



5th UNESCO Forum on transformative education for sustainable development, global citizenship, health and well-being

Recommendations for action towards transformative education

29 November – 1 December 2021

Co-organized by UNESCO and APCEIU

Hosted by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea

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The Global Education 2030 Agenda

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to *“ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”* The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.



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Introduction

In light of contemporary and emerging challenges such as climate change, violent and hateful ideologies, conflicts and risks of global pandemics, education must teach young people the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to live cooperatively, be flexible, think critically, respect diversity, care for the environment, and be actively involved in finding solutions, both locally and globally. Transformative education – as enshrined in Target 4.7 of Sustainable Development Goal 4 – is critical in supporting individuals to develop these competencies.

Transformative education involves teaching and learning that motivates and empowers learners to make informed decisions and actions at the individual, community and global levels. With a focus on sustainability, global citizenship, health and well-being for all, transformative education implies ensuring that curriculum, pedagogy, learning materials, schools and learning environments are meaningful for the social, political, economic, cultural and environmental contexts.

To better understand concrete progress in transformative education, UNESCO and the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) co-organized the 5th UNESCO Forum on Transformative Education for Sustainable Development, Global Citizenship, Health and Well-being (29 November – 1 December 2021).

The conference enabled a productive dialogue among a diverse range of actors from the fields of education for sustainable development (ESD), global citizenship education (GCED), education for health and wellbeing under the broader “banner” of transformative education. The Forum investigated key questions related to transformative education; what does it mean? Why is it relevant? How can it help foster the type of society we want for the future? How is it best taught and nurtured? And how can it be assessed? Below are some highlights from the conference and suggestions on the way forward.

Pedagogical elements and enablers

Transformative education should manifest into positive action – whether it is through cooperation, collaboration, peace building, inclusion, safety, health, well-being or sustainability.

To be truly “transformative”, education must pay greater attention to the quality of the learning environment (formal or non-formal) and school climate. It needs to pay attention to the local context that directly affects learners and their communities. In addition, by preventing and addressing school violence and discrimination, it must create a nurturing, safe, supportive and peaceful learning environment where learners will feel valued, acknowledged and included in the learning community.

Transformative education also implies the adoption of whole school approaches. That means that fundamental principles such as human rights, inclusion and sustainability are included in every aspect of school life including teaching content and methodology, facilities, school governance and cooperation with partners and communities. Likewise, it is necessary to redefine the relationship between schools, parents, and local community stakeholders to create a community spirit promoting responsibility and respect for one other. In this regard, many participants highly recommended widening the whole school approach to “whole of community” and extending it to non-formal approaches. For this purpose, transformative education should be implemented in consideration to every community’s own local context where all members of the community are able to share and exchange their knowledge and experiences.

Transformative education puts in place an experiential and explorative learning that involves “head, heart and hand” through cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural dimensions. In addition, the inclusion of formal, non-formal and informal education is essential to fostering transformation for children, youth and adults in a life-long learning approach. It is also important to empower students, educators and other stakeholders to co-create pedagogies, materials and monitoring mechanisms in order to create a sustainable and inclusive future to all.

The key take-aways from the Forum are:

- Progress of SDG target 4.7 and transformative education is measurable
- There are ongoing practices of transformative education by the partner institutions covering different levels (school, national, regional and global) and domains (inputs, process, conditions and outcomes)
- There are still some gaps and opportunities
- Flexibility and space for creativity need to be granted in order to incorporate different aspects and practices (e.g. pedagogies, assessment methods, and learning environment) that fit local contexts.

Challenges and obstacles

There are still some challenges and obstacles for the effective implementation of transformative education. First, the widespread culture of reductionist testing produces a lack of authentic learning. Testing is often conducted in a narrow way with a strong focus on basic skills and it is not sufficiently helpful and formative for learners. Second, there is the challenge of viewing education as serving a strictly vocational purpose. A narrow view of education that focuses solely on workplace readiness is not aligned with a transformative education perspective. Third, there is a very scattered and unsystematic implementation of the good practices of transformative education in the education sector at the country level. There is also insufficient recognition of the importance of adult and non-formal education. This lack of recognition is contrary to transformative education principles that imply a change in practices for all ages. The important role of teachers and in particular the fact that teachers are motivated, but not always sufficiently supported in their intention to teach and facilitate transformative learning is another challenge. In addition, there is a lack of consensus on what to measure when tracking progress in transformative education.

Recommendations for action

Action area 1: Develop *policies* that support the integration of transformative education across the education sector.

- Integrate transformative education into educational policies including formal and non-formal at local, regional and global levels.
- Involve teachers and their unions in dialogues and policy-making processes to achieve a sustainable, evidence-based policy.
- Include civil society, their existing practices and experiences at the grassroots level in the development of transformative education policies.
- Develop research on effective pedagogical approaches that support transformative learning in order to include them effectively into teacher practices and in the design of curricula and development of policies.
- Contextualize and adapt policies to respond to the needs and capacities of learners of all ages.
- Integrate diversity into educational policies to value the aspirations of learners, make the environment inclusive and supportive, and develop learners' competency to collaborate through multiple perspectives.

Action area 2: Integrate transformative education into *curriculum, pedagogy and assessments*

- Build a culture of lifelong learning and non-formal education by increasing access to adult education.
- Include ESD, GCED, education for health and well-being across the curricula of multiple subject areas at all levels.
- Adopt whole of community approaches engaging with the wider community.
- Replace the culture of reductionist testing by an authentic learning that creates meaningful and formative assessment for learning.

- Promote self-directed and team-based learning to foster social and collaboration skills.
- Adopt inquiry-based, project-based and action-based approaches to create experiential and exploratory learning.
- Pay greater attention to behavioural and social-emotional learning to create a sense of responsibility for the future.

Action area 3: Transform *learning environments*

- Create a nurturing, supportive, peaceful learning environment in all educational settings.
- Build the school as a living laboratory integrating all sustainable development principles in its infrastructure and organization.
- Provide new learning opportunities to learners by engaging schools in local and national festivals, competitions or activities to enable learners to expand their knowledge and skills in a greater sphere of their daily life.
- Enhance the learner-centered approach in determining transformative education policy and practice. Seek their opinions, capture their needs, value their creativity, to get them thinking about what they can do together to change the world for a better one.
- Ensure digital inclusion by ensuring that everybody can access and benefit from digital information and services.

Action area 4: Invest in *teachers* at all levels for their empowerment

- Provide high-quality professional development and teacher training on transformative education.
- Support teachers' autonomy by creating a more empowering environment, trusting them and giving them the freedom and space to develop their creativity and innovation.

- Promote collaboration among teachers in general, especially to share with each other the best ways to implement transformative education in schools.
- Provide training and tools to teachers for assessing students on transformative education. Teachers need access to flexible, authentic, and open-ended assessment tools and training in their use to formatively assess students' cognitive skills, socio-emotional learning and action competences.
- Co-engage monitoring teachers' understanding and application of ESD, GCED, etc.

Action area 5: *Monitoring*

- Decide collectively what is important to measure (and what is not) when monitoring progress in implementing transformative education through involving learners, educators and education stakeholders.
- Develop and expand easy-to-use monitoring mechanisms that help countries to set clear targets and evaluate their own progress.
- Identify the effectiveness and impact of transformative education in society to extract important and globally applicable lessons.



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