



The Faure report: 50 years on – Editorial introduction

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Introduction

This year, 2022, marks the 50th anniversary of the publication of *Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow*, otherwise known as the Faure report (Faure et al. 1972). The Faure report emerged from the International Commission for the Development of Education, established by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1970. The Commission was chaired by Edgar Faure, who had held the position of Minister of Education during the critical years of the civil unrest and its aftermath in France 1968–1969. The Commission was composed of seven members; the other six were Felipe Herrera from Chile, an economist and first President of the Inter-American Development Bank; Abdoul-Razzak Kaddoura, a nuclear scientist from Syria; Henri Lopes, Education Minister from 1969 to 1972 and later Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of the Congo; Arthur V. Petrovsky, Member of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences and the Academy of Educational Science of the USSR; Majid Rahnema, who had just resigned as Minister of Higher Education and Sciences in Iran, and Frederick Champion Ward of the Ford Foundation, USA.

Created in the era when the formal decolonisation of Africa was placing both hopes and strains on that continent’s education systems, and in the aftermath of student upheavals in a number of countries around the world, the Commission was tasked by UNESCO’s General Conference with proposing a vision of education for the future. This initiative also represented an attempt to (re-)assert UNESCO’s authority at a time when other international organisations, such as the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), were challenging UNESCO’s role as the lead agency for education (Elfert 2018). In that regard, the Faure report is an example of how international organisations

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seek “promissory” legitimacy, a notion proposed by Jens Beckert, by which he means the “promises with regard to future outcomes” (Beckert 2020, p. 318) on which policies base their authority and legitimacy. While some of UNESCO’s competitors, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank, built their legitimacy on a functionalist and productivity-oriented view of education, underpinned by human capital theory, the Faure report reinforced UNESCO’s humanistic approach to education, embedded in its Constitution and indebted to the Enlightenment. It recommended “lifelong education” [*éducation permanente*] as the global “master concept” for education and put forth the vision of the “learning society” in which “democratization is the main driver” of learning (Biesta 2011, p. 64).

Although the Commission was international to some extent (East and Southeast Asia were not represented; see Rappleye and Komatsu 2022), the report it produced was significantly permeated by French philosophy and culture through its location, chair and secretariat. It is important, then, to situate the Faure report in the context of the endeavour of democratising the elitist French education system. Faure was a part of a movement promoting efforts to democratise the class-based education system, and “there was much democratization and liberalization both in the lycées and the universities in the reforms of Edgar Faure” (Larmour 1973, p. 295).

However, more traditional forces resisted this reform movement, which cost Faure his job (as Minister of Education) when Georges Pompidou replaced Charles de Gaulle as President of France in 1969. John Field regards the report as a “turning point” (Field 2001, p. 6), as it marked a shift from the emphasis on schooling to a broader perspective including less traditional pillars of education such as non-formal and informal education. Guided by “scientific humanism”, a paradigm that has underpinned UNESCO’s worldview since its early years under its first Director-General Julian Huxley, the Faure report is rooted in an Enlightenment conception of “the complete man” [*sic*]. The “complete man” is one among many visions of the future human that exist to this day – a contemporary such vision is Yuval Harari’s “*Homo deus*” (Harari 2016) – but while some of them have transhuman or even anti-human connotations, Faure’s “complete man” is characterised by a “profound humanism”, as Moosung Lee (borrowing from John Field 2001) argues in this special issue. Praised as the “humanist educational manifesto of the twentieth century” (Torres 2013, p. 15), the Faure report arguably represents the fullest expression of UNESCO’s humanistic and utopian vision of lifelong learning (Elfert 2018). It insists on “*the physical, intellectual, emotional and ethical integration of the individual*” as “*the fundamental aim for education*” (Faure et al., 1972, p. 156; italics in original), but at the same time reflects a universal view of a “common humanity” (ibid., p. 153) with a “common calling” (ibid., p. 157). The universalist perspective is anchored in UNESCO’s constitution, which emphasised the “intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind” (UNESCO 1946, p. 93). As pointed out by Yoko Mochizuki, Edward Vickers and Audrey Bryan in this special issue, universalism is underpinned by scientific humanism, which was already promoted by UNESCO’s first Director-General Julian Huxley as UNESCO’s guiding principle, characterised by the belief in reason and science as the vehicle of progress that could overcome religious and cultural differences.

There are good reasons to revisit the Faure report on the occasion of its 50th anniversary. Arguably the result of the first international panel convened to prepare a universal vision of the future of education, and despite many shortcomings, some of which will be discussed in this special issue, the report is a progressive document. Written at a time of crisis, it contains ideas still remarkably relevant today, where we find ourselves in an environment characterised by a sense of crisis and loss of faith in science, technology and education as major drivers of social and economic development. The Faure report was conceived and delivered shortly after student uprisings in 1968 in France and a number of other countries brought to the fore the deep divide between traditional society and the demands of the younger generation. It grappled with themes similar to those we are wrestling with today and reflected the existentialist fears of the economic and environmental limits to growth, highlighted in the brand-new report of the Club of Rome (Meadows et al. 1972) that the Faure report referred to. The Faure report was inspired by non-conformist thinkers such as Paulo Freire, Ivan Illich, Pierre Bourdieu and Everett Reimer, all of whom had already pointed to the need to breathe new life into outdated elitist and conformist conceptions of education systems.

There are other contemporary developments that warrant renewed attention to the Faure report, such as UNESCO's establishment of the International Commission on the Futures of Education (ICFE). It put forward its report *Reimagining our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education* at the end of 2021 (ICFE 2021a), building both on the Faure report and a subsequent UNESCO report commissioned several decades later, the Delors report (Delors et al. 1996). There has also been recent attention to many of the Faure report's key themes, notably the re-emergence of the concept of lifelong learning in the fourth Sustainable Development Goal, SDG 4 (Benavot et al. 2022; Elfert 2019); debates about the shortcomings of global governance of education and the education for development agenda in the era of the SDGs (Burnett 2019; Unterhalter 2019); and renewed questions about the contradictions between the visions and realities of education provision (see Sara Black's article in this special issue).

Some of the Faure report's key ideas and what has become of them

The learning society

As addressed by Rita Locatelli in her article in this special issue, the Faure report's worldview was very much in line with the Keynesian democratic welfare state and a society based on a social contract between the state and its citizens, geared towards the common good. The report was infused by a "belief in democracy, conceived of as implying each man's right to realize his own potential" (Faure et al. 1972, p. vi). Although the Faure report represented a capitalist view of society with its focus on individual empowerment, as pointed out by Lena Ignatovich and Jude Walker in this special issue, its goal was a truly democratic "learning society" (ibid., p. 160), characterised by "human liberation and enlightenment" (Tuijnman and Boström 2002, p. 101), and active participation of citizens in their society. The Faure report

postulated that people learn “for democracy, humanistic development and change” (Faure et al. 1972, p. 101), an idea that has been referred to as the “maximalist” vision of lifelong learning (Cropley 1979, p. 105).

Inspired by existentialist philosophy, influential at the time in France, the Faure report reflected a view of human beings who needed to give meaning and value to their lives through their actions, with which they could make a difference in their societies and communities. The idea of the learning society represented a challenge to the traditional education system, in particular the formal school system, which the Faure report heavily criticised, much to the irritation of some of its readers. This needs to be seen in the context of the crisis of the education system in France, and the Faure report was not alone in calling the institution of the school into question (Larmour 1973). The report explains that, in the eyes of the proponents of “de-schooling” such as Ivan Illich,

the school’s position in society and the play of forces to which it is subjected make it incapable, however, of being the instrument of a true education in the service of mankind ... On the contrary, it serves the purposes of repressive, alienating and dehumanizing societies (Faure et al. 1972, pp. 20–21).

The critical stance that the Faure report took towards the school was characteristic of the political nature of lifelong education, as expressed by Paul Lengrand, a dedicated proponent of lifelong education at UNESCO:

Our recipe for improving the structures and conditions of individual and social life was determinedly ... political. We thought of situations and problems in terms of power and more specifically in terms of the assumption of power. Since the obstacles lay in the structures and institutions of an outdated society where disorder and privilege were rife, the only solution we could see was to change society (Lengrand 1970, p. 5).

The strong political dimension of lifelong education was also underscored by the authors of the background papers to the report (UNESCO 1975), including the critics of schooling mentioned above and echoed by Majid Rahnema, the commissioner from Iran. The influence of these school critics, some of whom were also strong critics of American cultural and economic hegemony, annoyed some of the readers of the report. For example, the Swiss response to the Faure report noted that the report’s critique of school systems and the references to Ivan Illich in the report had “not only surprised but shocked many people” (CSU 1973, p. 5).¹

As anticipated by the school critics, who argued that the institutionalised school systems aimed at creating workers for the economy but stood in the way of true learning, contemporary schooling has been subjected to what Pasi Sahlberg calls a “global education reform movement” (Sahlberg 2016), spearheaded

¹ That the critical stance on the school was the most controversial issue of the Faure report is illustrated by the fact that at the press conference held by UNESCO on the occasion of the launch of the report, the first question – posed by the representative of *Le Monde* newspaper– addressed the reasons for the softening of the “deschooling” aspect compared to a previous version of the report (UNESCO 1972).

by international organisations such as the OECD and the World Bank that drove the homogenisation of schools around the world. The OECD's influential Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), for example, has shaped the way good education is defined around the world, foregrounding standardisation and competition and emphasising core subjects such as reading, mathematics and science that allow for the measurement of learning outcomes (Gorur 2016). Critics see this as detrimental to the arts and social studies, as well as to experimentation and innovation. Global education agendas, such as Education for All (2000–2015), followed by the Education 2030 agenda aligned with SDG 4 (2015–2030), have promoted the expansion of the Western model of schooling to developing countries. In the spirit of subjecting education and learning “to increasingly intense quantification and measurement” (Vickers et al. 2022, p. 64), SDG 4 is characterised by a ramping up of measuring and monitoring of learning outcomes (Grek 2020).

As discussed by Gert Biesta in this special issue, in recent decades, with the emphasis on education as investment in human capital and measured by rates of return, the objective of lifelong learning has shifted towards economic growth and employability. Lifelong learning as a policy paradigm has been largely reduced to the acquisition of “skills” that are considered instrumental for national competitiveness and increased productivity (Brown and Lauder 2009). Indeed, the Delors report (Delors et al. 1996) very deliberately pushed back unanimously and strongly against this skills-focused vision of education in numerous recommendations and passages. It was inspired by and endorsed a holistic version of learning for all both in breadth (subject matter), time (throughout life), and participation (societal) (Carneiro and Draxler 2008).

More recently, lifelong learning has been emphasised as the responsibility of the individual to engage in ongoing training and skills development (OECD 2019; World Bank 2011; Deuel 2021). As a consequence, public policy around adult education, which was traditionally associated with lifelong learning and highly valued in the Faure report – to the extent that Peter Jarvis called the report “almost certainly the most influential book on the education of adults in its period” (Jarvis 2014, p. 49) – has been marginalised (Benavot et al. 2022). That marginalisation is not only related to the focus of international agendas such as Education for All on school education, but also to the demise of the strong citizenship tradition and roots in democracy of adult education that are no longer considered relevant in today's “skills” society (see the articles by Biesta and Black in this issue; Elfert 2019).

The utilitarian skills agenda, the focus on measurable results, and the marginalisation of traditional popular, adult and community education, point to the erosion of democracy in educational agendas. The very idea of democracy that was so central to the Faure report's vision of the learning society, and carried on with emphasis and commitment in the Delors report (Delors et al. 1996), has more recently been largely absent in the contemporary lifelong learning debates. As noted elsewhere (Elfert 2019), there is a “glaring absence of the word ‘democracy’ in the 17 SDGs” (ibid., p. 549). This trend has been exacerbated by the shift from the enlightened, self-determined learner who actively participates in society (the “complete man” of the Faure report) to the neoliberal individualised learner who is trapped in an

endless circle of training and skills acquisition, as predicted by Illich (Illich and Verne 1976).

Humanism and dehumanisation

Although the Faure report was written at a time of economic growth and unwavering faith in the possibilities of the future, it also reflects the tension between instrumental rationality and human freedom characteristic of existentialist philosophy. The Faure report's pronounced humanistic message comes out in one of its key ideas, the "complete man" [*sic*], defined as "agent of development and change, promoter of democracy, citizen of the world [and] author of his own fulfilment" (Faure et al. 1972, p. 158). This "whole person", who has learned to "*think freely and critically*" (ibid., p. 69; italics in original) is empowered enough to resist the threat of dehumanisation that comes out strongly especially in the preamble of the report, written by Edgar Faure himself. Faure had acted as a French deputy prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials, an experience which – according to his biographer – had a major impact on him and explains his deep anxiety of dehumanisation and suspicion of technologisation and technocracy (Krakovitch 2006). Those who had survived the years of dehumanisation and mass killings of the Second World War believed that the "supreme value of the human person" (Glendon 2001, p. 169) needed to be protected at all costs to prevent another Holocaust. In the preamble to the report, Edgar Faure warned,

What is to be feared is not only the painful prospect of grievous inequalities, privations and suffering, but also that we may be heading for a veritable dichotomy within the human race, which risks being split into superior and inferior groups, into masters and slaves, supermen and submen. Among the risks resulting from this situation would be not only those of conflict and other disasters ... but the fundamental risk of de-humanisation ... (Faure et al. 1972, p. xxi).

It is significant to note that the notion of "alienation" appears 10 times in the Faure report. Most of these instances refer to technical progress that the report considered to be a double-edged sword with the potential to bring about positive change, but which might also be "a source of iniquity, alienation and new tyrannies" (ibid., p. 101). The report expressed concern about "obsessive forms of propaganda" of "mass-communication media" (ibid., p. xxiv), "behavioural conformity which may be imposed on [human beings] from the outside" (ibid.), and "increasing possibilities for influencing human behaviour", for example through brain science (ibid., p. 102). These statements are prophetic given the strong influence of behavioural economics on society and education today (Bradbury et al. 2013; Halpern et al. 2010) and the current trend towards neuroscience and social and emotional learning (Bryan 2022; Vickers 2022). In light of the massive societal changes due to digitisation, big data and artificial intelligence, which go along with increasing erosion of democracy, a rise of technocracy and control, the statement "*Strong support must be given to democracy, as the only way for man to avoid becoming enslaved to*

machines” (Faure et al. 1972, p. xxvi; italics in original) takes on new meaning. The Faure report propagated

a real, concrete, practical democracy, not inspired and built by bureaucrats or technocrats, or granted by some ruling caste. It will be living, creative and evolving. For this to be achieved, social structures must be changed and the privileges built into our cultural heritage must be reduced (Faure et al. 1972, p. 79; italics in original).

Elsewhere, in his book *Ce que je crois* [What I believe] (Faure 1971), Edgar Faure, citing George Orwell’s *1984* (Orwell 1949), wrote about the threat of machination and technologisation of human beings in a disembodied “technostructure” (Faure 1971, p. 203). In this regard, he expressed his concern about the economic approach to education that he defined as being “*moderniste sans être humaniste*” [modernist without being humanist] (ibid., p. 213). Faure was very critical of the “human capital” approach to education, which stood in contrast with his view of the adult as an “agent of change” (ibid., p. 214; Schwartz 1968, p. 36). The Faure report, maybe as a side blow at the educational planners at the time, warned of “the tendency among technocrats to underestimate the importance of the educational factor in development enterprises” (Faure et al. 1972, p. 141).

The report was wary of the “common trend ... towards technocratic systems basically designed to train workers and qualified professionals and to promote scientific and technical advancements” (ibid., p. 15). It maintained that “education ... must not at any cost entail the denial of the fundamental freedoms of individuals, attacks against the integrity of the human person or technocratic, bureaucratic abuse of power” (ibid., p. 75). In Faure’s view, the danger represented by the technocratic and economic movement required the emergence of a “new man” (*l’homme nouveau*) (Faure 1971, p. 203), mirrored in the Faure report’s concept of the “complete man”, endowed with the capacity to understand the world in order to resist the instrumentalisation inherent in the development of society (Faure 1971). The suspicion with which the Faure report protected the political sphere from the onslaught of technocracy is reminiscent of Hannah Arendt, who also felt that the political needed protection from economic forces (Wolin 1983). The Faure report permeates the existentialist fear that the self-determining human being, capable of realisation and acting politically based on that realisation, which is the bedrock of democracy, would be eliminated by a “unidimensional” technocratic society in which humans would be reduced solely to their instrumental purpose, a threat that was foreseen, for example, in Herbert Marcuse’s critique of advanced industrial societies in his book *One-dimensional man* (Marcuse 1964): “The individual, anonymous among the city crowds and the hordes of migrant workers, feels more and more lonely, helpless and ‘unidimensional’” (Faure et al., 1972, p. 103).

Against this background, it is illuminating to consider a recent statement made by the OECD’s Andreas Schleicher, director of PISA:

The bottom line is, if we want to stay ahead of technological developments, we have to find and refine the qualities that are unique to our humanity, and that complement, not compete with, capacities we have created in our computers,

schools need to develop first-class humans, not second-class robots (quoted in Watson 2021; see also Schleicher 2022).

As observed by Vickers et al., despite the allusion to the “qualities that are unique to our humanity”, this is “[h]ardly a liberating or humanising vision, this is effectively a call to gird ourselves” for ever more intense competition with technology in order to maintain our economic relevance – or, in other words, “to reconfigure our ‘human capital’” (Vickers et al. 2022, p. 69) in light of the rise of artificial intelligence and automation.

The trend towards “first-class humans” manifests itself in the drive towards technology-enhanced learning and the emerging embrace of neuro-scientific and “social-emotional learning” by international organisations, “diverting political energy away from the pursuit of global justice and equality and redirecting it towards a depoliticised, individualistic and neoliberally-inflected ‘conscious human brain’ approach to ESD/GCED”² (Bryan 2022, p. 11). A growing body of literature on a “post-human society”, characterised by the shift from a competitive knowledge society to a performance-enhanced society (Coenen et al. 2007; Coenen 2008), could signify a greater role for lifelong learning as a governing technology (Deuel 2021), or, as Richard Edwards (2010) suggests, result in the end of lifelong learning. Growing attention to technology-enhanced learning (Lock et al. 2021) takes the neoliberal individualised learner even further towards a “robotic view” (Vickers 2022, p. 14). In the technology-enhanced perspective, lifelong learning, which in the first generation of the concept meant to enhance the capacity of human beings to change their society for the better, which in turn constituted the “political” dimension of lifelong learning (Elfert 2015; 2018), is reduced to a purely utilitarian and uni-dimensional function. Education, which in the Faure report was meant to advance “*a democratic and egalitarian relationship between classes*” (Faure et al. 1972, p. xxvi; italics in original), becomes a tool to develop a “first-class” human, indicating the “superior and inferior groups” (ibid., p. xxi) that the Faure report was warning about. As Moosung Lee discusses in this issue, we are in “the hour between dog and wolf” when it comes to the use of technology in education; Lee urges us “to think collectively about how we can appreciate and harness technological innovation as an emancipatory tool”.

Solidarity

Alongside the key universal principle, lifelong learning, another unifying concept in the Faure report is “solidarity”, which appears 17 times, including in the title of chapter 9, “Roads to solidarity”. The idea of “solidarity” underpins the universalism of the report, grounded in the normative idea of a common human nature that relates to the influence of Erich Fromm’s “radical humanism”, used “to denote the body of thought that developed as a protest against the dehumanising tendencies of capitalist

² Education for Sustainable Development/Global Citizenship Education.

society and that held out the promise of a new form of cooperative, international emancipation” (Wilde 2004, p. 162).

In UNESCO’s early years, the concept of “solidarity” is to be found frequently in relation to adult education, one of UNESCO’s priorities at the time, for example in the report of the first international conference on adult education (CONFINTEA I), held in 1949 at Elsinore, Denmark (UNESCO 1949, p. 8). The idea of “solidarity” appealed to a sense of community in the face of the adult’s “loneliness”, also reflected in existentialist literature, after two world wars during which traditional forms of identity, such as nationalism, had been shattered. Solidarity is further invoked in the Faure report with regard to “operational, technical and financial solidarity in relation to developing countries” (Faure et al. 1972, p. xxxvi). In the letter to UNESCO’s Director-General René Maheu included at the beginning of the Faure report (ibid., pp. v–viii), Edgar Faure recapitulated the four basic assumptions on which the Commission grounded its work. The first point he mentioned was “the existence of an international community” which inevitably necessitated the “fundamental solidarity of governments and of peoples” (ibid., pp. v–vi). The report not only called for a more equal participation in education of developing countries, but also for “equitable redistribution” (ibid., p. 49) of material and immaterial resources between developed and developing countries:

All countries at all development levels should therefore be brought into the common effort towards international solidarity, which at the same time should give special consideration to developing countries (Faure et al. 1972, p. 235; italics in original).

As a contribution to the 2nd United Nations Development Decade (1971–1980), the report anticipated the claims for a New International Economic Order (NIEO), an initiative put forward during the 1970s by developing countries to establish a more just economic world order based on redistribution of resources from rich to poor countries. The report promoted some of the ideas underpinning the NIEO, such as the claim that “[d]evelopment should be indigenous” (Faure et al. 1972, p. 235; italics in original), which implied greater economic self-determination of developing countries and structural changes of the world monetary system and of international trade. These ideas are associated with economists such as Raúl Prebisch, who is referred to in the report as a “highly regarded economist” (ibid., p. 96). The Faure report also mentions Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, another NIEO proponent, in relation to his statements about the colonial nature of education in developing countries (ibid., p. 10). The report deplores aid fatigue, and sees the role of aid in terms of creating “the conditions in which it will no longer be necessary by developing the potential which the assisted country requires in order to do without assistance” (ibid., p. 235). It expresses concern about brain drain, which “runs directly counter to the aims underlying aid for the development of education” (ibid., p. 246).

The importance of solidarity also plays a role in the critique of the school system, insofar as schools tend to “nourish a rather unhealthy spirit of competition” (Faure et al. 1972, p. 83) rather than fostering a sense of solidarity. Despite the report’s focus on the human condition, it reflects a structural perspective with its concern about class inequalities and class conflict, exhibiting “traces of Marxist ideology”,

as noted by Moosung Lee and Tom Friedrich (2011, p. 157), in their analysis of the ideological influences on the Faure report. With the onslaught of neoliberalism since the late 1970s, the “class” perspective has been driven out of educational thinking in favour of an individualistic and meritocratic view of education. More recently, the “turn to the inner” (Holford et al. 2021, p. 3) and the current trend towards neuroscience and social and emotional learning places the responsibility for inequalities on individual dispositions rather than power relations in society (Bryan 2022).

The authors who have contributed to this special issue engage in different ways with the ideas of universalism and solidarity. While Gert Biesta and Rita Locatelli emphasise the political and emancipatory potential of these ideas, contrasting them with the utilitarian and economic direction that education and our societies more broadly have taken, Suzanne Smythe provides a feminist-postcolonial critique of the “single story” inherent in the universalism of the Faure report and its notion of solidarity.

The Faure report and the subsequent UNESCO reports concerning education

A quarter of a century after the publication of the Faure report, UNESCO established the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century, chaired by Jacques Delors, which produced the report *Learning: The treasure within* (Delors et al. 1996). The Delors report, already mentioned above, reiterated the humanistic and emancipatory vision of lifelong learning. Its key message comprised the four pillars of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. While the Delors report connected with the Faure report’s message of “Learning to be”, it chose to expand the existentialist question of what it means to be human to the more collectivist message of “learning to live together” (ibid., p. 91). This formula represented a new politics of multiculturalism and solidarity. It also, in a different way from the Faure report, emphasised the complex challenge of tasking education with building a better future. It both acknowledged and embraced diversity, questions of identity and the tensions involved. But it stayed firm in its commitment to education as both a right for individuals and a duty for public entities.

Another 25 years later, UNESCO has published a third report that emerged from the work of a Commission, the Futures of Education report, *Reimagining our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education* (ICFE 2021a). This report (and also a smaller-scale report published in 2015, *Rethinking Education*; UNESCO 2015) signals a clear shift from the previous reports as its focus is no longer on life-long learning. Despite this distinguishing element, the Futures of Education report connects with the previous reports by re-claiming the notion of humanism and education as a right. It connects with the Delors report by placing the emphasis on the collective, the common (“global common good” is one of its key ideas), the interdependencies with one another, but its humanism is less anthropocentric: “we need a new understanding of humanism that recognizes we cannot separate humanity from the planet and all other living beings” (ICFE 2021b, p. 3). While it connects with

the Faure report in its critique of schooling and its concern about the consequences of technology, its more planetary perspective also contrasts with the Faure report, which was grounded in a Western scientific worldview and one in which humans are the rightful custodians of nature.

The shifts in how humanism is framed between these reports indicate the changing dilemmas they were responding to. The Faure report responded to a high degree to the civil rights movements and the 1968 student revolts in France. It reflects a sense of crisis that many perceived towards the late 1960s, by which time unlimited belief in the post-war model of progress had dissipated. At the same time it exuded faith in the possibility of the birth of a new society, a new political system and a trust in science. The Delors report saw the future in a context of ideological and societal tensions, difficult transitions, and the need for a new (“necessary”) utopia. Its recommendations were partially a response to the rise of neoliberalism and the downsides of globalisation. It perceived a crisis of democracy and was therefore much less optimistic than the Faure report. The most recent Futures of Education report (ICFE 2021a) responds to our recognition of the damage we have done to the planet, to other living beings and to ourselves, massive inequality, and epistemic injustice, as well as to the challenges of rapid digital transformation that Faure already saw coming. The Futures of Education report clearly seems to go even further than the previous reports in its sense of precariousness and proclaims that we need “radical changes” and a new beginning.

In accordance with UNESCO’s mandate of international cooperation and norm-setting, UNESCO’s education reports took strong philosophical stances and focused on individual enlightenment and social capital rather than human capital, standing in clear contrast to more empirical, utilitarian approaches taken by other international organisations, in particular the OECD and the World Bank, that are focused increasingly on outcomes, evaluated by data and measurement. When looking at the policy influences of UNESCO’s education-related reports, there is some evidence of “soft influence”, but it is fair to say that UNESCO’s humanistic vision of lifelong learning has for the moment lost out to the human capital approach to education.

The articles in this special issue

This special issue features articles both by scholars who have previously engaged with the Faure report, and others who read the report with a fresh look as to its contemporary significance. The authors were invited to reflect on the Faure report by addressing the following questions:

1. How does the Faure report inspire our thinking about education and about the society we want to live in in our contemporary age of crisis, marked by debates about climate disaster, post-humanism, surveillance and big data?
2. Do the Faure report’s key concepts, such as lifelong learning, the “learning society”, and “solidarity” still speak to us, and how can we conceptualise them?
3. How can the Faure report’s humanistic concept of the “complete man” inspire our thinking about the post-human subject?

4. How can a philosophical approach to development and global governance be a force to contribute to a better future?

Across the seven articles in this special issue, we see four broad themes that have inspired the authors in their reflections on the Faure report: humanism; the social contract and the role of state and society in education; the report's universalism; and its faith in technological advancement.

In his article entitled "Reclaiming a future that has not yet been: The Faure report, UNESCO's humanism and the need for the emancipation of education", *Gert Biesta* engages with the Faure report's humanism. He sees the legacy of the report in its reminder of the emancipation of education – a perspective that he argues is needed given the increasing dominance of the "ongoing functionalisation and instrumentalisation of education". Biesta points to "the shift from a humanistic to an economic agenda for education, and the transformation of lifelong education as a right to lifelong learning as a duty" and argues that humanism should not be understood as an agenda that comes from outside of education, but "can actually be found on the inside of education itself". Even more importantly than the battle between the "economic, humanistic, technocratic or democratic" agendas of education, Biesta considers it urgent to "counter the ongoing functionalisation of education".

In "Lifelong learning as cruel optimism: Considering the discourses of lifelong learning and techno-solutionism in South African education", *Sara Black* critically engages with the discourse of lifelong learning and techno-solutionism that was taken up in educational policy texts in post-apartheid Africa. Black's article examines the disconnect of Western-inspired policy discourses with the realities of the majority of the population who – however – still subscribe to these ideals promising upward mobility. Applying Lauren Berlant's concept of "cruel optimism" to these imaginaries (Berlant 2011), "sustaining a fantasy of liberatory education despite empirical evidence to the contrary", Black argues that "[o]nly by denaturalising the work of these discourses, the fantasies they tacitly suggest and the social relations they undergird, can alternatives be dreamed or realised".

In "Revisiting the Faure report: Contemporary legacy and challenged legitimacy", *Moosung Lee* focuses on the engagement of the Faure report with the "scientific-technological revolution". As he points out, the report placed a lot of emphasis on the role of technological advancement in education and is largely uncritical of and overly faithful in the possibilities of technology, but, as argued above, it was ambiguous about the role of technology and also highlighted the dangers of technological advancement. Pointing to the increasing role of artificial intelligence in society and education, Lee interrogates the Faure report in terms of how it can help us to collectively think about the use of technology as an emancipatory tool. He argues that "we are on the verge of *l'heure entre chien et loup* – literally, 'the hour between dog and wolf'", which will determine to what use technology will be put.

In the next article, "Huxleyan utopia or Huxleyan dystopia? 'Scientific humanism', Faure's legacy and the ascendancy of neoliberalism in education", *Yoko Mochizuki*, *Edward Vickers* and *Audrey Bryan* take a historical perspective. They argue that there have always been transhumanist/technosolutionist tendencies in UNESCO since the first Director-General Julian Huxley proclaimed "scientific

humanism” as UNESCO’s guiding philosophy. They relate the Faure report and the Delors report to a recent report of the International Science and Evidence-based Education Assessment (ISEEA) (Vickers et al. 2022), launched by UNESCO’s Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP), which indicates what they call a “*neuro*liberal turn” towards mainstreaming neuroscience, digital technology and transhumanism. While they see continuities to “Julian Huxley’s optimistic embrace of ‘science’ for the betterment of humanity”, Mochizuki and her colleagues argue that the “*neuro*liberal turn” ultimately stands in contrast with UNESCO’s humanistic tradition and undermines its historical “political and ethical mandate”, as it was expressed in the Faure report.

Rita Locatelli’s article, entitled “Faure’s new social contract fifty years later: Promises and evolutions”, addresses the concept of the “social contract”. Although the term is not specifically used in the Faure report, this idea was implicit in the report and central to Edgar Faure’s thinking, illustrated by the fact that he wrote a book on the topic (Faure 1973). Discussing the Faure report in relation to UNESCO’s most recent Futures of Education report (ICFE 2021a), which gives a central position to the idea of the “social contract”, Locatelli argues that the new report lacks the “clear political contours [which] translated into an up-to-date vision of the emancipatory function of education for the fulfilment of individuals within democratic societies” that characterised the Faure report. While the Faure report referred to governments as the main implementers of the right to lifelong learning, the new report considers education a more broadly shared societal endeavour and a common good, but remains vague about actual responsibilities. She argues that a revisiting of the social contract can only be meaningful if followed by a concrete understanding of and debate about who is responsible for education in society.

In “The Faure report and the Western and Soviet concepts of lifelong education”, Lena Ignatovich and Jude Walker explore an underresearched aspect of the Faure report, the representation of the Soviet model of lifelong education. Although the Faure Commission included a member from the Soviet Union, Arthur Petrovsky, the report, “grounded in the Western European intellectual tradition” and individualistic view of education characteristic for capitalist societies, did not adequately acknowledge that the Soviet Union had already established a socialist model of lifelong education. Rather than engaging with the differences between the socialist and capitalist models of the concept, the Faure report proposed a unified model of lifelong education for all types of countries without, as Petrovsky “deplore[d]” in a footnote (Faure et al. 1972, p. 231), adequate consideration of their economic and socio-political systems.

In its critical engagement with the universal – “capitalist Western” – concept of lifelong education of the Faure report, Ignatovich and Walker’s article connects with the next article: “The Faure report, Sylvia Wynter and the undoing of the Man of lifelong learning”, Suzanne Smythe’s powerful critique of the report’s concept of the “universal man” – “the complete man” – and its situatedness in the project of modernity. Her critique expands to any attempt to find a universal solution in our pluriversal world. Smythe brings the frames of reference of the Faure report, such as capitalism, “liberal monohumanism” and the “universal man” into conversation with the work of Sylvia Wynter, in particular her concept of the “hybrid human”, and

other Caribbean writers, such as Frantz Fanon. In the final contribution to this special issue, one of Smythe's key arguments is that we have to give up on "the Western imaginary of Universal Man" that is entrenched with the story of lifelong learning, and: "We will need to get used to more uncertainty, more mistakes, more generative experiments for how to live and learn differently."

Conclusion

We would like to express our deep thanks to the authors of this special issue whose contributions ultimately have taken the Faure report as a reference point to think about what we have achieved and where we stand when it comes to visions of the state of education and society more broadly. Whether we criticise or sympathise with the universal future-oriented ideas of the Faure report, we can certainly see in all these contributions a deep disenchantment with what has been achieved since the publication of the Faure report 50 years ago. Although some of the discourses, such as lifelong learning and the faith in the technological developments, are still alive and all-pervasive, these ideas have been to a large extent reduced to a narrow functionality that stands in stark contrast to the emancipatory call of the Faure report to "lear[n] to think freely and critically" (Faure et al. 1972, p. 69).

The Faure report constitutes an example of a promissory vision for the future, which was meant to provide both an overall vision and legitimacy to UNESCO. There are many other examples of these promissory visions that international organisations and governments have promoted in the past 50 years, some of which have been discussed in this special issue, in the form of ideas, discourses, reports and policies. Maybe it is time to ask why these promises of a better future, greater equality, social justice, and a more democratic education that was so central to the Faure report, have not been realised? The Faure report and the UNESCO-commissioned reports that followed were united by a few common normative views. They viewed education's role as essentially emancipatory and in implicit contrast to a utilitarian view of humans at the service of the economy rather than the other way around. The notions of lifelong learning broadening out the notion of education beyond schooling (Faure et al. 1972), or education as participatory in a "necessary utopia" of living together (Delors et al. 1996), or the "new social contract" (ICFE 2021a) are all part of the notion of a world in which progress towards harmony and improvement can be ongoing and to some extent linear.

However, as Suzanne Smythe's article in this special issue powerfully conveys, we have become suspicious of the homogenisation that follows from universal ideas. As argued by Stephen Carney in his recent review of the Futures of Education report, "whilst education matters, the matter of education is far from settled and is certainly beyond the scope of any one body to define on our collective behalf" (Carney 2022, p. 569). Rather than providing a universal answer, we see this special issue as an invitation to enter into dialogue and to question the master narratives of the past, the present and the future. Many perspectives are missing and much more could have been said, but the debate continues. Perhaps that is where lifelong learning will reclaim its legitimate and central place.

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