

The treasure within: Learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. What is the value of that treasure 15 years after its publication?

Jacques Delors

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Abstract This is an English translation of a speech held by French economist and politician Jacques Delors, former President of the European Commission, on 7 November 2011 at the opening of the International Congress on Lifelong Learning in Donostia/San Sebastián, Spain. Fifteen years after the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century submitted its report entitled *Learning: The treasure within* to UNESCO, Delors briefly reviews the four pillars of education and then considers the current growth of continuing education, its primary functions and general trends. Next, he discusses how basic education and continuing education might be combined into a lifelong learning approach. This is followed by some thoughts about the educational society and the challenges of current changes it is facing which include the challenge of globalisation, the phenomenon of contemporary individualism, the influence of the media and modern technologies and the dominant economic (market-orientated) ideology. Delors concludes his speech by stressing that lifelong learning is essential for gaining self-esteem and the ability to take control of one's own life.

Keywords Lifelong learning · Four pillars of education · Continuing education

Résumé *L'éducation : un trésor est caché dedans – Apprendre à connaître, apprendre à faire, apprendre à vivre ensemble, apprendre à être.* Quelle est la valeur de ce trésor 15 ans après sa publication ? – Ce texte reproduit le discours prononcé par Jacques Delors, économiste et homme politique français, ancien président de la Commission européenne, le 7 novembre 2011 lors de l'ouverture du congrès international sur l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie à Donostia/Saint-Sébastien (Espagne). Quinze ans après la remise à l'UNESCO par la Commission internationale sur l'éducation pour le vingt et unième siècle de son rapport *L'éducation : un*

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trésor est caché dedans, Jacques Delors passe brièvement en revue les quatre piliers de l'éducation, avant d'aborder l'expansion actuelle de l'éducation permanente, ses principales fonctions et ses tendances générales. Il analyse ensuite les moyens de réunir l'apprentissage de base et l'éducation permanente dans une approche d'apprentissage tout au long de la vie. Il poursuit par plusieurs réflexions sur la société éducative et sur les défis des changements qu'elle connaît aujourd'hui, dont la mondialisation, le phénomène actuel de l'individualisme, l'influence des médias et des technologies modernes ainsi que l'idéologie économique dominante (axée sur le marché). Jacques Delors conclut son discours en soulignant que l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie est essentiel pour acquérir l'estime de soi et être en mesure de prendre sa vie en main.

Introduction

I thank the Minister¹ for her invitation to speak in the context of the third Basque Vocational Training Plan.

It is already fifteen years since the report² of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century was published. UNESCO has continued to work on this issue since then, and you will hear more about that later in the programme. At the time, the Commission endeavoured to address the traditional theme of education in the context of the huge changes taking place in our world.

The education system needs to tackle the challenges concerning the general idea of education, political leaders, employers' associations, trade unions, and also teachers, their place in society, their duties and their role in developing the education system. In some countries where there are problems with schooling or social problems, too much is being asked of schools, because alongside schools, families and society must also play their part. But it is true that schools need to cope with greater demands and strike the right balance, in terms of teaching, between what is unchanging and what is changing. It is the big question that King Solomon asked himself about judgment: what is unchanging and must remain so, what is changing, and how can this change be dealt with?

Teachers are there to remind us, and especially the younger generations, of everything that mankind has learnt about itself. Ultimately, the subject we are discussing here today, if we really want to identify the role of schools and teachers, if we really want to leave other responsibilities to one side, should ideally lead us to become an educational society not unlike the one envisaged by the Greek philosopher Castoriadis, that is, an educational society as a means, a constant striving, towards greater democracy and citizenship.

Let me come back for a moment to the four pillars of education. Although they have spread to the four corners of the globe, we still need to define them properly so

¹ Delors is referring to Isabel Celaá, Minister of Education, Universities and Research of the Basque Government.

² This refers to the report entitled *Learning: The treasure within* (often referred to as "The Delors report") which the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, chaired by Delors, submitted to UNESCO in 1996 (Delors 1996).

that we can talk about the growth of continuing education and adult education. Then we can look for a way of achieving a kind of amalgamation, a synthesis, of basic education and adult education. The coming together of the two is gradually revealing to us, in some countries, the first steps on the road to lifelong learning, in the truest sense of the term. But this educational society needs to deal with the changes that are taking place, and we would be leaving something out of this presentation if we forgot that these challenges are considerable and concern political, economic and social decision-makers as well as teachers.

The four pillars of education

Let us first come back briefly to the four pillars of education. This is a global vision, as I have told you, which is well received in many countries and rejects the idea of specialisation of spheres – specialisation whereby learning to know happens at school, learning to do happens in the workplace, learning to be happens in the private sphere, and learning to live together happens in the public sphere. This means, as I said before, that schools do not have sole responsibility. That is why I propose to you once again, for lifelong learning, the concept of an educational society that relates to and challenges the family, the social and physical environment of the child, the working world and economy, and policy on the provision of material resources in the education sector. I lay particular emphasis on families. Without wishing to get embroiled in pointless quarrels, I would also like to come back to the social and physical environment of the child, because the first three years of a child's life are the most formative years, and this is when it is most difficult to bring a child fully into this educational society.

I will say it again; these four pillars are inextricably linked. We must not favour one particular goal over another in education. The subject of competitiveness has been talked about, and with good reason. As we will soon see, education and competitiveness are closely linked, but alongside preparation for working life and the contribution made by each citizen to general prosperity, we must also consider cultural development and the struggle against inequality of opportunity. Some people say that because of the influence of the media and modern information technologies, cultural development takes place in society. In my opinion, this is a dangerous view.

This brings me back to the four pillars. The reason I chose the title *The treasure within* for the UNESCO report is directly linked to what I said earlier about children, because within each child there lies a treasure. Children must be helped to thrive; this is the encouraging dimension of the battle against inequality of opportunity.

Learning to know

Let us begin with learning to know: acquiring a body of knowledge and also a thirst for knowledge, learning how to learn throughout one's life, completing basic education and still being full of curiosity, the desire to gain a better understanding of the world and other people. This thirst for knowledge after leaving school is perhaps the most difficult thing to give each child. This brings me to dropouts, those who

leave school before gaining a qualification. They account for a large proportion of young people: 30 per cent in Spain, for example. There is no point in asking dropouts if they have a thirst for learning. They leave school in difficult circumstances; this is undoubtedly one of the most delicate of issues. Even in France, the national education system does not know what becomes of them. One day they leave school, and then they disappear. Of course, on television you will hear that one in every hundred thousand of them becomes a top chief executive in the USA and this means you can make it on your own, without going to school... But one person's dream come true is not a solution for everyone.

Learning to do

Learning to do. How can we incorporate the methods and knowledge that people learn into a package of skills? Knowledge, on the one hand – this is the word chosen by teachers – and qualification on the other hand – this is the word chosen by entrepreneurs. But company bosses now understand that the concept of qualification has often been restrictive and that, if we leave word games to one side, “skills” is a better description of what you have to have nowadays to be self-confident and able to deal with the various challenges of working life. Please note that when I speak of skills – and the European Commission published a report on the learning society a few years ago³ – I am not just talking about hard sciences. I am also talking about soft sciences, if I may put it that way. When businesses recruit staff, particular attention is paid to young men and women who have studied social sciences, because a good knowledge of social sciences makes people better able to understand the global environment and new kinds of management. This is why I believe we must not make a radical distinction between science and culture, even if it is true that Europe as a whole has much work to do in terms of innovation and discovery in the cognitive sciences.

Learning to live together

Learning to live together is a perfectly ordinary thing. It is essential in the world we live in, given the resurgence of populism that we are witnessing everywhere. Immigration is becoming a sometimes explosive issue, and is being used by some unscrupulous politicians to divide society and build hatred. This is why learning to live together is an essential part of school education. It concerns the relationship between schools and communities. It is also the focus of fundamental subjects that tend to be sacrificed for economic reasons in some countries: history, geography and philosophy, and in particular, as I myself suggested at the time, the history of religion. What we need to do is not to convert people to religions, but to truly understand the heritage that underpins each one, so that we can learn to be tolerant. But you cannot have tolerance without understanding, it is not just a gesture of the heart. It requires an understanding of cultural and religious phenomena.

³ This refers to the European Commission's *White paper on education and training* (European Commission 1995).

Learning to be

Finally, learning to be. This is the most difficult thing of all: fully developing the creative potential of each individual, in all its richness and complexity. I have already talked about this with regard to children, and in a few weeks' time, a book all about children and how their needs are changing in our society will be published in France.⁴ No one is doomed from birth. I repeat: a treasure lies within each one of us, and continuing education must enable everyone to improve their self-knowledge during their vital quest for self-esteem. I will take the liberty of stressing this point after having spent a great deal of time talking to young people during my years of active retirement. The lack of self-confidence is a central issue for dropouts. A lack of self-confidence is also a lack of self-esteem. This means that learning to be at school is about enabling people to understand themselves better, without sinking into despair or delusion. So it is important to underline the importance of both the family and schools in this respect. It amazes me that in some European countries, people blame schools when there are social crises, but schools cannot do everything. Schools are just one part of society. We are here to try to ask more of schools, but it would be futile to think that schools can single-handedly put society on the right track. UNESCO has also made great efforts in this area, as you will hear later in this conference.

In my opinion, these are the foundations of education, and they are inextricably linked. At the same time, we must also talk about the growth of continuing education or training. In some countries it is simply called vocational training, in others dual education and apprenticeships, which I will come back to later.

The growth of continuing education

The three needs

The growth of continuing training or adult training has been linked to three needs. First, a need felt by organisations and communities of interest which resulted in popular education and the promotion of culture. Even though the latter is in relative decline because of the growing influence of the media and the increased accessibility of cultural output, we must not forget the role that popular education has played, undoubtedly in efforts to fight totalitarian regimes, by leading men and women to reject any system that is detrimental to humanity or its freedom.

Second, a need felt by manufacturers due to changes leading them to reconsider the questions "what to produce?" and "how to produce?". Vocational training has often been provided by companies who want to update their employees' knowledge and know-how.

Finally, a need asserted in the name of equal opportunities: to give people a second or third chance, and beyond that, the never-ending debate about innate

⁴ This refers to *Peut mieux faire ! Pour un renouveau des politiques d'Education* by Michel Dollé, for which Jacques Delors wrote the preface (Dollé 2012).

versus learned abilities. And you know that according to the elitist school of thought that I have often come up against in France, in essence, schools are supposed to identify the innate abilities of certain individuals and make them flourish, which is to underestimate what learned abilities can do for those whose innate abilities are weaker. This debate about innate versus learned abilities has caused me personally many problems in France with certain education experts and even certain teachers.

Different countries have had different experiences of “adult training”. I think that the main divide is between countries where the state plays a dominant role and countries where the role of employers’ organisations and trade unions is central. The former group mainly comprises southern countries, including France, and the latter group is mainly in the north and includes Germany. So when we speak of continuing education, before we come back to focus solely on the working environment, we must remember the efforts made by the voluntary sector, universities, including universities for adult education, and businesses themselves, as well as efforts with regard to labour market policy, ever since unemployment began to grow considerably. Agencies, or labour market policy-makers, have increasingly geared training towards finding employment for people who have lost their jobs or who have never had one. This link between training and employment policy is encouraging, but because of the rise in unemployment, it has been a big drain on the human and financial resources devoted to continuing education. In this regard, it is interesting to look back on the different experiences over the past forty years of northern European countries, where there has been collective bargaining at the national, sector-wide and company levels; and of France, where we can assess the outcomes of the Law on Continuing Training, the enactment of which I oversaw in 1971.

Primary functions

In 1971, to take the example of France, after the events of 1968 and the student protests around the world, the focus was on enabling every man and woman to deal with the changes taking place in their working lives, combating inequality of opportunity, and finally incorporating this continuing training policy into a lifelong learning policy.

In other words, a great deal was being asked of continuing training. Its first purpose was to bring about the *integration of young people*, the infamous dropouts: those who leave school with no certificates or qualifications.

Another goal was to enable people to *switch to a new activity*. People may find themselves having to take up a different activity within their own company or in order to move to a new company, or having to learn a new way of doing something, or taking up a new profession.

The third goal was to maintain *and improve knowledge*. This is the most developed aspect in all countries. Companies have felt it necessary to renew people’s knowledge and skills, to adapt them and to update them.

Finally, there was the goal of encouraging *promotion*, the opportunity to rise up the ranks by acquiring new roles and skills.

General trends

What is the general trend, in France and elsewhere? Burgeoning unemployment has forced countries to spend an increasing proportion of their budgets for adult training on tackling unemployment. Even in countries that are held up as examples, such as Sweden, spending on the other functions of continuing training has had to be cut back in order to focus more on tackling unemployment.

However, access to continuing training remains unequal. In France, 50 per cent of workers take up continuing training courses every year, but when you look at the breakdown, you find that they are often middle or senior managers. Workers and employees who are not highly qualified have less access to training. This means that there is a long way to go in terms of ensuring equal opportunities. I have talked about France a great deal, but I could have focused more on the experience of Germany, which of course has a different tradition: dual education. As you know, secondary education in Germany includes a dual education component, which has made German industry the success that it is. And some people wondered, this is a point worth mentioning, whether dual education would retain its role and usefulness in a society that is more scientific, more geared towards the tertiary sector. Experience over the last fifteen years shows that the dual education system in Germany still supports economic competitiveness and the employability and professional advancement of wage earners. That is why dual education is an important means of increasing the individual and collective value added by education.

Combining the two: lifelong learning

How can we blend basic education and continuing training, as people are now seeking to do?

Purposes of continuing training

You have given this conference the title “Lifelong Learning”. I do not want to argue with you, but I prefer “Lifelong Education”, because the term “learning” has too many professional and not enough non-professional connotations. In saying that, I would like to come back to a point made by the President of the region,⁵ which was underlined by the Minister: investment in education offers a better return than any other kinds of investment. The return is measured in terms of workers’ incomes and varies from 11–15 per cent between countries. This is something we must never forget when our governments make decisions in favour of or against education. The return on investment for education is high. This means that there is a strong economic case for lifelong learning, especially in this Economic and Monetary Union where, due to a lack of economic leadership, the difference between moderately industrialised countries and highly industrialised countries has

⁵ Jacques Delors is referring to Patxi López, President of the Basque Government.

increased. So it is not easy to arrive at a synthesis, not just between school life and working life but also between private life and life in society. What *bridges* can be built between basic education and adult education?

First of all, *learning systems*, at all levels. In particular, let us focus on the system of dual education.

Second, there is my proposal which was included in the UNESCO report but not implemented: *education credits*. I was referring to young people who leave school between the ages of 16 and 18 and are poorly equipped for working life. They leave school earlier but they would be able to take up training a little later thanks to these education credits. Some people stressed the idea of an education account that could be funded by the State, by businesses, by industries and even by certain individuals who wanted to return to school. But this issue of education credits, in the context of this concept of lifelong learning, concerns the way in which studies are financed. If tuition fees have to be levied, there are loan schemes that can be combined with welfare schemes, with a balance to be struck between the contribution of those concerned – this is their responsibility –, the contribution of the State, and arrangements making it possible to stagger repayments and establish a link between success in one's working life and the repayment of loans. All this can incorporate a financial dimension into lifelong learning and strengthen the idea of individual responsibility.

Without going back to the four pillars of education, I would like to highlight a few essential goals.

Building judgment capacity: This is a very important factor, as surveys of higher education students have shown. We always find that there is a conflict among students, as there is within mankind as a whole, between the singular and the universal, tension between tradition and modernity, and tension between the spiritual and the worldly. All these changes must be incorporated into lifelong learning so that we can build the judgment capacity of those concerned, because there is a “McDonald's” aspect – “quickly eaten, quickly forgotten” – to modern life that is at odds with the essential nature of schools. Schools focus on continuity, memory – there is no future without memory – and so they try to resist the fast pace of modern life and the dominance of the present, which prevents us from taking a step back, exercising our judgment and thinking about the future.

Second, we need to *offer a range of pathways*. For instance, it should be possible to change course during a university or school year. This is rare in the European systems that I am familiar with. There is also the link between parental leave and study leave. That may strike you as surprising, shocking or off-topic, but I talked to you earlier about the first three years of a child's life. Parental leave can be very important in enabling a child to develop in the presence of his/her mother and father. From a child development point of view, given what we have learned from neurovegetative research, I believe it is essential to incorporate this dimension into lifelong learning.

The last factor I would like to highlight is the concept of “*capability*” proposed by Amartya Sen.⁶ This means that the concern of teachers and education chiefs is to

⁶ For more information on Indian economist Amartya Sen's concept of “capability” see his books *Inequality re-examined* (Sen 1992) and *Development as freedom* (Sen 1999).

give everyone the ability to deal with life's problems. This "capability" is not demonstrated solely by certificates; nor is it demonstrated solely by spoken accounts of experiences, or even one's initial experience of the workplace; it is broader than that. It is not just where an academic course meets a job description. It is much more than that. And finally, of course, there is the question of how to *avoid a digital divide*, which already exists; this is especially important since people are trying very hard to integrate new training technologies into the education process in the Anglo-Saxon world today. Of course, each society – I am speaking too generally and I apologise for that – must find its own path according to its own situation, what is going well and what gaps have to be filled, and this is why I cannot recommend too highly the PISA studies of the OECD,⁷ which are very detailed and offer much food for thought.

These, it seems to me, are the ways in which we can attempt to blend basic education and adult education to arrive at what is still a somewhat vague concept: lifelong learning, an ideal, a thirst for learning. A society in which everyone can alternate between being an educator and being educated.

The educational society and the challenges of the current changes

The challenge of globalisation

First, the challenge of globalisation. It is the most obvious one, so I will not dwell on it too much. And it is not being experienced in the same way by all countries. It is the local versus the global, a search for our roots and models to be followed. When we train our young people, we must never lose sight of the fact that they will have to live in a world where several cultures will collide and the superiority that we ascribe to our Western culture will fade. But the fact remains that education or living together is truly important in dealing with the challenges of globalisation.

You will notice that I stressed the search for our roots, which is essential. We cannot invite the younger generations to live in a society that has lost its identity; we must hold on to our roots and values.

Contemporary individualism

The second challenge, which is far more controversial, is the decline of traditional relationships. All too often, we find ourselves lost in the "lonely crowd". When this is taken to the extreme, everyone feels that they alone have the right to judge themselves; competitive spirit is no longer compatible with the spirit of cooperation. Of course, this feeling of being the sole judge of oneself is linked to the decline of religion, but that is not the only reason. It is a matter of people no longer seeing themselves as part of the community to which they belong, and the loss of the

⁷ This refers to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) designed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

discipline and solidarity that go hand in hand with that. But the individuals who are more lost than anyone else, the ones who are experiencing the most disruption because of these changes, have a huge need to be acknowledged. Individuals who are overcome by the complexity of situations, the plethora of choices available, and who are becoming increasingly removed from their usual environment need people to acknowledge them. Efforts to tackle poverty and marginalisation are, of course, based on education, but also on this acknowledgement of those at the margins of our society. That is why lifelong learning must restore everyone's confidence, self-respect and a kind of social esteem.

Influence of the media and modern technologies

And now we come to the influence of the media and new information technologies, along with two unfortunate consequences: the "cult of the present minute" and the "emotional society".

The *cult of the present minute* is an attack on education because it means that we lose our memory and stop thinking about the future. Gaston Berger said: "When I look into the future, I'm already building it".⁸ So an example of this present-obsessed society would be when a minister appears on television and a journalist says to him: "Minister, there's been some catastrophe or other, what is your reaction?" And he becomes unsure because there is no immediate reaction, of course, so this cult of the present minute is deadly. Then there is the *emotional society*. Every day, when we switch on our televisions, we see the trials and tribulations of life, people are crying, people are moved, sometimes they donate one euro or ten, and that's that. Emotion is replacing compassion, and emotion often makes people forget about solidarity.

Denouncing these two aspects of modern society is not just a matter of morality. That, I believe, is why learning to be, learning to live together and learning about the paths followed by humanity are extremely important. For instance, right now there are certain doubts about European integration, as you know. But they are inflated by the fact that you are in the present. If, however, you cast your minds back a little and think about how and why this adventure came about, the point of the European project becomes clear once again.

The dominant economic ideology

The last disaster I wanted to mention is the dominant economic ideology, which is "the market decides everything". We saw that in the 2000s. And it is quite convenient for politicians, it absolves them of their responsibilities because the market is the final arbiter. It passes judgment and imposes penalties. People talk a great deal about banking crises, but it is the ideology of the era that ought to be criticised because along with the dominance of finance, it was what led us into this

⁸ Gaston Berger (1896–1960) was, among other things, a French philosopher and futurist. From 1953 to 1960 he was Minister of National Education in France and modernised the French universities system.

awful crisis. In the field of economics, the first thing you have to do is to make a choice, not say what you prefer.

Second, when the financial ideologues of the market tell us that what matters is the creation of value, the question we have to ask is “what value?” Stock market value? What value? We are a world away from entrepreneurs such as Max Weber and Schumpeter. This is what education must combat, not in order to denounce a partisan ideology, but to demonstrate that the long-distance runner has a better chance than the others. And there has to be a balance between the market and regulation – the market because it embodies freedom and facilitates the competition that we need, which is healthy some of the time, and regulation because it enables people to be guided by rules of law and institutions that impel them to be a little less unreasonable. And that is what institutions are for. That is how democracy was created, as a system that tries to curb the excesses and madness of men, because we are always capable of madness. That is exactly what being a great politician is all about: striking the right balance between freedom and responsibility, personal advancement and solidarity, and, in economic terms, between regulation and the market.

Conclusion

Lifelong learning is about work and life, success in work that benefits the community, and the future of our young people who will enter the labour market. But on a deeper level, it is about knowing oneself better, I cannot stress this enough, gaining a kind of self-esteem to help us deal with the risks and constraints of life, and acquiring the ability to take control of our own lives.

To this end, reaffirming the central role of education in society is vital. If we want to overcome all the risks that we face, education is the only solution: education as a way of acquiring knowledge but also judgment, as an apprenticeship in independence before we assume responsibilities, and as a school of tolerance that teaches us how to live side by side with other people, wherever they may come from.

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