

Chair, Peter Kearns OAM FACE, in introducing our guest speaker, Emeritus Professor Colin Power AM FACE, drew attention to Power's time at UNESCO within a world that was, and continues to be, in a state of surprises and flux, and the re-assertion of the power of education and learning towards building a better world. It was also the time of what is known as the UNESCO Delors report (***Learning: The Treasure Within***) which provided a framework of four pillars: *learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together (and with others), and learning to be.*

The International dimension is reflected not only in the countries and people with whom UNESCO works and international benchmarks such as PISA, but also in the PASCAL (Place, Social Capital & Learning Regions) International Observatory with centres around the world committed to building lifelong learning and developing communities. Anticipated out of this discussion were ideas and actions to acknowledge the power of education & learning to inform the Australian College of Educators.

Beginning with the bold statement, that **education empowers nations, individuals, learners, citizens, communities and humanity as a whole**, Power advised of a range of challenges as he progressed through the themes provided as pre-reading (in a summary by Kearns below):

Professor Power will provide an overview of the current global context confronting and challenging education systems and will pose a series of questions relating to the kind of education that is needed to build the world to which we aspire. He welcomes comments and suggestions. A panel of educators will respond to initiate the discussion.

The context and challenge

Increasingly, the destinies of individuals, nations and the planet are being shaped by global forces. The changes that have flowed from advances in information technology, science, the opening up of markets, and also new concepts mean that shrinking space, shrinking time and disappearing borders are linking people's lives more deeply, more intensely and more immediately than ever before. Our common future will depend on the degree to which we all become better global citizens, working together to solve global problems and to live in harmony with each other and nature. Our collective well-being, even survival, will increasingly be dependent on the extent to which education contributes not only to the empowerment of individuals and nations, but to the entire global community.

1. The power of education

This was well articulated in the 1996 UNESCO Delors Report in terms of global citizenship, lifelong learning, and four pillars of education. Are these still relevant? Are more needed?

2. Empowering nations and communities

What are the features of education systems in successful nations which are inclusive, and which empower both individuals and the nation?

3. Education for all

UNESCO has consistently promoted the objective of education for all. While there has been international progress in addressing illiteracy in poor countries, there is growing inequality in a number of affluent OECD countries such as the United States and Australia. What contribution can education make?

4. Learning through life

A central message of the UNESCO Faure and Delors reports has been that learning is a continuous lifelong process. This is fundamental for individuals, their communities, and countries. However, not all the graduates of education systems are empowered and acquire a lifelong passion for learning. What needs to be done? Are there approaches adopted elsewhere not sufficiently adopted in Australia?

5. Learning to know and do

Learning to do is about acquiring the skills we need to participate in life and work in a turbulent ever changing world. Australia has fallen to 14th place in the OECD PISA assessments. In this context with on-going changes in jobs, this is a difficult challenge for schools, colleges, and universities. What can be done?

- *As global citizens, issues such as achieving sustainable development, global warming, threatened planet/species to harmonious living need to be priorities. Natural and cultural heritage are critical.*
 - *The World Bank acknowledges that education provides the highest of returns for individuals and nations – thus a sound investment for the public good. We need a strong, united profession whereby we build on research and experience that makes a difference and empowers both teachers and learners.*
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Panellists were asked in advance to consider a key issue out of Power's presentation summary to share with participants from their unique perspectives:

Kath Kayrooz – Principal – QLD Academy for Science, Mathematics and Technology

Often 'cherry-picked' ideas are imposed in isolation, especially by people who are not educators themselves operating independently. What is important is for teachers to collaborate in their planning and pedagogy, needing concessions from a full timetable to achieve this. Kath has chosen to provide the equivalency of 2 full-time teachers to permit one hour's meeting time per week for all her teachers as part of rostered duty time to plan, co-teach and lead. Research indicates the best professional training is on the job. Such reflection and development needs to come from the educational authority, not the school, with a holistic view towards education and learning.

Robert Baldi – Board and Parents and Friends' Committee member, Clairvaux Mackillop College

Coming from an economic refugee background, Robert's family were keen to support the education of their children for the security it would provide, and this has continued with his generation in pursuing learning and providing likewise for his children. The issue of funding education from an organisational standpoint needs to be one of performance and outcomes, based on evidence, with politicians realigning education with its worth, i.e. education is valued as an investment rather than an anchor. As a businessman and parent, to be gainfully employed and taking responsibility by 'giving back' is seen as the emergent result from sparking minds to excel and supporting our children and youth.

Alex Mason – Academic Enrichment (History, English, Legal Studies), Grace Lutheran College.

As a younger career aspirant, Alex left Law to retrain as a teacher and embodies what he quoted from the Delors UNESCO report regarding the prospect of education as "an ongoing process of improving knowledge and skills...". He believes we need processes that build, maintain and enable "those who can" to enter and continue teaching. As professionals we need to implicitly and explicitly articulate better that we "do", become involved in discussions that are strong and robust around teaching and learning, and encourage the building of capacity to ensure we achieve the Delors four pillars. Attracting good people into teaching and seeking more ways for this to happen was foreseen as educators being 'at the table' rather than 'on the menu'.

Professor Donna Pendergast – Dean and Head of School of Education & Professional Studies, Griffith University

As a tertiary educator, grappling with thoughts of the status of teachers and the schooling community as well as working tirelessly through compliance, accreditation to requirements is a pre-occupied space. However, Donna asked us to shift from "What keeps you awake at night?" to "What do you dream about?" Introducing an inspirational focus around hope and happiness brings the optimism for tomorrow in the way we create our systems, how individually and collectively we can provide opportunities for young people and thus people across all their life to have the tools for wellbeing and happiness into the future. The challenge for the power of education now is how do we make and turn into the positive dreams we have.

Discussion

The audience was representative of all educational sectors, teachers at various stages of their careers, educational administrators/advisors, retired educators, parents and students. Open exchanges queried and shared approaches, crossroads, wider community impacts, measurement issues, conflicts, juggling demands, pulling together, multiculturalism, how learning takes place, using educational funds wisely, cocktail of capacities, bad to narrow to misuse of data, the need to teach students instead of subjects, free education, parent/teacher/student trinity, using time to teach and promote learning, to common problems and solutions sought.

In challenging the audience to think of what kind of education we want for our children and the entreaty to ensure all children receive that education, Kearns summarised key presentation and discussion points in closing:

1. Empower students & teachers;
 2. Focus also on communities and citizenship;
 3. Accept sustainability is an issue (there are enough warning signs with global warming to refugees crises);
 4. Achieve equity (nations are becoming more unequal);
 5. Instil a passion for learning and the centrality of lifelong learning (what we should aspire to);
 6. Address silos and have a holistic vision (including of society and how we tie together);
 7. Invoke hope and happiness: a good community is a happy one, meeting gratifications (meaning/purpose) with a need to build this into education and personal development;
 8. Empower the grass roots in schools and communities, value-add and strengthen in unison.
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