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# Section V

## The Profound Changes in the Long Term: Education, Learning, and Socialization

Nathanaël Wallenhorst and Christoph Wulf

### Perfecting the Imperfectable: Historical Perspectives

In modern times in the West the formation of the Anthropocene is closely linked to processes of education and learning, the goal of which is to perfect the individual. This is clear if we look at the history of education in Europe (Wulf, 2022).

Comenius expresses this aspiration clearly in his dictum that “Everyone should learn everything in its entirety”. Rousseau takes this further. He emphasises the right of each child to find self-fulfilment through education. With industrialisation and the growth of the middle classes the following become particularly important: the access of concrete individuals to *universal norms*, the *rationalisation* of ways of life, and the principle of *representation*. Education contributes to people’s self-empowerment, their increased autonomy, and their perfection of themselves. Instrumental reason governs our emotions and demands that we fit into ways of conducting our lives that are increasingly based on economic principles. This development extends to the externalization of emotions and the training of the body.

Education plays a role in disciplining people and the planet to make them economically more useful. It promotes people’s functionality. New modes of behaviour are acquired. People learn to fit into superior spatial and time plans. Along with the development and prevalence of rational modes of behaviour there is an increase in the division of labour, with wage labour becoming more widespread. Moderation and rationality are becoming what society rewards. As we become increasingly dependent on how society functions as a whole, there is a growing pressure on us to

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exercise self-control. With the internal structure of human beings becoming more differentiated as processes of modernisation take place, the contradictions in society become part of people themselves, so that they must grapple with these internal conflicts more and more. At the centre of this development is the subject, what constitutes him or her, their education, their position in the world and with regard to the self.

The self-empowerment of the individual is becoming a key characteristic of the modern age. The subject is formed by the structures of the Anthropocene and by means of his or her own actions. The right to individual freedom, criticism and autonomous action is promoted in the subject's name. As knowledge becomes more and more rationalised and generalised, the subject's power over nature gets entrapped in pitfalls of his or her own making as he or she exercises their power. Subjects cannot assert their power over nature and society without themselves becoming imprisoned as they exercise this power. This process also inevitably leads to the isolation and self-alienation of the subject. Hopes that the conciliatory power of reason might succeed in resolving these antinomies have been only partially fulfilled. The forming of identity as a task of education rests on the repression of nature both inside and outside us. The self-identical self can only be acquired through the sacrifice of nature, i.e. through breaking off communication with nature that has become anonymous to the self as a result of these processes. The need to master nature rationally results in the need to expose oneself to an educational process which produces the isolated, abstract subject who is focussed on the accumulation of power (Kamper & Wulf 1994).

These thoughts illustrate the importance of education, learning and socialization in the developments of the Anthropocene. This is equally true of both negative and positive results. Corrections of the undesirable developments, the reforms associated with this, the implementation of sustainable development and Global Citizenship Education are also dependent on socialization and educational processes. Learning is essential for all Sustainable Development Goals. None of them can be achieved without appropriate educational processes. Extensive learning processes are taking place in all areas. Their focus on sustainability and global citizenship is resulting in the emergence of a new normative orientation of society and culture (Wulf, 2021, 2022).

## **The Combining of Local and Global Perspectives**

Ever since the end of the First World War and the League of Nations and then after the Second World War and the founding of UNESCO there have been several attempts to recognise education as being a global task. However, it soon became evident that global education schemes do not really meet the needs of all the various parts of the world. Education must also pay full consideration to what is going on locally, nationally, and regionally. It is clear today that in education the desired results can only be achieved by combining global and local aspects.

In addition, UNESCO also recognises the value of the educational and socializing effects of culture, in the concrete sense (literature, theatre, performances, visual arts, music). Such a concept of education is therefore different from purely utilitarian ideas that are dominated by economic factors, and it is this that makes it so complex. This is also seen in the three seminal UNESCO reports: the Faure Report “Learning to be” (1972), the Delors Report “Learning – the treasure within” (1996) and “Rethinking education. Towards a global common good?” (2015). What they all have in common is that, in the global society in the Anthropocene epoch, they are attempting to develop a framework for education that has human rights at its core.

The Faure Report deals with the development of two interconnected concepts – “*learning society*” and “*lifelong education*”. It underlines the right of all individuals to learn for their own personal, social, economic, political, and cultural development. The Delors Report picks up on these thoughts and develops the four pillars of learning – *learning to know*, *learning to do*, *learning to live together*, and *learning to be*. It also stresses the close connection between the organisation of the society in which people live and the way that people do and can learn. Since the 1970s considerable changes have taken place in global living conditions (UNESCO, 2015). The problematic developments and the negative effects of the Anthropocene have become irrefutable and have made clear the extent to which all people and societies are becoming increasingly interdependent. New kinds of complexity, insecurity and tension have arisen that can only be dealt with globally. Television, internet, mobile technologies and other digital media offer opportunities for culture and education. About 50% of people are connected to each other via the internet, although this can vary greatly depending on region. Increase in mobility results in new abilities and skills. Sustainability and social development result in global transformations and new learning opportunities. This development has resulted in a new diversity of human images, world views and knowledge systems (Wulf, 2013, 2022; Wallenhorst, 2020, 2021, 2022; Wallenhorst & Wulf, 2021, 2023).

From a conceptual angle, some of these challenges are addressed in the 2015 UNESCO report “Rethinking Education”. This aims to determine how education and learning are to be understood in the globalised world of the Anthropocene. On the one hand it presents an update of the values, concepts and practices developed by UNESCO. It also develops ideas and strategies for meeting the challenges presented by changes to our planet. Here *sustainability* and *peace* come to take a central place in education. We must understand *education as a common good* and have a corresponding *planning strategy*.

## Education for Sustainable Development

A new phase of Education for Sustainable Development began with the World Education Forum in May 2015 in Incheon in Korea, which dealt with a declaration and action programme from 2015 to 2030. The post 2015 agenda, Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Education, was then decided at

the world summit in autumn 2015 in New York. For the first time, the international community set universal goals, which were valid for all nations. The fourth of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) developed the following new vision of education and learning in the world community: “*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all.*” The programme is a “vision of education and development” that is based on human rights, human dignity, social justice, security, cultural variety, and common responsibility. Education is seen as being a “public good” and a basic human right, which must be ensured to achieve peace, human fulfilment and sustainable development. (UNESCO, 2015).

The Action Programme recommends a public school system that lasts 12 years. There should be 9 years of compulsory schooling with free, high-quality teaching, covering at least the primary and middle school stages. It is also recommended that there should be free, obligatory pre schooling, lasting at least a year, and that vocational education should be developed and also literacy classes for adults. Education should be inclusive and equitable. “Inclusive” does not merely mean the inclusion of children with disabilities but is broader and is directed against all forms of exclusion and marginalisation. Equality of access and treatment in education automatically follow. In many regions of the world there is still much to be done in the case of girls and women. The quality of education needs to be improved to promote the creativity of children and young people. A reform of teacher training is needed to raise the quality of education. Finally, it is important to see the improvement of education not only in terms of the school system. Vocational education and lifelong learning must be developed as well as informal and non-formal education. 4–6% of the GDP or 15–20% of public spending should be used on education.

In Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Education for Sustainable Development is expressly mentioned, to “ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development”. A further task is “Global Citizenship Education” (GCED), which is about developing a *common feeling* of global responsibility for the fate of our planet (Wulf, 2021). Furthermore, education in Human Rights, Peace Education, intercultural learning, and education for tolerance and democracy are promoted.

## Perspectives for Education in the Anthropocene

Learning, education, and the raising of awareness are important ways of achieving critical and constructive perspectives in the Anthropocene. This is true of sustainability, Global Citizenship and many other cultural and social areas that are important in how we co-exist on our planet. For this reason, the range of areas where education and learning are important is vast. It ranges from birth, childhood, and youth to social, aesthetic and inter-cultural education, to educational processes in institutions and non-institutional and informal contexts. It embraces cognitive and emotional, theoretical, and practical, mimetic and ritual aspects. Embodiment and

the formation of habits also play an important role. (Kraus & Wulf, 2022) Having to create oneself through very different and sometimes contradictory or paradoxical learning processes is an ineluctable condition of being human that comes up against many new challenges in the Anthropocene. Processes of learning and learning things differently become intermeshed and define the diversity and quality of our daily lives (Göhlich et al., 2014).

It was the stability and predictability of the Earth's climatic conditions (following the entry into a new geological epoch, the Holocene, 11,700 years ago) that subsequently made agriculture possible in different parts of the world. Then, our mastery of ecosystems made it possible to manage agricultural surpluses, which led to the emergence of civilizations. We then organized modes of transmission and learning, and then our education systems emerged. The change of geological epoch with the transition from the Holocene to the Anthropocene calls for unprecedented challenges for educational communities. The challenge of the twenty-first century is to re-found our education systems. This is so that we learn to work for the sustainability of human life in society and ensure peace and justice in a sustainable world (Leal Filho, 2019; Hétier & Wallenhorst, 2021, 2022a, b, c; Jagodzinski, 2018; Padilla, 2021; Paulsen et al., 2022; Priyadarshini, 2021; Summers & Cutting, 2016; Wallace et al., 2022; Wallenhorst & Pierron, 2019).

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**Part XVIII**  
**Developing Subjectification**