PART 1

**TAKING THE LONG VIEW OF CONTINUITIES AND
CHANGES IN ADULT EDUCATION**

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2. REVISITING THE *FAURE REPORT* AND THE *DELORS REPORT*

Why was UNESCO's Utopian Vision of Lifelong Learning an "Unfailure"?

As John Field (2000) remarked, lifelong learning is a “beautifully simple idea” (p. vii). Lifelong learning as a policy concept came to prominence in the 1960s in the context of accelerating post-war social transformation and economic growth that required a greater democratization of educational institutions. However, its meaning has changed. In the 1960s and 1970s, especially in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), lifelong learning (at the time the term “lifelong education” was in use) represented an emancipatory and rights-based concept. Since the rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s the meaning of lifelong learning has shifted to denote the individual’s responsibility to obtain the necessary skills to find employment in the marketplace (Biesta, 2006). This chapter will shed light on the reasons for this shift by tracing the history and fate of two flagship education reports published by UNESCO, which were instrumental in promoting and conceptualizing lifelong learning as a global educational “master concept”: *Learning to Be* (otherwise known as the *Faure report*), published in 1972, and *Learning: The Treasure Within* (otherwise known as the *Delors report*), published in 1996. The key ideas in these documents, and the way they have been taken up in some quarters and disregarded in others, illuminates important continuities and changes in thinking about power and possibility in adult education.

UNESCO AND LIFELONG LEARNING

It is fair to say that UNESCO is the international organization that has made the most significant philosophical and theoretical contributions to the concept of lifelong learning. But it is important to note that in parallel to UNESCO’s intense engagement with the concept, especially during the 1970s and the 1990s, the idea was much discussed in educational circles more broadly, and other international organizations played a part in bringing it to prominence under different names with slightly different meanings, such as the OECD’s *recurrent education* and the Council of Europe’s *permanent education* (Kallen, 1979).

UNESCO’s concept of lifelong learning grew out of the organization’s universal and utopian humanism and was strongly related to the idea of education as a human

right, entrenched in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* of 1948 (Elfert, 2018). It was influenced by French and Scandinavian traditions of popular education and a blend of classical and social democratic liberalism, as well as radical social democratic ideas, with traces of Marxism especially in the case of the *Faure report* (Lee & Friedrich, 2011; Elfert, 2018). In this chapter I will argue that UNESCO's humanistic vision of lifelong learning constituted an "unfailure", drawing on Gilman (2015), who borrowed the term from Jennifer Wenzel (2009). Wenzel used the term in relation to a prophecy that led the Xhosa people of southern Africa to kill their cattle in the late 19th century in the hope that their ancestors would return to drive out the colonizers. Although the Xhosa people did not achieve their goal, Wenzel shows how the supposed failure of the prophecy and the action it ensued has continued to inspire anti-colonial movements. Gilman (2015) defines the concept of "unfailure" as "the paradox that many seemingly failed political and social movements, even though they did not realize their ambitions in their own moment, often live on as prophetic visions, available as an idiom for future generations to articulate their own hopes and dreams" (p. 10). On the one hand the humanistic vision of lifelong learning has arguably lost out to more powerful economic interpretations of the concept that dominate education policies today (Bagnall, 2000). In the struggle over "global governance" in education the *Faure report* and the *Delors report* proved unsuccessful in asserting their worldviews against powerful counter-ideologies promoted by organizations challenging UNESCO's authority such as the OECD and the World Bank. On the other hand, both reports continue to capture the imagination of scholars and educators. In particular, the *Delors report*, despite its limited policy influence, continues to exert a "soft influence" on educators all over the world.¹ Revisiting these reports shed light on the debates and controversies in the context of their time and they also tell us a great deal about power and possibility in education policies.

UNESCO's vision of lifelong learning, as put forward in the *Faure report* and the *Delors report*, had a much stronger citizenship dimension than, for example, that of the OECD, which emphasized the economic aspect of lifelong learning in terms of investment in human capital. UNESCO's interpretation represented what Cropley (1979) called the "maximalist position," which involved "a fundamental transformation of society" (p. 105). The notion of citizenship embedded in UNESCO's concept of lifelong learning invoked the right and responsibility of the individual to employ education for the sake of the betterment of society, and the importance of solidarity among all the people of the world. Also, in terms of the reports' views on international development, they represented a counter perspective to the dominant development discourse of Western modernization. In particular the *Faure report* showed a tendency to supporting endogenous development based on dependency theory.

THE FAURE REPORT

The *Faure report* emerged from the *International Commission for the Development of Education*, established in 1970. UNESCO's General Conference had charged the

Commission with the task of producing a report on the future of education. The report was an attempt to (re-)assert UNESCO's authority at a time when the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) were challenging UNESCO's role as the lead agency for education. Thinking about the future of education seemed timely as Western countries were shaken by student revolts and civil society movements calling for reforms of the education system; at the same time the newly independent countries of the South were desperate to rebuild their education systems. Education was increasingly viewed as a 'pillar of development', which had become an important domain of Cold War foreign policy (Coombs, 1964).

Chaired by Edgar Faure, a French socialist politician who had been appointed Minister of Education after the 1968 May student uprisings in France, the Commission produced the report *Learning to be*, which recommended "lifelong education" (*éducation permanente*) as the global "master concept" for education. Lifelong education had been promoted in UNESCO as an educational paradigm since the 1960s. The concept was concerned with reforming the linkages between education and work, which was necessary as the post-war reconstruction required mobilizing all potential members of the workforce. But much stronger than the economic aspect was the citizenship dimension of lifelong education. The post-war democratic project required adults who were educated and empowered enough to exercise their role as citizens and help to build a new society out of the ashes of World War II.

Compared to similar concepts that were used in parallel such as "recurrent education", the *Faure report's* concept of lifelong education was utopian – or what Cropley (1979) called "maximalist" – insofar as it entailed a call for a new democratic society. The overwhelming message of the *Faure report* was an unwavering faith in education as the means to prepare human beings "for a type of society which does not yet exist" (Faure et al., 1972, p. 13). The report stated "that any undertaking which aims at changing the fundamental conditions of man's fate necessarily contains a utopian element" (p. 163). Lifelong education blended the post-war idealism with the critical spirit of the 1960s and the humanistic-cosmopolitan worldview that permeated the report was in tension with human capital theory, which around the same time fueled what was seen as a more pragmatic approach to educational planning. The title *Learning to be* reveals the influence of existentialism on the report that placed the focus on the human condition and on the role of education for the development of every individual's potential.

The *Faure report's* vision of the "learning society", which was a much-debated idea at the time (e.g. Thomas, 1963; Hutchins, 1968; Husén, 1974), was in line with other utopian visions spread during the 1960s. On the one hand, the *Faure report* was an optimistic document, exuding confidence that the "learning society" would come true. On the other hand, a spirit of crisis was noticeable as well as the fear that technocratic forces would alienate and enslave human beings and deprive them of their freedom and capacity to act. The existentialist theme of the tension between instrumental rationality and human freedom prevailed not only in contemporary literature such as Herbert Marcuse's *One-dimensional man*, but also in lifelong

learning circles, for example in the writings of Bogdan Suchodolski (1976), who contributed several background papers to the Faure Commission.

The *Faure report* needs to be understood in the context of its very particular time, the 1960s and early 1970s when the dominant economic and social model was the Keynesian social-democratic welfare state. Education policies were, “in essence, welfare policies of the state performing a range of social democratic functions” (Griffin, 1999, p. 331). Edgar Faure was a strong believer in the “social contract” and he authored a book by that title (Faure, 1973). The attack of the economic sphere on education greatly preoccupied him (Elfert, 2018, pp. 103, 121). In terms of the *Faure report’s* view of development, it 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 did not refer directly to the NIEO because it was produced before the time when the NIEO gained prominence but some of the members of the Faure Commission supported the ideas underpinning the NIEO, such as Majid Rahnema, former Minister of Higher Education and Sciences in Iran, who brought the ideas of critical theorists such as Paulo Freire, Ivan Illich and Everett Reimer into the Commission.

The broader significance of the *Faure report* lies in it being an expression of a movement driven by socialist and social democratic forces pushing for democratization and the regulation of capitalism in the 1960s and early 1970s. Arguably, the NIEO was another expression of this movement, as was the “*Ordnungspolitik*” (regulatory policy) promoted by the German social democratic Chancellor Willy Brandt²; and the 1976 report of the Club of Rome, *Reshaping the International Order*, which took up the demands of the Third World and the NIEO (Tinbergen et al., 1976, p. 23). But this social-democratic movement was challenged by market-oriented counterforces since the late 1970s. While in 1969, Social Democrats had held government responsibility in fourteen countries (Van der Pijl, 1993, p. 35), by 1983 the German political magazine *Der Spiegel*, in an article written by Ralf Dahrendorf, declared that “we are experiencing the end of the social-democratic century in the OECD world” (*Der Spiegel*, 1983). The reactions to the *Faure report* show that some of its ideas constituted a provocation for some of its readers. The OECD response, for example, authored by the American diplomat Edwin Martin, criticized the report for its “heavy ideological overtones which are inappropriate in a U.N. document designed to have global significance” (cited in Elfert, 2018, p. 129). Other responses reflected irritation about the report’s critique of the school system, such as the Swiss response, which noted that the references to Ivan Illich in the report “have not only surprised but shocked many people” (p. 128).

THE DELORS REPORT: “LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER”

Learning: The treasure within (the *Delors report*), the second UNESCO report on the future of education, was launched by the *International Commission on Education*

for the Twenty-first Century in 1996, in the context of UNESCO's "Education for the Twenty-First Century" program. Although larger and much more diverse in its composition, the Commission was again chaired by a French socialist – or social-democratic – politician and intellectual, the President of the European Commission at the time, Jacques Delors. The Commission was situated in a very different socio-political context. Education was high on the agenda again following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the educational demands of new states that emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union. Following in the footsteps of its predecessor, the *Delors report* propagated lifelong learning as the educational paradigm of the future. But it introduced a new term, "learning throughout life". Beyond the temporal – some would say the vertical – dimension of "lifelong", it included the horizontal notion of "lifewide", considering the learning that occurred in all spheres of life and emphasizing the idea of learning as a "continuum" (Delors et al., 1996, p. 100).

The *Delors report* adopted a more pessimistic tone than its predecessor did. The democratic and participatory society based on freedom, creativity and solidarity imagined in the *Faure report* had not come about. The first chapter of the report, written by Jacques Delors himself, stated that "the prevailing mood of disenchantment forms a sharp contrast with the hopes born in the years just after the Second World War" (Delors et al., 1996, p. 15). The *Delors report* shared the *Faure report's* concern about a too narrow, economic view of education. But while the *Faure report* was still situated in "the golden age" of capitalism, economic crises and recessions had hit, and the situation of the developing countries looked much bleaker than in the late 1960s. The *Delors report* perceived a crisis of democracy and a loss of interest in its values in terms of the "widening gap between those who govern and those who are governed" (p. 55) and pointed to "a crisis in social policies which is undermining the very foundations of a system of solidarity" (p. 56). The *Delors report* was more conformist than the *Faure report* and did not question the foundations of society as much. It exhibited a subtle spirit of disenchantment in propagating education as a necessary condition for the ability of humans to stand against an "alienating", even "hostile" system (p. 95).

Delors' chapter in the report is titled "Education: The necessary utopia". Like its predecessor, the *Delors report* took a philosophical and utopian approach to the task of envisioning the future of education, in sharp contrast to the World Bank's human capital approach, as exemplified by its report *Priorities and Strategies for Education*, published in 1995 and which the Delors Commission discussed at length. The *Delors report* argued there are four pillars of education – learning to know; learning to do; learning to live together; and learning to be (Delors et al., 1996, pp. 85–98). The emphasis shifted from the *Faure report's* individualistic "learning to be" to the more collective perspective of "learning to live together", which the Commission regarded as the most important of the four pillars and the guiding principle of the report (p. 22; see also Carneiro & Draxler, 2008). Elsewhere, I have argued that the utopian and collectivist stance taken by the Delors Commission was a reaction to neoliberalism (Elfert, 2018, Chapter 6).

WHY WAS UNESCO'S 'UTOPIAN' VISION OF LIFELONG LEARNING AN "UNFAILURE"?

It is not easy to assess the actual influence of the *Faure report* and the *Delors report* on education policies, as there is very little literature on the subject. Ryan (1999) traced the influence of the *Faure report*'s concept of lifelong education on Training and Further Education (TAFE) policies in Australia. Deleon (1996) listed Canada, Japan, Sweden, Norway and Argentina among the countries that took up the *Faure report*, but most of the country activities were limited to seminars and panel discussions, and "most experiments have been fragmentary and sporadic, with limited resources" (p. 14). Jones (1992, p. 213) pointed to the report's influence on the World Bank's strong commitment to non-formal education between 1974 and 1979. As a reaction to the *Faure report*, the European Commission launched *For a Community Policy on Education* (the "Janne report") (Field, 2001, p. 9). In parallel, the OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) published a report on recurrent education (CERI, 1973). The educational literature of the early 1970s contained frequent references to the report, and it "has aroused widespread debate on the Continent" (Richmond, 1974, p. xiii). It is fair to say that the *Faure report* functioned as a catalytic agent for lifelong learning in Western countries, but it was too philosophical and impractical to have much influence on developing countries, which at the time "regarded lifelong education as a luxury of the Developed World" (Rubenson, 2006, p. 71).

In terms of the *Delors report*, the strongest response came from Europe and Latin America. The Nordic countries organized a conference of the Nordic Council of Ministers that was directly inspired by the *Delors report* and attended by representatives from 18 countries (Elfert, 2018, p. 185). The report sparked the development of indicators for lifelong learning (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2010; Canadian Council on Learning, 2010) and reflections on educational reform (see, for example De Lisle, 1996, for Latin America; Dohmen, 1996, for Germany). According to Carneiro and Draxler (2008), the *Delors report* generated initiatives in 50 countries, and was translated into about 30 languages. However, apart from the rhetorical and intellectual exercises, little evidence points to actual influence on policies around the world (Elfert, 2018, Chapter 6). In contrast to the *Delors report*, the 1989 OECD report *Education and the economy in a changing society* "became a bible for Ministers of Education" (Rubenson, 2008, p. 255).

I would like to suggest several interrelated explanations for the lack of influence of UNESCO's two lifelong learning reports. While UNESCO represented the "powerhouse" for education in the 1960s and to some extent remained so in the 1970s, in the course of the next decades, as one of the members of the Faure Commission's secretariat put it, "the ... power centre was shifting across the Atlantic" (cited in Elfert, 2018, p. 142). The World Bank emerged as the most influential international organization for education in the developing world and the OECD became the most powerful shaper of education policies in the industrialized world. Field (2001) noted that of the various international organizations concerned with adult education, "only

the OECD's proposals appeared to have any concrete influence on governments" (p. 8). The utopian vision of the *Delors report* did not offer a strong enough alternative to the financial and "coercive" power exerted by the World Bank (Chabbott, 1998, p. 212) and the "persuasive" approach taken by the OECD with its focus on indicators, output measurement and rankings that fit better in the political economy of our time than UNESCO's normative-philosophical approach (Rubenson, 2008). In this regard, it is important to note the "Frenchness" of the reports, both produced by commissions led by French politicians: The highly philosophical *Faure report* exemplified a French endeavour, "the kind of symbolic declarations by the French of the importance of Paris and culture" (cited in Elfert, 2018, pp. 135–136). The same could be said about the *Delors report*. Delors told a journalist that he wanted to put all his authority and good reputation behind "a battle of ideas to be fought and won" (Henderson, 1993, cited in Elfert, 2018, p. 184). But he fought his battle with tools that remained caught up in French approaches to philosophy, exemplified by the first question he posed to the Commission, "what is modernity?" (p. 192).

The rise of other more powerful international organizations and ideas needs to be situated in the overall shifting ideological climate towards neoliberalism, defined by Overbeek and Van der Pijl (1993) as a "counter-revolution" to moderate social-democratic forces and Third World calls for a regulation of capitalism and redistribution of wealth through the NIEO. In accordance with this view, Gilman (2015) qualifies "the failure of the NIEO [as] the result of a deliberate and concerted strategy on the part of leaders in the north, compounded by strategic choices on the part of the south" (p. 10). To some extent, I would assess the "unfailure" of the *Faure report* and the *Delors report* along these lines. Both reports were out of line with the market-oriented and divisive ideology that gained the upper hand.

Although their actual influence on policies remained very limited, the message of both reports continues to resonate. The *Faure report*, while unknown to the general public, has captured the imagination of educational scholars until this day. Field (2001, p. 6) saw the report as a "turning point", 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. Torres (2013) touted the *Faure report* as the "humanist educational manifesto of the twentieth century" (p. 15). The *Delors report*'s four pillars of education (commonly known as the "four pillars of learning") are not only frequently cited in policy reports and the scholarly literature to this day, but they are also used in schools (Elfert, 2018, p. 193). In this respect, the *Faure report* and *Delors report* could be characterized as "unfailures". They represent an "unfailure" because their translation into actual policies has been limited but their influence is notable to this day. Gilman (2015), when discussing the claim made by many that the NIEO was an "inevitable" failure, argued that "we should always be wary of ascribing inevitability to outcomes that seemed deeply uncertain to the actors at the time" (p. 9). Elsewhere, I made a similar point about the *Faure report*: "Maybe the ideas and discourses that seem very radical and new ..., or in other cases totally archaic, were not so radical or archaic at the time" (Elfert, 2018, p. 29). Engaging with

these reports opens up a space in which it becomes possible to imagine alternatives to the prevailing instrumental view of education promoted by the current dominant economic and political order. In that respect the *Faure report* and the *Delors report* exemplify the limitations, but also the possibility of a utopian vision of education.

NOTES

- ¹ In particular the idea of “learning to live together” from the *Delors report* continues to inspire educators. It suffices to do a google search to find some of the numerous examples of reports and strategies using the phrase, such as a 2013 report on education for conflict resolution published by the Qatar Foundation (<https://www.gcedclearinghouse.org/sites/default/files/resources/LEARNING%20TO%20LIVE%20TOGETHER.pdf>) or a 2017 report by the Council of Europe on citizenship and human rights education (<https://rm.coe.int/factsheets-learning-to-live-together-council-of-europe-report-on-the-s/1680727be3>).
- ² Brandt initiated the *Independent Commission on International Development Issues* that discussed the NIEO proposal, resulting in the publication *North-South: A Program for Survival* (Gilman, 2015, p. 7).

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