



STATEMENT ON EDUCATION

2017, JULY 22ND

Prologue

Discussing education is challenging. When we initiated this dialogue, it turned out that for many of us, the theme of education generated mixed associations. In many minds, Education was mainly restricted to finding a job and making a living. It was often seen as a duty one had to fulfil to find his or her place in society.

It became clear that this was to form only a very limited aspect of our discussion. We concluded by defining education as an ongoing and lifelong process that applies to all areas of life.

This has several direct implications:

First, when we are receptive, we have the opportunity to learn all the time. Second, we are all providing others with opportunities to learn. It is up to us to determine whether they learn by our good or bad example.

Education is the responsibility of each and every one of us.

I. LEARNING: A PATH TO EMPOWERMENT

A. Learning to listen and understand

As small children, we all went through a phase where we learnt so much from our surrounding environment. We should maintain this capacity of staying open even after we have grown up.

The process of learning can happen in multiple ways:

1. Learning from Oneself

Learning to truly listen to Oneself, to be intuitive and to take responsibility to manage our mind and its emotions. Self knowledge lays the foundation for our sound mental health and shapes not only our wellbeing but also our whole attitude towards life.

2. Learning from Others

Only when we truly listen to others and understand what they are going through will we be able to respond to them in the right way. This empathy should be given the right place in our life. Team work and community projects are great ways to develop this attitude and understanding. Our ability to understand other cultures and build bridges instead of walls ensures our future wellbeing.

3. Nature

Nature is a tremendous resource of knowledge and our bond with nature helps to make protection of our environment a priority.

We are all interdependent beings. We should realise the consequences of our actions on the world, and be mature in our choices.

B. Learning to learn

Intrinsic motivation drives us to reach the best of our abilities. Education delivered by force will never give the required results. Competition used as a learning method often leads to putting other people down and diminishes our motivation.

C. The shared responsibility of learning

Teaching should not be confined to a classroom and all learning experiences should be valued. Manual and vocational labour deserve as much respect as any other occupation. Academic, emotional and practical intelligence should all be catered for and valued in the educational system. A combination of these different skills is necessary in order to become a balanced individual.

Currently, governments formulate and implement formal education systems. They also design policies supportive of non-formal and informal learning, in association with many different partners. The educational system should actively combine contributions from various sources to grow holistically.

Parents and teachers have a greater responsibility in the nurturing of the younger generation. They have to be open to new techniques of imparting education.

D. Learning tools

Acquiring practical and professional skills is essential, as it enables us to take responsibility, without depending on others. This knowledge helps us to play an active role in the betterment of our societies.

Knowledge and technology should be used in service of society and not become an object of greed and judgement. We should be using technology, not allowing technology to use us.

II. MEANING: A QUEST FOR PURPOSE

A. Direct inspiration

We often draw inspiration from good role models in life who may be around us. We also should be aware that knowingly or unknowingly, we may be seen as role models by others. Our institutions and teachers should inspire society through their contributions.

B. Values and a culture of the heart

There should be emphasis on developing the culture of the heart in education. All cultures have immense knowledge to offer us in this field. They can be shared through intercultural dialogue to identify common principles and core values.

C. Aiming at a higher goal

Each individual needs to find a higher purpose in life. Each individual has to find it through their personal introspection. A global vision and understanding of the state of the world can reveal to us our roles and responsibilities.

III. ACTION: ENGAGED CITIZENS FOR A STRONGER EUROPE AND A SUSTAINABLE WORLD

A. Personal responsibility

Each and every one of us should strive to do our part. Instead of time and again pondering over the reasons why the world is in such a challenging condition, we have to reflect more on what our contribution could be to make it better.

B. Contributors to the European Dream

We, as European citizens, have a role to play in shaping our nations' development. We can help translate the principles and values of European cultures into effective policies. Youth are agents of change. They need to feel that their voices are being heard, especially by decision makers. The very structure of the European Union calls for a collaborative working culture, and this should be introduced from a young age through practical exercises. The implementation of this process is one of the main challenges of our times.

C. Creators of a sustainable world

Our unsustainable way of life has reached its limits and we are now facing the negative consequences of our actions. We urgently have to find new ways to design innovative solutions, for the issues identified by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. They should be made available to as many as possible.

Conclusion

We conclude that education should nurture an open mind-set in citizens. It should foster a positive and creative attitude towards life and prompt individuals to express their personality and realise their full potential.

When we develop the habit of learning from everything that the journey of life has to offer, it becomes a thrilling and fulfilling experience. We can choose to embark on it at any point of time, at any stage of life. Welcome aboard!