (what is so abnormal about a 'coloured' school in a 'coloured' neighbourhood?), but that the facilities and resources to which the students have access are 'coloured'. These schools do not always have the same infrastructure, didactic material, teacher quality, extra-curricular activities, home support and social appreciation as their 'non-coloured' counterparts ([Darling-Hammond, 2009](#)).

Even though mixed groups are not enough to guarantee success, some studies show that, at least in higher education, such groups promote deeper and broader learning ([Kurlaender & Yun, 2002:3](#)).

Working with gender and not against it

Even though gender parity in education is one of the millennium development goals, this is not a reality as yet. Despite the fact that 'investing more in the education of girls drastically increases personal and social well-being – the end objective of all development activity' ([Colclough et al., 2003:4](#)), UNESCO's EFA Global Monitoring Report (2003/4) shows that Brazil was at the time one of the countries where there is still considerable

work to be done on this front.

The presence or absence of female teachers seems to be one way to judge, especially in the developing world, whether gender parity is growing or declining (Colclough et al., 2003:7). Although, in this respect, progress has been made in primary education, there still remains much to be done in secondary and tertiary education before the male and female ratio among teachers has reached levels that are proportional to the size of the overall population. In places such as Belgium, the gender variable works the other way around: it is men that are underrepresented in primary education and in the first part of secondary education.

Educational planners will have to take into account the causes of gender disparity so that they can promote the rights of girls' rights *to*, *within* and *through* education (Colclough et al., 2003). In their attempts to overcome structural obstacles at these three levels, the help of important social agents should be sought and made use of, such as religious bodies, the commercial world (e.g. those that rely on particular skills for their production) and NGOs (Colclough et al., 2003:14).

Some good practices in this area have emerged; for instance, demographic shifts, women in the labour force, changing the law, giving incentives to reduce child labour, offering scholarships and food, changing traditional attitudes, setting up early childhood benefits, empowering women to envisage themselves as valid and important agents in society (Colclough et al., 2003:17).

C) Overcoming school-related constraints

Facing the costs of studying

Sponsoring programmes should be set up so that children and teenagers can gain access to education. However, given that for UNESCO the ideal educational structures are those that transform children in need into community agents, sponsoring and scholarship programmes should include clauses whereby the beneficiaries must 'pay back' what they have received *by enabling others* (EFA, 1990: art. 1–4; Auduc, 1998). Even programmes meant to help students from developing countries to study in foreign universities could be conceived of in this manner to ensure that those students become agents of positive change. This might help counter the negative effects of brain drain.

Improving on the curriculum

There are studies that show that once the curriculum has been attuned to the learners, they perform better and ethnic differences begin to fade away ([Darling-Hammond, 2009](#)). In Europe, countries such as the UK and Germany have seen the

appearance of what is called 'immigrant education,' whereby pieces of the new cultures are plastered onto the old curricula without challenging the old assumptions (Arora, 2005:19ff.). These practices have had ideological goals rather than pedagogical ones. Education ought once again to be about the education of individual learners, not just about training this or that group to fulfil what is expected of them.

Enabling qualitative instruction

Whenever isolated individual learners fail, their failure might be due to individual characteristics. However, as 'Education for Some' or, as it is known, the Eggleston report (1986) suggested, *when whole segments of the population fail, then that is a sign that the system has failed* (Arora, 2005:32).

D) Overcoming family-related constraints

Fostering parental involvement

Parents' involvement is not always fully dependent on the parents. Children from the lower class will at times purposefully block parents' involvement, e.g. because they know that their parents have to work hard and need their rest when they are at home, or because they do not want outside things, such as school, to come into the home.

The attitude and expectations of the parents concerning education may be one of the more important inheritances that they will bequeath their children. If parents think that helping with school is not part of their job as parents, they will be less readily inclined to take up an active role in the education of their children (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003:49). Consequently, their children might interiorize their parents' lack of involvement as an expression of how parents should be or of the lack of importance of learning. Yet, even in cases where parents are involved, it is not the overly helpful parent that is the most conducive to a learner's educational achievement, but the one that motivates *independent learning* the most (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003:51). In order to promote success, educational agents ought therefore not to work on the attitude and skills of their pupils and students only, but also of their parents.

To promote equality of educational opportunities, there is a real need for programmes that (1) help parents with parenting (e.g. through special workshops), (2) establish communication channels between the school and the parents, (3) encourage parents to do voluntary work in favour of their children's learning environments (e.g. the school or the library), (4) train the parents to help their children with their homework (e.g. by forming study groups for parents and learners similar to home schooling settings), (5) give parents the feeling that their input counts in times of decision making, and (6) find ways to broaden the parents' vision of education (e.g. by organizing study trips for

parents and children together) (Epstein, 1992; see also Vyverman & Vettenburg, 2009).

Compensating for deficient parental educational luggage

Not every classroom teacher will be able to compensate for the parents' educational lacunae by offering extracurricular activities; this is especially true in developing countries where teachers must have a second (and even a third job) to make ends meet. This is therefore an area in which the assistance of governmental departments, religious organizations, NGOs, international voluntary and internship programmes is needed.

E) Overcoming personal constraints

Physical and psychological impairments can represent real barriers preventing children from receiving systematic education. Emotional problems must not be forgotten (e.g. due to abuse, abject poverty or traumatic experiences such as drought, floods, war or terrorism). This is an area in which specialized coaching is necessary, as well as infrastructural adaptations that require funding. Herein lie a lot of opportunities for education providers from the developed countries, who could demonstrate their sincere commitment to the internationalization of education. Ideally, it should be non-addictive cooperation: foreign agencies could help with setting up the necessary structures and training the local service providers so that no long-lasting dependence relationship arises.

3 Thinking vertically

There is also a vertical dimension to 'learning to live together,' which invites us to consider our ties across time. In the module 'Living Together in 2025' the students set out to define a shared vision on this prospect in a stepwise approach.¹⁵ Given their interest in education, students tend to select a related aspect as their focus, for instance, what it will be like to educate teachers in 2025. From the field of futures studies they first learn to identify the megatrends of today that will shape tomorrow's world. Next, by applying the scenario method, they learn to turn those possible futures into vivid scenarios and backcast ways to arrive there. Drawing on strategic management theory, they finally learn to define paths toward the most desirable visions. In this way, the exercises in envisioning the *future* are informed by trends that originate in the *past*, yielding route planners for navigating the *present*.

Living together is more than a theme in this course. In addition to constructing knowledge *about* living together in 2025, students will tackle hands-on exercises *in* 'learning to live together'. As the students envision desirable futures, they engage in

strategic conversation and genuine dialogue with students from different cultures and backgrounds. As they develop scenarios towards plausible futures, they come to terms with promoting values with respect for others. In this way, this module supports the development of a range of faculties, including imagination and creativity, analytical and synthetic thinking, empathy and pro-activity. And as in the module on 'Society, Education and Intercultural Dialogue', the plurality of perspectives that comes with the international composition of the group enhances the in-class dialogue.

3.1 The presence of the past

It is very hard to be truly visionary. When the first advertisement for an automobile was published in 1898, it was named the 'horseless carriage' and that is exactly what it looked like. When we try and look into the future, mostly we just extrapolate what already exists today. The question is to whether this means that we should refrain from trying. When John Naisbitt, a leading futurist and author of the groundbreaking *Megatrends*, was recently interviewed by the Copenhagen Institute for Future he declared that we had had all of the major breakthroughs for the time coming —information technology, biotechnology, the rise of China— and that this will be a period of evolution rather than revolution.¹⁶ On this assumption it becomes possible to describe plausible tomorrows based on what we can see around us today.

In order to detect these evolutions and feel the pulse of time, we need to look beyond the constant twists and turns of events – stocks crashing, athletes achieving victory, governments toppling, companies merging, volcanoes spewing ash clouds – and search for patterns of behaviour. Events may fascinate us but it is the patterns or *trends* that provide windows into the underlying systems which have the explanatory power to tell us why things are what they are and what we can do to change them ([Meadows, 2009](#)). Looking at trends, many of today's events will be revealed as the logical continuation of what preceded. The here and now carries inside it the there and then. That is why a curriculum for learning to live together, even though it may be preoccupied with the concerns of the day, will always reach out to the past and connect with the generations that came before us.

In the module 'Living Together in 2025' we primarily investigate trends as indicators of how the future may unfold, though. Fortunately, there exists a vast body of excellent research at institutes and think tanks around the world that students can rely on, notably from OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (e.g. *Trends Shaping Education*, 2008; *Higher Education to 2030*, 2009) and UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (e.g. their quarterly newsletters and the series on *New Trends in Higher Education*).¹⁷ Other useful sources include the U.S. National Intelligence

Council (*Global Trends 2025*, 2008), the Dutch STT Foresights on Technology and Society (www.stt.nl), and private institutes like the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies (www.cifs.dk) or Fast Future (www.fastfuture.com). Students are asked to skim these publications and identify trends that are likely to have a considerable impact on the chosen theme, for instance educating teachers in 2025. In order to encourage students to look beyond the domain of education and consider trends that reflect a more complete experience of living together, we have coined the acronym DEEPEST. Each letter stands for an external domain of forces that are bound to affect education deeply: Demography, Ecology, Economy, Politics, Ethics, and Science & Technology. This web of interrelations with different domains of the evolving environment brings the horizontal dimension of living together into this module.

In a follow-up activity students are asked to literally take a stand, whereby their position in the classroom reflects the extent to which they believe a particular trend is likely to (1) continue in the years to come, and (2) affect the chosen theme in 2025. This physical impact diagram with real-time feedback, a tool recommended by Benammar et al (2006), encourages students to muster all the supporting evidence they have when they present their selected trends to their classmates. This is crucial because trends that are backed up by robust research provide us with the much-needed reality check of our visions for the future. Visions often derive from dreams and fantasies, and it is this imaginative power that gives visions much of their appeal and lure. However, in order to serve as useful beacons for taking effective action, they should transcend fiction and be compatible with the facts that we can perceive today. As they say, without the data your chatta' don't matta'. This is the reason why in the initial stages of the module 'Living Together in 2025' the emphasis is on logical and analytical thinking.

3.2 Picturing plausible futures

Scenarios are multiple stories about possible futures. Scenario thinking was brought under the attention of a wider audience after it had been applied in a business context at Royal Dutch Shell by Kees van der Heijden (1996) and before him by Peter Schwartz, who links scenarios to 'the art of the long view': 'Scenarios are a tool for helping us to take a long view in a world of great uncertainty (...) Scenarios are stories about the way the world might turn out tomorrow, that help us recognise changing aspects of our present environment' (Schwartz, 1991). Since then scenario has also been applied extensively in non-profit organisations (Searce, Fulton & the GBN Community, 2004). More recently, the method has been developed as an educational tool to be used by students in the Netherlands by Marco Snoek and his colleagues. Benammar et al (2006) cite several ends to which scenario thinking can contribute, such as to become aware of

important value systems within the students' field and of their own position in relation to these, and to expand their horizons by examining changing perspectives and exploring the complexity of contexts.

In the light of learning to live together, it is worthwhile pointing out that this examination of multiple perspectives should include opposing voices: 'When one is working with passionate convictions, it is easy to become deaf to voices you may not agree with. Yet consciously bringing these voices to the table exposes you to ideas that will inform your own perspective and could prove extremely helpful in your efforts to see the big picture of an issue or idea' (Searce, Fulton & the GBN Community, 2004:14). In this way scenarios can help us to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the world in which we operate so that we can use that understanding to improve our ability to make better decisions. Van der Heijden (1996) links scenarios to 'the art of strategic conversation'. 'It is my experience', he says, 'that scenarios are the best available language for the strategic conversation, as it allows both differentiation in views, but also brings people together toward a shared understanding of the situation, making decision making possible when the time has arrived to take action' (1996:ix).

Forming a scenario matrix

The central question in scenario thinking is: What if powerful forces of change evolve in opposite directions? Accordingly, scenarios are set in internally consistent yet structurally distinct environments that are constructed around a limited number of critical uncertainties. These critical uncertainties make up the foundation of the scenario matrix, typically a 2X2 template. The axes of the matrix represent two of the important driving forces behind the identified high-impact trends. Both selected driving forces should be characterized by large impact as well as large unpredictability; they should be highly relevant to the issue at hand and highly uncertain in that each pole represents a plausible future. Will government spending for education be high or low in 2025? Will migration policies be strict or mild in 2025? The response to each of these questions will have a considerable impact on the state of education yet it is not clear today which way things will turn. What is more, the answer to one of the question does not determine the answer to the other. This makes it worthwhile picturing the four futures that arise when we combine both axes: for instance, what could it mean to be a student or a teacher in a future where government spending is low and migration policies are mild? The definition of the scenario matrix is indeed a crucial milestone of the method and as a novice practitioner it might be wise to ask for expert feedback at this stage.¹⁸

Developing the scenarios

Once the scenario matrix has been formed, it is time to develop the scenarios proper. The key is to make each quadrant come alive by trying to live inside each scenario and to tell a story from the perspective of the future. Each future will be distinctive as a result of the combination of the poles of the axes, yet they all share features related to the high-predictability trends that were identified in the first stage. As a showcase product, student teams could for instance work together to write the education pages of an online newspaper, integrating techniques from digital storytelling (Tolisano, 2010). Some contributions would focus on the flavour of the day (e.g. account of the first school day of a teacher trainee in 2025; an editorial about the controversy over a new policy); other contributions would backcast from the future and present a glimpse of what happened between today and 2025 (e.g. an obituary of a leader in education); others would look forward beyond 2025 (e.g. a visit to an innovative school).

3.3 Paving the way

Searce, Fulton & the GBN Community (2004:15-18) name four applications for scenario thinking, all of which are relevant to a curriculum for 'learning to live together'.

- Setting strategic direction, based on the exploration of how complex factors could create very different environments that we might have to navigate.
- Accelerating collaborative learning, by providing a platform for making our mental maps explicit, appreciating other perspectives, and leading to novel insights.
- Alignment and visioning; facilitating the development of a shared vision for the future.
- Catalyzing bold action; based on the realization that the status quo is not sustainable and pushing us to intervene in the system and take action.

'Think of this guide as an introduction to a discipline aimed at increasing your ability to change the world', the authors write (2004:3). In the module 'Learning to Live Together in 2025' the students are asked to evaluate the four scenarios they developed. Which one is the most likely to unfold? What can we do to anticipate that expected future? Which scenario is the most desirable? And what can we do today in order to increase the chances that this common vision might materialize? As a final step the group writes down its recommendations on how to act as a formal mission statement with reference to the purpose, the strategy, the values, and the behavioural norms ([Campbell & Yeung, 1998](#)).

And again, dialogue provides the key. Just like with scenario thinking, dialoguing is often referred to as an art. [William Isaacs \(1999\)](#), founder of the Dialogue Project at MIT, speaks of 'the art of thinking together'. He presents a methodology for dialogue that

rests on listening, respecting, suspending, and voicing. 'We are entering an age where we cannot know what is coming. [...] Dialogue can help by stretching the minds to inquire into points of view we might not naturally accept, and so holding more possibilities and options open' (1999:334). It goes without saying that when we embark on this process with a group that holds many different nationalities, cultures and persuasions, the voyage may be slightly rougher but the views along the way are magnificent.

4 'Learning to live together' in Brazil: Manu's story

During the IEC programme, I wrote a paper for 'Society, Education and Intercultural Dialogue' about education in rural Brazil. After my graduation, it was time to put the theoretical knowledge into practice, which I did together with Micheli, my Brazilian partner, in the village of Teolandia.

4.1 Teolandia

The first step, before our departure for Brazil, was to set up a charity (VZW) called 'Brasil Feliz' ('Happy Brazil').

Once we had arrived in Salvador da Bahia, we began our journey to Teolandia, a small rural village, situated 260 km south of Salvador. It has a surface of 289 km² and houses about 12,000 inhabitants. After studying the local educational landscape, it became apparent to us that there were a few barriers preventing universal access to education, which I shall now briefly describe.

A) Environmental constraints

Schools are at about 30 minutes' drive from one another. They are mostly small schools with merely two or three classrooms and a very limited school curriculum. Children go to school till they reach the age of 10. After that, they have to go to another school that has the other classes. At that moment, many children drop out of formal education.

There is often only one teacher per class made up of 3 different (age) groups at once. Hence, most of the time, there is one teacher every 40-50 pupils. Many of these teachers are volunteers without any pedagogical education and with no knowledge of didactics. Nonetheless, if it was not for them, a great many children would not have any education at all.

Since building more schools was beyond my means, my partner and I thought of helping the children by solving their transportation problems. We bought an old truck,

a Ford F4000, and transformed it into a school bus of sorts. We also sought and found a driver for it. On this make-shift bus, we transported pupils to a school that offered a curriculum suitable to their age and learning needs. A lot of them had previously had to travel on horse back, on foot or by other means. The local government subsidized the fuel and the driver's wages.

Social constraints

Adult illiteracy

Once we began to map out the local social structure, we realized that many elderly people were unable able to read and write. When we sought to find some more background information, we were told by a teacher that Brazil was conducting an alphabetization programme, destined for elderly people, and entitled 'Brasil Alfabetizado'. The government pays the wages of educators who, in their spare time, can teach elderly people to read and write. Our contact was willing to do that but lacked the necessary space, since she lived in a very small house.

To solve that problem, we set up a project whereby a house was going to be built, big enough for her and her family to live in and for a classroom to alphabetize adult people. The construction was almost finished when we left for Belgium in order to raise more funds. At present, the building has been completed and the lessons have started.

School-related constraints

Curriculum

As part of our preparatory research, we visited all the local schools, both private and public, and interviewed the teachers about their experiences and difficulties. We concluded that both types of schools offer a weak curriculum and need professional assistance.

4.2 Vision for the future

Seen that the social and learning needs of Teolandia are considerable, we shall have to concentrate our efforts and means on a reduced number of initiatives in order to ensure positive results. In order to foresee future educational needs, possible trends were analysed using the scenario method. The two variables employed in the quadrants are: 1) *regional* economic growth levels (envisaged over against the background of a predictable positive *national* growth) and 2) the perceived value of education.

Perceived value of education	High Regional economic growth levels		High Perceived value of education
	Low	High	
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People are better off• Economic dependence remains• Low levels of labour mobility due to limited trained skills• Higher levels of welfare (the trickle down effect)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater general economic solvency• Educational competition due to more schools• Better trained educators• More labour mobility due to training and the ensuing diversification of skills	High
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The poor remain poor• Economic dependence on landowners remains• If the other regions prosper, many people will migrate to those areas or move away from the rural areas to the cities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The poor remain poor• Demand for education grows• New cooperative ventures emerge• People will move closer to schools• Parents will select which children go to school and the rest work to make it possible	
Low Regional economic growth levels		Low	

From the above scenarios, we draw some conclusions.

- Whatever the developments may be, one aspect that will probably remain unchanged is the need for projects in the area of sports, hobbies and useful, shared pastimes.
- If the regional economy does not improve and the perceived value of education stays low, the people will continue to be dependent on the landowners in whose farms they work. The choice for them will be between staying put or migrating to another region.
- If the levels of regional economic growth remain low but the perceived value of education increases, the need for qualitative education will also expand. Before the government has managed to provide adequate educators, there will be a demand for 'train the trainers' enterprises. We could tap into that need and offer such programmes.
- If the regional economy improves but the levels of appreciation of the value of education continue to be low, we shall have to focus on vocational trainings that lead to better paid jobs. If the people can see that there is a correlation between education and financial and social improvement, their perception of the value of learning will probably increase. Innovative and vocational trainings (e.g. ICT and technological trainings) will be advisable options. The increase in economic solvency will lead to the acquisition of new tractors, agricultural machines and vehicles, computers, domestic gadgets that are still very rare in the region (such as washing machines, freezers and air-conditioning). Consequently, new businesses and shops will emerge. These changes will entail that in this primordial agricultural region, new technical skills will be needed and, hence, also new training opportunities.
- If both the regional economy and the general appreciation of the value of education increase, the need for new educative programmes will also augment; for instance: training the trainers, educating the educators, subsidiary trainings focussing on aspects of education (such as coaching, special education, technological education), adult education schemes (e.g. second-chance education), education for innovation, etc.

In light of the above analysis, we have decided to study a number of possible courses of future action.

Overcoming social constraints

Since youngsters spend a great part of their day doing nothing, we will set up a project that uses sports and games to keep them off the streets and busy. By creating stronger bonds between them, we hope to minimize crime.

Overcoming school-related constraints

Educating the educators

It is our intention to establish bilateral schemes between the schools in Teolandia and teacher education colleges in Europe, especially GROUPT – Leuven Education College. Student teachers would thus be able to volunteer in our projects: they could educate the teachers and, at the same time, learn Portuguese and/or Capoeira. The school principals have already lent their support to the idea; now we must find partner institutions in Europe and sign the necessary international accords and memories of understanding.

Overcoming the costs of studying

We are planning on founding a 'foster a pupil' programme. People of means could foster a pupil for approximately 5 EUR a month so that he or she can gain access to education.

Offering extra lessons

In order to compensate for the deficiencies in school instruction, we are also planning on organizing extra lessons (e.g. English, homeworks, Physical and art education, lessons in sustainable development, etc.) in another house, closer to where the learners live. For adults, there would also be trainings to acquire new skills (car mechanics, building, hairdressing, clothes making, etc.).

Finances

In order to realize the above initiatives, we shall need sufficient funding. At present, we are giving paid Capoeira workshops and organizing sponsored Brazilian cultural and culinary events in Belgium. In the future, we hope to conduct a systematic fund-raising campaign.

5 Suggestions and questions arising

In itself, internationalization in education is a pre-ethical reality: intrinsically neither good nor bad. Its open-endedness raises questions, such as what we mean by 'education,' what we want it for and what we want to get out of it. While some see it as an economic asset and become sellers of trainings, UNESCO sees it as an opportunity to build on the common non-quantifiable human heritage.

The double-sidedness of education highlights the relationship between education and schooling. Depaepe has shown that schooling often 'scholarizes' education, whereas schools also becomes 'pedagogized'. In other words, on the one hand, one can detect a reduction of the meaning of education to going to school, while, on the other hand, modern life demands that schools increasingly take over the role of parents and the state, playing a greater role in the upbringing of children and the training of the (future) workforce. Consequently, providing education nowadays involves a lot more than simply founding schools and running schools entails more than merely implementing the curriculum. UNESCO's educational philosophy represents and attempt to enunciate and enact an ethically, realistic and future-oriented respond to the ongoing societal processes, precisely there where education, schooling and the economy intersect and shape one another.

At the IEC, policy makers, educators and learners continuously evaluate the programme's components. Our experience with the two modules focused on 'learning to live together' spoken of in this contribution confirms what others ([Isaacs, 1999](#)) have been indicating for a while: the internationalization of the economy and education calls for curricula for 'learning to live together' in a decentred world that are fully aware of the enhanced, horizontal and vertical systemic nature of present-day life. Such curricula must remain conscious of the local, regional and international context within which learners and education facilitators function now and will do so in the future. There is a need to map the network of relationships and variables that shape social trends, to which purpose systemic approaches must be set into place. However, 'systemic approaches' must not be understood as uniformity-oriented but as open-ended and flexible strategies capable of continuously incorporating new voices into ongoing international, polyphonic dialogues. Having said that, lest one should fall into vagueness, priorities and centres of action must be selected and seen as evolving targets subject to evaluation and revision. Educational endeavours must, after all, follow, predict and thus shape the world's flow of change.

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Notes

- 1) <http://www.Unesco.org/delors/ltolive.htm>.
- 2) <http://www.Unesco.org/en/aspnet/study-areas/peace-and-human-rights>.
- 3) <http://www.Unesco.org/delors/ltolive.htm>.
- 4) <http://old.antislavery.org/breakingthesilence/educationproject2.shtml>.
- 5) <http://unesdoc.Unesco.org/images/0016/001610/161059e.pdf>.
- 6) <http://www.Unesco.org/en/aspnet/good-practices>.
- 7) http://www.groep.be/www/over_groep_t/visie_en_missie.
- 8) This activity is an initiative from the dean's office, the team for 'Religious and Non-Religious World-views Education,' and the diversity co-ordinator. For its implementation, the assistance of AndersOm ('TheOtherWayAround'), a theatre group, has been sought.
- 9) <http://www.groupt.be/piec>.
- 10) For instance, the access of girls to primary school seems to have declined in Algeria, the Congo, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Oman, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Thailand and the United Republic of Tanzania). (Colclough et al., 2003:6).
- 11) In 2003, the situation was still far from perfect. At the time, half the teachers in the developing world had not yet received (adequate) pedagogical training (Colclough et al., 2003:11).
- 12) The Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (<http://www.flasco.org.ar>).
- 13) For instance, the African Virtual University (<http://www.avu.org/home.asp>), the Arab Open University (<http://www.arabou.org.sa/en/index.php>), the Asian International Open University (http://www.aiou.edu/eng/index_e.htm), etc.
- 14) In Belgium, they are called 'concentration schools' (on account of the concentration of allochthonous students in them) and in Holland, 'black schools' (because of the visibility of the non-white student population).

15) See Benammar, K., Dale, L., Poortinga, J., Schwab, H., & Snoek, M. (2006). *The scenario method for education*. Facilitator Manual, version 6.2, www.scenarioleren.nl.

16) This interview took place in 2007. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4QLFObhKoXI> (retrieved on April 28, 2010).

17) All IIEP publications can be downloaded free of charge at: www.iiep.unesco.org/information-services/publications.

18) In the context of GROUP T's International Educating Class we have been so fortunate to call on the expert advice of Henno Theisens from OECD-CERI and of Marco Snoek from the Hogeschool van Amsterdam, University of Applied Sciences. Without their much appreciated guidance and support we would not have been able to serve our students as well as we did.

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