

## Chapter 8

# Conclusions. Integrating the Five Perspectives



There is no more important challenge facing the world than educating the next generation so that they have the competencies to invent their future. This will include being able to address the challenges we are passing on to them: environmental degradation, social exclusion, and the various forms of violence, within and across nations, that undermine the possibility that we can live in peace.

Three centuries ago, during the long eighteenth century, a powerful set of ideas transformed humanity. The Enlightenment put forth the audacious proposition that ordinary people could rule themselves, and improve their lives individually and collectively, as a result of the use of reason. The age of reason gave us three institutions, joined at the hip: democracy, public education, and the modern research university. Like the Enlightenment itself, these institutions reflect a cosmopolitan ambition, the ambition to improve the human condition through collaboration, including collaboration across borders.

Out of this global project of collective self-improvement was born public education. An institution designed to develop human capacities for self-rule and for societal improvement. It was only in the last century that most of the world's children gained access to school, as a result of the inclusion of the right to education in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and as a result of the leadership and collaborations made possible by the creation of the United Nations and UNESCO. These institutions made the goal of educating all of the world's children a truly cosmopolitan project, both in the processes they created and supported to accelerate cross-national exchanges to educate all children, and in their advocacy for the purposes of education to develop true cosmopolitan global citizens.

As the world around us changes with accelerating speed, we stand at a moment of extraordinary possibilities created by the social, political, and technological developments of the last century. However, we also face challenges that are daunting and deeply consequential for our very survival as a species. We are at a moment of choice as to how we are to face those challenges.

Due to the success of the enterprise of providing access to education for all we are ready, like never before, to equip all children and youth with the capabilities to help them make the best possible choices. To do this, however, it is essential that

schools, this wonderful invention to make the world better, take on directly the task of engaging students with the challenges the world faces.

Preparing students to understand those challenges, to care about them and to gain the skills to address them is the most important leadership task that teachers and school leaders face. Facing it will require advancing global education in our schools. Global education is not a new fad, a small tweak, another addition in the large menu in the cafeteria that curriculum has become in many schools. Global education is an approach to reorient the entire enterprise of how students learn and teachers teach. It may involve additions to the curriculum, but it first involves intentionally examining and revising the existing curriculum, pedagogy and school organization so that they stand the best chance of helping students understand the world and figuring out how to make it better.

Ideas about how to make education global have been around for some time. In many ways, the institution of public education is already global in that it exists all over the world, includes most children and there are remarkable similarities in how schools are configured globally. But as the world in which we live changes rapidly, our schools have not yet reached their potential to truly prepare all children to be ready for those changes. This has not been for lack of trying, but for a limited way of thinking about how to bring this change about. Global education has been, for too long, a domain for the initiated, a conversation among specialists, largely academics, who have spent much energy and ink deliberating what global education is. These debates, valuable as they are, have had the unfortunate effect of causing a certain amount of confusion among practitioners and the public. Not because teachers and parents cannot engage and even enjoy discussions at thirty thousand feet from the classroom, but because the conversations have been too disconnected from that domain where education takes place every day.

If global education is to seize its potential to make schools more relevant, it must include practitioners in the task of inventing it. Such invention is not just about the theoretical discussion of what a global citizen or a good society is, it is especially about how we can do this work with our students, in our school, next Monday morning. Implementation of global education cannot be an afterthought to theoretical debates, it must be part and parcel of the debates.

Leading a process that makes such deep change possible in schools can be aided by thinking about change through five complementary perspectives. One is a cultural perspective: what is it that society expects of schools and what are the social imperatives of our times? The second is a psychological perspective: what do we know about how children and adults learn, and how do we reconcile the normative imperatives that a cultural perspective offers, with the scientific knowledge about how to structure the most effective learning opportunities for students? The third is a professional perspective: how do we approach the task of making schools more relevant in a way that depends on expert knowledge and on the best use of reason to guide practice? How can a reorientation of education to make it more global serve also as an avenue to make education more professional, while depending on the professionalism already existing in the enterprise? The fourth is an institutional perspective: how do we align the various elements of the system of education so

that, together, they all support forms of teaching and learning that truly empower students to understand and improve the world? The fifth is a political perspective: how do we make the best of the reality that schools touch many different interests, and align those interests on behalf of an education that advances the global project of collective self-improvement it was created to advance?

Each of these frames is complementary to the others. Not only does each one shed light on important elements that must be addressed in a change process, but using them in combination can help lead change more capaciously. It is in the interaction of the activities animated by simultaneous attention to the five frames that global education can reach levels of impact not yet reached in most schools.

I hope the ideas presented in this book inspire your efforts to make schools more relevant, so our students can build a better world.

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