



EDUCATION *for* SUSTAINABILITY

Prioritizing the Development
of the Altruistic Self



A Brief Contributing to the Transforming
Education Summit, New York
September 17, 2022

Global Peace and Prosperity Forum

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This brief describes how the Global Peace and Prosperity Forum (GPPF) ¹ envisions contributing to UNESCO’s Transforming Education Initiative,² by presenting our perspective on the implementation of education for sustainable development (ESD). This perspective invites educators to broaden the mission of schooling beyond academic and technical training by emphasizing the development of a *global moral identity* and related altruistic capabilities. We believe that the formation of a young person’s *altruistic self* is a prerequisite for life-long commitment to building a sustainable civilization. GPPF invites stakeholders with a similar vision to partner in both constructing the goals and objectives of education for altruism and sustainability and implementing this approach by building on the teacher training and curriculum development efforts of our partners.

The International Commission on the Futures of Education (2021) describes how education is a “route for sustainable collective futures.” The Commission states that to accomplish this vision will require a new education contract:

This new social contract must be grounded in human rights and based on principles of non-discrimination, social justice, respect for life, human dignity and cultural diversity. It must encompass an ethic of care, reciprocity, and solidarity (p. 3).

Inherent and implied in this description of a “new social contract for education” is the formation of a deep moral identity in learners that includes commitment to a framework of universal ethical principles and virtues.

A Problem in Traditional Schooling

The principles quoted above must be explicitly taught in worldwide curricula, but the traditional school schedule and curriculum does not teach such principles with any regularity, systemization, or universality. Instead, traditional schooling relies on indirect character-building experiences and adjacent morally instructive educational activities, such as the celebration of a culture or two during a designated holiday, in the hope that an awakened educator might take advantage of often unplanned “teachable moments” to engender such character traits and moral awareness in children. The current indirect and unplanned approach to the teaching of an ethical

¹ <https://www.globalpeaceandprosperityforum.com>

² <https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/transforming-education-summit>

framework for global citizenship is not capable of preparing an *entire generation* to act responsibly and altruistically in the wider society. Such indirect experiences and informal moments of character instruction do transform and propel *some* learners along a path towards sustainability and righteousness (a state adherence to all universal virtues and moral principles) while abandoning the majority of learners to the oppression of not knowing that their purpose is to live a life of service to an ever-advancing civilization by acting on humanity's highest ideals – the path to true and lasting happiness which is experienced during and after the self-sacrifice that gradually dissolves self-importance and self-centeredness (ego).

A Solution in Education for Sustainability and Altruism

Any serious attempt to affect the scope and scale of educational transformation envisioned by UNESCO's New Social Contract for Education will need to first identify and then prioritize the capabilities that must be taught formally and directly, within the course of the school day, that are most aligned with a sustainable future. Identification of the moral capabilities that must be developed, in any transformed educational system, requires exploration with stakeholders, such as yourself, of the following questions: Which capabilities need to be learned, starting at what age and on what learning progression, the practice of which will lead a generation of children to protect human rights after their maturation? Which capabilities must be learned, when and how, to ensure that a whole generation will commit itself to decency, fair-mindedness and equity after their maturation? What capabilities must be fostered, in any future transformed or reconstructed curricula, the practice of which most demonstrates "the ethic of care, reciprocity, and solidarity" within and across entire future populations?

Until educators and concerned stakeholders commit to the formation of moral character as education's *first priority*, and the formation of a prerequisite conceptual framework of related ethical principles constructed by the mind and adhered to by the human heart, releasing the power of will and purpose, any hope at "transforming" education to meet the conjoined crises of environmental catastrophe, currently unfolding like some avoidable, slow-moving and dramatic tragedy of Shakespeare, poverty and its counterpoint, greed, and ongoing authoritarianism and rebellion against democratic institutions will fail. Understanding what does not work (the prioritization of discrete academic learning absent any unifying framework for moral development) is a sign of growth because it compels the mind to search for and accept an alternative.

An Alternative to Prioritizing Academics as the Mission of Schooling

Teaching children and young people to live a life of service that embodies the principles quoted from UNESCO's Commission requires learners' active participation in altruistic projects, and their sustained reflection on the meaning and impact of their contributions to social and environmental welfare. The outcome of education for sustainability and altruism that intentionally fosters ethical principles and universal virtues (e.g perseverance, curiosity, love, truth) will be the formation of a **global moral identity** and **altruistic self**. The development of the altruistic self is

needed to release the power of purpose and will that catalyzes decision-making needed to achieve the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals, including decisions, yet to be made by young people, about their personal lifestyle, their career choices and social choices, decisions that will either exemplify or betray the principles and ideals associated with global citizenship.

Education for Sustainable Development in Context

Before pressing onwards with this invitation to reorient education around a universal ethical framework of moral capabilities, we will step back briefly to contextualize the field of education for sustainable development (ESD) and review some of its noteworthy achievements and foundational ideas. It is widely recognized that ESD is an integral element of SDG 4, as well as being a key enabler of all the other SDGs³. SDG 4.7 target provides that:

by 2030 ensure all learners acquire 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.

ESD is therefore widely understood as a framework for incorporating sustainable development principles into global educational practices with the goal of transforming each other and society. It equips and empowers learners with “knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to make informed decisions and take responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability, and a just society empowering people of all genders, for present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity” (UNESCO, 2020, p. 8).

Around the world, nations are already making impressive strides toward education for sustainable development. In places like Japan and France, we see priority given to lifelong learning. In nations like Indonesia and Malaysia, we see a focus on incorporating robust moral curricula into the national education agenda. In places such as Japan, Sweden, and Sierra Leone, we see leadership in and formal adoption of ESD curricula at a national level. So many nations have already built strong and impressive systems for addressing important aspects of ESD. By considering these efforts in combination, we can begin to envision an ESD framework that requires a focus on preserving universal human rights, addressing the need to reskill and upskill throughout life, the importance of concentrating on sustainability and environmental science, all while undergirded by a focus on building proper morals and virtues that we argue will enable lifelong learners of the planet to continue contributing to the world in informed, equity-minded, and globally-conscious ways.

³[SDG 4 - Education 2030: Part II, Education for Sustainable Development beyond 2019 - UNESCO Digital Library](#)

In response to a global interest and need to address challenges such as gender inequality, child poverty and homelessness, lifelong learning, and sustainability, UNESCO has developed global strategies for transforming education. The framework for this response can be in part traced to the inspirational UNESCO Delors report titled *Learning: The Treasure Within* (1998). It presented a vision of education based on four pillars of learning: learning to live together, learning to know, learning to do and learning to be. The report emphasized that the survival of humanity is highly dependent on learning how to live together. So, we know education is about empowering learners not only to develop skills and knowledge for work, but also how to live in harmony with each other and the planet.

The 2030 Agenda (2015) also makes calls for an integrated approach to development to leave no one behind. This report emphasizes a concern for humanity that requires the cultivation of a *global moral identity* in people worldwide, which only a new approach to education across all ages can bring about. Through achieving Agenda 2030's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 associated targets through Education for Sustainable Development, we can ensure that the next generation contributes fully to peace, prosperity and sustainability. Since the release of Agenda 2030 and its associated Learning Objectives, an actionable framework for ESD has been conceptualized in the report *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education* (2021)⁴. This report highlights the interconnectedness of social and environmental well-being and stresses the need to take urgent action to develop a social contract for education. According to UNESCO, this contract must be “grounded in human rights and based on principles of non-discrimination, social justice, respect for life, human dignity, and cultural diversity, and an ethic of care,” all in pursuit of “peaceful, just, and sustainable futures for all.” The Social Contract places “respect for human rights and concern for education as a common good” as two central components toward a successful global future (p. vii). This contract was further discussed in *Our Common Agenda* (2021), whose 12 commitments, including renewing the social contract, are “designed to accelerate the achievement of the sustainable development goals” (p. 6). Collectively, these documents inspire a need for transformed teacher training, curricula and pedagogy to develop global citizens committed to sustainability and altruism as new primary goals of education.

Recently, UNESCO has made accelerated progress toward mobilizing state and community leaders by developing five “action tracks” as conversational pathways to address global issues related to education. These five action tracks include 1) inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools; 2) learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development; 3) teachers, teaching, and the teaching profession; 4) digital learning and transformation, and 5) financing of education. Key stakeholders have gathered to converse and produce detailed reports on each of these five action tracks, which were discussed at the Transforming Education Pre-Summit in Paris

⁴ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707.locale=en>

from June 28-30th, 2022. At this summit, emphasis was given to creating space and agency for all of humanity, especially young people, in the quest to transform education. This event also highlighted a need to consider the holistic education of a child and continuous education of a lifelong learner. This requires that we reimagine the core tenets of a “good” education by first contemplating the core tenets of a good human being.

Many speakers at the UNESCO Pre-Summit in June discussed how education can be reimaged to develop character. H.E. Mr. David Sengeh, Minister of Education in Sierra Leone, questioned the role of technology in inspiring empathy. Ms. Adriana Figuerdo, a DAFI scholar, argued that inclusion and equality in education starts with empathy and awareness. Ms. Tarcila Rivera Zee, Executive Director of Centro del Cultural Indigenas del Peru, exclaimed “education should be seen as something that enhances our dignity. It should lead to a sense of universal citizenship based in human rights from the bottom up.” Finally, H.E. Mr. Patrizio Bianchi, the Italian Minister of Education, asserted that we must change ourselves to change society, and education is the instrument with which we establish democracy and peace.

It is clear from these perspectives that the Pre-Summit uncovered sentiments that place moral capacity-building, toward virtues such as empathy and altruism, as important traits in a citizen of the planet. The Transforming Education Summit in September, 2022, in New York City, culminates a cumulative call to action by nation states around the world, producing a targeted response to each of the five action tracks. This effort represents a critical opportunity to make policy-oriented progress in education for sustainable development, and to target the cultivation of altruism as a key component of a successful global education plan.

In addition to UNESCO’s internal response, they have also built on existing regional and global partnerships themselves to build initiatives, quality networks, and platforms that promote learning skills for life, work, and sustainable development. For example, International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNEVOC) is UNESCO’s global network for institutions that specialize in TVET, built to facilitate an environment that supports exchange, cooperation, and support for ministries, national bodies, training providers and research institutions (UNEVOC, n.d.). At this time, there are more than 220 UNEVOC centers situated in more than 140 UNESCO Member States across the globe. This network truly aims at global cooperation, and works to build cross-national competencies and synergies between nation states. This effort toward multilateralism inherently supports a framework of global citizenship, in which the path forward in TVET is one that requires a set of ever-evolving, universal skills. UNESCO is also maintaining partnerships with the Data-Pop Alliance, a “think-and-do-tank” aimed at bringing together researchers, practitioners and activists to solve problems, improve data literacy, and transform society⁵, and the Open Science Partnership, which aggregates interest open science stakeholders around the world to equitably involve representative stakeholders in the improved dissemination of and access to scientific knowledge⁶. These partnerships reflect a continued

⁵ <https://datapopalliance.org/>

⁶ <https://en.unesco.org/science-sustainable-future/open-science/partnership>

interest in bringing together diverse stakeholders to solve global challenges related to transforming education and ESD.

UNESCO's Roadmap for the ESD Movement

UNESCO has recently developed a new framework (2020-2030) to enhance global efforts on ESD. UNESCO's *Education for Sustainable Development: A Roadmap (or ESD for 2030)*,⁷ upscales and builds upon the last 15 years of ESD. UNESCO's Roadmap provides guidance for Member States and other stakeholders for the implementation of *ESD for 2030* that outlines five priority action areas for ESD: 1) advancing policy, 2) transforming learning environments, 3) building capacities of educators, 4) empowering and mobilizing youth, and 5) accelerating local level actions. This roadmap highlights six areas of implementation: 1) country initiatives, 2) ESD for 2030 Network, 3) communication and advocacy, 4) tracking issues and trends, 5) mobilizing resources, and 6) monitoring progress. This provides the framework for beginning a process of exchange and collaboration between member states and stakeholders through their own country's initiatives.

Inherent in UNESCO's work is an understanding that to change the world, we must change our education systems. These action tracks, and the principles that they represent, require that nations join forces to reimagine what the core tenets of education and of life should be. We argue that this change includes an explicit focus on character building, centered on the cultivation of altruism, to produce citizens of the world with mutual care, love, and respect for each other and the planet. Many efforts are being made to respond to our world's challenges through education, and to consider the role that character-building can play in this transition. These will be discussed below.

National Examples of Education for Sustainability

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is another nation that has prioritized implementing the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. They have been consistent in presenting evaluative Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), and having contributed three since the call to action from Agenda 2030⁸. Primarily, Sierra Leone has focused on achieving SDGs 4 (education) and 16 (justice), and has worked to actualize these goals by aligning the priorities of the SDGs with their government's Human Capital Development program as well as their Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019-2023)⁹. A consistent theme among nation states leading achievement of the SDGs is this alignment of national policy with Agenda 2030, and a creative openness to restructure one's country around the needs of an ever-evolving future.

⁷ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374802>

⁸ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/sierraleone>

⁹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/sierraleone>

Sweden

In Sweden, Education for Sustainable Development is a top priority. In fact, it is incorporated into governing documents at all levels of the Swedish education system, including preschool curriculum, compulsory school curriculum, and the Swedish Higher Education Act (Ministry of Education and Research, Sweden, n.d.). Similar to nations like Japan, Sweden is one of the countries that has actively aligned its national curricula with the goals of ESD with success (Cars & West, 2015), even in early childhood (Kultti et al., 2016). Additionally, governmental, municipal, academic, civic society, and youth stakeholders offer support and action in ESD. Currently, Sweden is taking leadership roles in the Transforming Education process, serving as its fourth largest donor in 2021¹⁰.

Indonesia

Pancasila is the foundational philosophical theory guiding life in Indonesia. It forms the basis of Indonesia's Constitution (1945), which has held firm since their independence. *Pancasila* is comprised of five equally important principles (Nishimura, 1995):

- 1) belief in the One and Only God (divinity)
- 2) Just and civilized humanity (humanity)
- 3) Unity of Indonesia (unity)
- 4) Democracy guided by inner wisdom found in unanimity from representative deliberation (democracy)
- 5) Social justice for all Indonesian people (justice)

Pancasila also forms the basis for national education in Indonesia (Nishimura, 1995). "Pancasila moral education" calls for education that reflects the "Pancasila spirit" (p. 312), placing a moral imperative on nationalizing morality itself. Beginning in 1975, Indonesia required at least two hours of *Pancasila* moral education per week from elementary to higher education. This prioritization in the cultivation of values is clearly reflected in the second principle, a just and civilized humanity, in which the aim is to both learn and respect fundamental human rights.

According to Nishimura, all principles set forward in Indonesia's National Constitution have been argued to require moral norms. Principle 1, belief in One and Only God, teaches devotion and religious tolerance. Principle 2, humanity, stresses respect and compassion for our global community. Principle 3, unity of the nation, aims to cultivate love for one's country. Principle 4, representative democracy, calls for an inquisitive process of deliberation and agreement. Principle 5, social justice, aims to build virtues of fairness, equity, and simplicity, undergirded by principles of mutual aid.

Pancasila education, as it is both a process of developing moral virtue and learning about the philosophy of *Pancasila* itself, is taught by lecture, storytelling, discussion, role playing,

¹⁰ <https://en.unesco.org/partnerships>

simulation, and games. The nature and values of Pancasila, where “good citizenship” is viewed as a result of community-building and a shared set of values, is argued to be inseparable from the concept of civic education in Indonesia, where the notions of civics and morality have been intertwined (Dewantara et al., 2019).

Malaysia

The Malaysian government has also introduced a curriculum that emphasizes moral education. In 1977, the Malaysian Ministry of Education determined that moral education should be included in a formal school curriculum, and it was decided that the subject would be rolled out in various phases in the 1980’s, using methods such as storytelling, problem solving, and conventional teaching (Taib et al., 1982). It was in 1983 that the subject of Moral Education (ME) was introduced as a required subject for students (Saharuddin et al., 2021), after a long and tumultuous history of formal and casual approaches to moral education through the title of civics and religious studies. This curriculum is undergirded by moral values, or *Nilai Murni*, which guides character development toward the pursuit of a “satisfying life and contribut[ion] towards peace and harmony in Malaysia” (p. 192). To make this successful, Malaysia makes targeted efforts to train their teachers to be moral agents in the classroom. During the process of formalizing a moral education system, it was argued that:

“Education in Malaysia aims to develop the ability of individuals holistically on an ongoing basis, to produce balanced individuals in terms of intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical, based on strong faith and loyalty to God. The measure is taken to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, have high moral standards, responsible human beings who are able to achieve high personal well-being and able to contribute to the harmony of the family, society and the country in general.” (Ministry of Education, 1988, via Saharuddin et al., 2021, p. 192)

Through Malaysia’s **KBSR** and **KBSM** curricula Moral Education has been introduced and adapted over time, especially in the years of 2000 and 2010. In 2017, the Standard Based Curriculum for Secondary Schools (KSSM) replaced previous standards to meet policy requirements of Malaysia’s Education Blueprint (2013-2025) (Saharuddin et al., 2021), which they are currently working toward. This blueprint focuses on progressing education in tandem with Malaysia’s various economic and governmental initiatives and proclaims that the goal of the blueprint (and the education system) is “to equip our students holistically to allow them to succeed in the 21st century”. In addition to developing critical thinking, leadership, and communication skills, the Education Blueprint places emphasis on imbuing students with “values, ethics, and a sense of nationhood, enabling them to make the right choices for themselves, their families, and the country with a view towards enduring and overcoming life’s inevitable challenges” (Ministry of Education, 2013, foreword). It is clear from this guiding document that Malaysia places priority on the cultivation of virtues that are inextricably linked to citizenship.

National Examples of ESD and Lifelong Learning

Introduced into international debate in the UNESCO report “Learning to Be” in 1972, the concept of lifelong learning is recognized as learning that happens “from cradle to grave” in formal and informal learning environments (Yang & Yorozu, 2015). As argued by Zhao & Biesta (2012), a continuous commitment to learning new knowledge and adapting to change requires a cognitive as well as a personal capacity to reflect and build *moral* dimensions during lifelong self-formation. In the context of 21st century environmental challenges, endangerment of indigenous languages, global pandemics, conflict, and stark inequality, the moral imperative to make concerted efforts to educate human beings through adulthood becomes even more pronounced (Benavot et al., 2022).

There are several countries who have responded to this need by developing robust lifelong learning programs, including Japan, The Republic of Korea, and France. In regard to the first two nations, they are unified by a heavy influence of Confucianism, which is associated with understanding the importance of an educated workforce and in education (Yang & Yorozu, 2015). Confucianism is also associated with values including cooperation, diligence, respect for elders, reciprocity, and humility (Hur & Hur, 1999). This also includes a focus on harmony with family and society, as opposed to the individualistic way of thinking in the West. Below, several examples of strong lifelong learning systems around the world are discussed.

Japan

Japan has a long and robust history of adult and lifelong learning. Beginning in 1949 with the Act for Adult Education, lifelong education became particularly important in Japan in the 1990s, where education policies were driven by a need to continuously adapt to a changing society (Fuwa, 2001). A cornerstone policy in this movement came from the 1990 Lifelong Learning Promotion Law, which established the national and regional infrastructure to focus on two main aspects of lifelong learning: evolving beyond formal education, and prioritizing learning at all stages of life (Centre for Public Impact, 2018). Lifelong learning, or “shougai gakushuu” represents in Japan the learning that happens at every stage of life, as participants are motivated by “intellectual curiosity, improvement in quality of life, or fun and pleasure” (Ogden, 2010, pp. 5-6). According to Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, & Technology (MEXT), lifelong learning encompasses structured school learning as well as learning acquired through sports, cultural activities, recreation, and volunteering (Ogden, 2010). MEXT’s current position on lifelong learning can be in part attributed to Japan’s dwindling birth rate, requiring optimization of individual skills; globalization and its impact on employment; problems of disparity and poverty; philosophy of independence and coexistence; and an aging population (MEXT, n.d.). To respond to these challenges, Japan has worked to enhance the Open University of Japan, in which people can receive specialized training at home to upskill and also hosts regular lifelong learning festivals to stimulate continued interest in learning at a societal level.

Apart from the impressive work being done in lifelong learning, Japan has also served as a founding force and continuous leader of the ESD movement itself. According to MEXT, Japan

actually proposed ESD as a concept in 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, where UNESCO then took the lead in its development (MEXT, n.d.). Since this time, Japan has incorporated ESD into national policy, and some have argued that Japan’s leadership in the ESD movement is due to the cooperative approach that Japan takes with its government to promote collective action, leverage political opportunities, and align the goals of education within the wider framework of the national agenda (Nomura & Abe, 2009). The Central Council for Education in Japan, an advisory council for the Ministry of Education, has played a foundational role in the creation and evolution of the country’s National Curriculum Standards, which places Education for Sustainable Development as a “foundational principle” for kindergarten, elementary school, lower secondary school, upper secondary school, and schools for special needs (MEXT, n.d.).

In addition to their incorporation of ESD into national curriculum policy, Japan is also responsible for funding a biannual UNESCO-Japan prize on Education for Sustainable Development¹¹ (UNESCO, n.d.) and has participated in bi-nationally funded programs such as the Japan-U.S. Teacher Exchange for Education for Sustainable Development to learn about and strengthen ESD efforts in both countries¹². These efforts signal Japan’s leadership in and commitment to the ESD movement.

Republic of Korea

Similar to Japan, The Republic of Korea has an established lifelong learning framework for its citizens, which can be partly attributed to the importance Korea placed on adaptation in a rapidly-evolving world. The National Lifelong Learning Promotion Plan (2018-2022) is the latest of a series of five-year plans borne out of the 2009 Lifelong Education Act of the Republic of Korea, which called for the Minister of Education to develop comprehensive lifelong learning programs at the national level. According to this policy, lifelong learning includes “all types of systematic educational activities other than regular school curriculums, including supplementary education for educational attainment, basic literacy education for adults, occupational ability enhancement education, humanities and liberal education, culture and art education, and citizen’s participation education” (UIL, 2013).

To prioritize lifelong learning is to be inclusive of all spaces, timeframes, and competencies that individuals must acquire to be effective citizens. According to UNESCO (2020), participating in lifelong learning in Korea has increased from 26.4% in 2008 to 35.8% in 2017. In particular, the area of Suwon City, a city of 1.2 million people, has established a network of over 600 lifelong learning centers, earning them the UNESCO Learning City Award in 2017 (Di Maio et al., 2020). Additionally, in 2021, the city of Yeonsu hosted the fifth International Conference on Learning Cities, where the city of Osan was among the winners, indicating that the city embodies an environment that “enables their citizens to adapt to a rapidly changing world and acquire the

¹¹ <https://en.unesco.org/prize-esd>

¹² <https://www.fulbright.jp/eng/esd/index.html>

knowledge necessary to act jointly to solve global challenges” (UNESCO, n.d)¹³. Even with relatively low expenditure toward lifelong learning, the Republic of Korea has creatively employed innovative funding schemes such as the Employment Insurance Fund, which acquires private sector resources (Yang & Yorozu, 2015). Through use of an autonomous institution called the National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE), the Republic of Korea can ensure that the goals of the Lifelong Education Act are being met. Korea demonstrates that when a top-down lifelong learning structure is prioritized, resources can be efficiently and responsibly allocated to the lifelong learning system.

Developing the Altruism Necessary for Sustainability

Defining Altruism

Altruism has been defined as being motivated by interest and concern for the welfare of others (Vailliant, 2002; Dahl & Paulus, 2019). Leeds (1963) has put forward a popular definition of an altruistic *act* as something that is 1) an end in itself, 2) conducted voluntarily, and 3) does good. This interpretation suggests that altruism cannot be executed with an ulterior motive or for any transactional reason. Psychologist Dennis Krebs remarked that not only is altruism fascinating for its status as a virtue, and its role in maintaining our social system, but it is also important in signaling behavioral socialization (what renowned educator Maria Montessori termed *normalization*), and is part of human nature itself (Krebs, 1970).

Necessity of Altruism

This selfless concern for the well-being of others (altruism) is integral to achieving the SDGs, solving global challenges, and collective flourishing and unity of humanity. There is a suggested association between altruistic behavior and a quest for social justice (Simmons & Lerner, 1968; Kanungo & Conger, 1993), implying that practicing altruism is nurturing a behavior that is opposite to injustice. The new social contract (UNESCO, 2021) opposes injustice in all its forms. Therefore, explicit focus on cultivating and nurturing altruism in ESD will be an integral step in realizing the SDGs, combatting inequality and conflict, and harmonizing our global community.

Inherent in this quest toward social justice is the belief that inequalities in the world must be rectified. Altruistic tendencies thus share an association with social justice and with equality more broadly (Zettler & Hilbig, 2010). A disposition toward equality, as developed through an altruistic self, naturally suggests that those who are altruistic will be inclined to break down hierarchical structures that form the basis of social, economic, and political inequality. This focus on altruism, and more specifically, on how to cultivate it in pursuit of the SDGs, therefore offers a solution to the challenge of how to address inequalities within and between nations, starting inward as a component of identity-building and expanding out in pursuit of a life of service.

¹³ <https://uil.unesco.org/press/unesco-learning-city-award-goes-ten-cities-outstanding-achievements-lifelong-learning>

In a professional capacity, altruism has been explored as an alternative to territoriality (Axelsson & Axelsson, 2009), in which altruistic leaders try to see “the role and tasks of their own agency in relation to the other agencies involved” and particularly in relation to the people who are involved in the organizations (p. 327). In this sense, altruism can be viewed as a tendency that promotes nonlinear, organic, and holistic approaches to leadership, in which collaboration and mutual harmony are prioritized above all else. It can be argued, then, that in *education*, a cultivation of altruism in students and in teachers may lend themselves to organic and holistic approaches to learning, in which the whole person learns and evolves to promote the well-being of the planet and its people.

Inherent in a global moral identity is a focus on cultivating altruism. It is altruism, or a selfless concern for humanity, that can form a strong foundation for education and by extension, for society. It is altruism that will place the salvation of the planet, in all nation-states, at the center of concern. It is altruism that will center poverty and inequality as an unacceptable challenge in need of solution, and place technology in the hands of every student of the world. It is altruism that will consider the next pandemic in any corner of the globe as an international crisis, eliciting community, action, and problem-solving from global citizens. Altruism will form the backbone of the education for sustainable development movement, and all subsequent global movements, and will do so most effectively if it is situated as a central component of our curriculum through national policy change. The framework that GPPF is exploring with regards to sustainability and altruism through project-based learning provides one such prescriptive mechanism for integrating moral identity building into our classrooms for the purposes of leading an *altruistic life of service*.

Developing Altruism from a Young Age

Despite recognition that altruism is associated with many prosocial and beneficial tendencies, introduced above, it is not often the focus of educational initiatives. However, we argue that an intentional commitment to altruistic development is essential for achieving the SDGs and transforming education, starting with young learners, in that it will allow young people to develop selflessness that enables living a life of social justice, equality, and change. Some research has found that infants are naturally altruistic, and as they grow and become introduced to more social contexts, must make more challenging altruistic decisions (Warneken & Tomasello, 2009). Others argue that human altruism actually develops in children from infancy to preschool age in four phases, through: (a) interest in social interactions (prealtruistic), (b) preference for others’ goal completion (prealtruistic), (c) concern with others’ well-being (altruistic), and (d) a normative stance toward altruistic actions (altruistic). These two perspectives expose infancy and early childhood as a foundational time to explore the intentional cultivation and protection of altruism, and what better place to do so than in educational spaces.

Fostering a Global Moral Identity and the Altruistic Self

The *altruistic self*, as it emerges through education for sustainable development, must have a vision that is world-embracing, that can perceive the current stage of the unfoldment of the plan

contained in the U.N. Charter for peace and prosperity, a vision that understands how to contribute to the next step in humanity's collective enterprise of society and civilization-building.

To make this contribution in action, through career and personal choices that promote human and ecological well-being, the altruistic learner must have also developed a *global moral identity*. A global moral identity is operationally defined as an orientation and commitment to life that is personally motivated to act on the architecture of moral and ethical principles enshrined in the U.N. Charter and its related covenants and conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As foreshadowed in those conventions, individuals with a strong global moral identity are committed to the mission of the ingathering and oneness of the human race, to justice and fairness applied to the entire spectrum of human diversity, to taking principled action to safeguard human dignity, to preserve humanity's constant quest for truth and knowledge, and to participate with wisdom in the struggles against the untamed human ego, which, left uneducated, leads human beings to become a danger to themselves and the planet.

As developmental indicators, necessary for the creation of human resources capable of creating a sustainable civilization, the *altruistic self* and its accompanying *global moral identity* provide educators with a vision for the inner and outer type of human being that it is our urgent responsibility to nurture. Educators already have a vision for young learners as potentially literate, as emerging mathematicians, scientists, artists or historians, and because of that vision for human potential, educators already understand how to create an educational system aligned with those roles and capabilities.

So, too, must a new vision be presented of the potential and capability of the human being to be not only a scientist or artist, but an altruistic self, living a complete and balanced life of service, making decisions and taking action with a global moral identity. Such a vision is striving to become crystalized in the discourse seeking to define the idea of global citizenship. However, as the vision and definition of "global citizenship" remains an evolving social construct, because thinkers continue to grapple with the underlying unanswered question of what is the ideal image, vision and potential for a mature human being, the underlying purposes and practices of global citizenship education, by extension, must remain in a state of flux, or, to be more generous, of widespread experimentation. Given this state of open experimentation in the field of education for sustainable development (ESD), seeking as it does to arrive at a clearer vision of the endpoint of optimal human development, it is suggested that one approach be the intentional cultivation and measurement of an *altruistic life of service* sustained by an equally intentional approach to the development and measurement of a *global moral identity*. Experimenting, then, with these endpoints of optimal human development, educators can align curriculum, pedagogy and assessment towards this vision for human flourishing, at every stage of the teaching and learning process.

Invitation to Collaborate

The Global Peace and Prosperity Forum is exploring several educational initiatives that include a component on the development of the altruistic self in education for sustainability to upscale efforts in education for sustainability. This includes initiatives that seek to give equal and integrated importance to altruistic development and sustainability using projects that start in early childhood and continue through all stages of schooling thereafter. We would like to expand our efforts and develop collaboration with interested stakeholders who are keen to explore national examples of ESD to identify the most promising practices and policies that national governments can consider as the international community responds to the call of the United Nations to create a new social contract for education.

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