



## Education and Human Security

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### Abstract

*The importance of human security has always been a concern for the World Academy of Art and Science (WAAS), which has served as a platform for intellectual debate and the exchange of global ideas. WAAS has influenced the understanding of development beyond economic growth, advocating for a focus on people's opportunities and choices. It played a significant role in supporting the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030, which deepens the understanding of human development and security. The current crises, such as COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, and climate change, highlight the need for comprehensive approaches to enhance security, human rights, and sustainable development worldwide. Education is crucial to achieving these goals by promoting learning, innovation, diversity, and critical thinking. Sustainable development requires a renewed commitment to education as a public endeavor that cuts across all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Global Citizenship Education is essential for promoting sustainable development and fostering values such as human rights, peace, and cultural diversity. Universities play a critical role in creating learning environments that foster the skills necessary to achieve the SDGs and address global challenges through teaching and research. Their function extends beyond preparing individuals for the workforce to shaping values and global citizenship. Ultimately, education plays a transformative role in achieving human security.*

Concern with the issue of human security has indeed run throughout the history of the World Academy of Art and Science. For more than 60 years, the Academy has served as a global platform for intellectual debate, fostering partnerships, encouraging the creation of knowledge, and launching new global ideas—from the warning of the imminent danger of catastrophic nuclear war to the existential threat of climate change and environmental degradation, and today, the Human Security for All campaign.

In the last few decades, WAAS has immensely influenced the shift in understanding development beyond economic growth, expanding the richness of human life rather than simply the richness of the economy. Thus, WAAS' advocacy for focusing on people, their opportunities, and their choices as a measurement of humanity's progress was one of those critical and timely ideas, embraced by the United Nations, that resulted in the launch of the Human Development Reports in the 1990s and then the Human Development Index.

WAAS was strongly engaged in supporting the elaboration and adoption of the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030, which was a major step forward in the deeper

and more comprehensive understanding of human development and human security and represents a true blueprint for the future of humanity and the planet.

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The current crises of unprecedented intensity—the COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, and climate change—brought about the imperative to mobilise decision-makers, institutions, and the general public around the world to promote a comprehensive, integrated, person-centred approach to enhance the security, human rights, and sustainable development of people everywhere and to address all the critical issues confronting the world today, including peace, human rights, inequality, health, food, education, jobs, safe communities and personal safety, energy, pollution, biodiversity, and, of course, climate change.

The devastating result is shrinking economies and job opportunities, rising inequalities, a surge in poverty, and emerging food insecurity, with a dangerous impact on efforts to fight climate change and ensure a sustainable path for development. Decades of efforts to reach and implement important international agreements are under threat of being lost, including the Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030 and the Paris Climate Agreement. The UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres launched an alarming alert: the world may be going back almost 25 years in its development, and many achievements will be pushed back. These developments showed once again how interdependent the world is today and how much humanity needs multilateral platforms to look for common solutions.

These crises and their consequences are a wake-up call for putting human security and well-being at the forefront of public policies. One sure path is investing in people and in economies and societies that are clean, green, healthy, safe, and more resilient.

And it starts with education. Education is the foundation of human development, and I would add that human security is vital for our health, jobs, gender equality, the protection of the environment, risk reduction, fighting climate change, and living together with respect for diversity. In other words, education is where our future lies. But not just any education. Education which means learning, which is transformative and equitable, which embraces innovation and diversity, and which encourages creativity and the possibility to make choices. Education that supports students and other learners in different areas to develop the necessary knowledge, skills, and mindsets to contribute to solving the complex sustainable development challenges our world faces.

I would not pretend to exhaust all the challenges today regarding the future of education and its place in the Human Security for All campaign. Let me just mention **three** important points.

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If we want to promote a comprehensive, integrated, person-centred approach to enhance the security, human rights, and sustainable development of people everywhere and to address all the critical issues confronting the world today, we need to reconfirm our commitment to sustainable development and the Agenda 2030 with education at its heart from the point of view of human security.

The importance of Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Agenda, “**Promoting inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all,**” comes with all of its critical importance for the future.

The Transforming Education Summit, convened by the UN Secretary General in September 2022, as well as the Report on the Futures of Education, launched earlier by the International Commission under the President of Ethiopia, Sahle-Work Zewde, made an important assessment. They concluded that the way we organise education across the world does not ensure just and peaceful societies, a healthy planet, or shared progress that benefits all. They further called for a new way of thinking about learning and the relationship between students, teachers, knowledge, and the world.

Both the UN Summit and the Report reaffirmed the criticality of Goal 4 of the UN SDG Agenda: ensuring the right to quality education throughout life. This is the essence of the social contract for education. Let me quote an important message from the Report on the Right to Education: “Long interpreted as the right for children and youth, it goes further in affirming that it must also encompass the right to information, culture, and science, as well as the right to access and contribute to the knowledge commons, the collective knowledge resources of humanity that have been accumulated over generations and are continuously transforming.”

Education lies at the heart of the UN Agenda 2030 and it plays an important, multifaceted role in efforts to implement the global Sustainable Development Goals. These goals strive to eradicate poverty while addressing social needs such as education, health, gender equality, social protection, job opportunities, climate change, and environmental protection.

What we need to emphasise again concerning the Human Security for All campaign is the strengthening of the understanding of education as a public endeavour and a common good that cuts across all the SDGs. As a shared societal endeavour, education builds common purposes and enables individuals and communities to flourish together. As Nelson Mandela famously said, “Education is the most powerful weapon to change the world.” And we do need to change the world and make societies inclusive, peaceful, and respectful towards each other, providing security for all.

This leads me to my second point on Global Citizenship education, which is one of the targets of UN SDG Agenda Goal 4:

*“By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.”*

Global Citizenship Education, as a new concept that emerged during the debates about education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the need for a more peaceful and sustainable future for all, is the ethical response to the quest for a peaceful and sustainable future for all, as well as the challenges of an interconnected and interdependent world. We must move beyond literacy and numeracy to focus on learning environments and new forms of learning. Education is not just a technical way of transferring knowledge; it should also be understood as one of the best ways of acquiring values such as human rights, mutual respect, respect for nature and humanity, and the ability to live together.

And my third point is about the role of universities.

Agenda 2030 recognised for the first time that higher education is part of a lifelong learning system. It also recognised, for the first time, that higher education plays an important, multifaceted role in the new global development agenda.

Let me come back to the “Report on the Future of Education”, which affirmed that “Universities have a responsibility to lead the debate about the need for a new social contract for education that must not only ensure public funding for education but also include a society-wide commitment to include everyone in public discussions about education. This emphasis on participation is what strengthens education as a common good—a form of shared well-being that is chosen and achieved together.”

Universities indeed should create learning environments to foster skills for achieving all 17 of the SDGs and responding to the current global challenges through their teaching, research, and pedagogy. Thus, they should educate and create global citizens in a world that is changing and transforming with unprecedented speed. Universities should teach young people critical thinking and curiosity while embracing change.

In some ways, embracing the need for sustainable development in our times creates an important new intellectual discipline and organising principle for universities. Intersectoriality and interdisciplinarity are now the norm, not the exception.

Universities are not now, nor have they ever been, solely focused on preparing young people for the workforce. It is also about values and citizenship, about preparing young people to live in a globalised world, and about intercultural competence.

The role of universities in this endeavour is critical, as their main function at the end of the day is to make a significant contribution to society by fostering knowledge, broad capabilities, and skills in our young people so that they have access to and participate in the creation of the global knowledge commons.

It is inconceivable today to speak about human security without considering the deeply transformative role of education and knowledge.

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