Global Meeting: 31 May - 4 June 2021

JOINT INVITATION

These are challenging times.
How can we achieve just transitions to more equitable ways of living?
How can teacher education & training institutions contribute to a sense of humanity that is more inclusive, equitable and to a planet that is flourishing and has long-term resilience?

This document is the result of a co-creative process. It specifies a dynamic, shared vision by and for UNESCO Associated (ASPnet) Teacher Education & Training Institutions (TEIs). It provides impetus and motivation for taking collaborative action, reflecting together and contributing to strengthening transformative education. It directly addresses Sustainable Development Goal 4 Target 7 in teacher education and training. This document intends to inspire and invite others, outside of the ASPnet, to take on similar pathways of action, reflection and transformation.

1. Preamble

We, members of the UNESCO Associated Schools Network (ASPnet) and as part of the Change Initiative Global Community of Practice – teacher educators, deans, student teachers, National Coordinators, experts and UNESCO – gathered online at the Global Meeting on Transformative Education (31 May - 4 June 2021) to join our forces and

a. Adopt this Joint Invitation, while emphasizing that it is not a blueprint but an open vision document to build on, inviting continuous dialogue and questioning to revise it based on experience and research.

b. Understand that we share one humanity, one planet and one future. In face of global challenges, no one and no country can stand alone, we need to unite together.

c. Call urgent attention to the widening social and economic inequalities, climate change, biodiversity loss, unsustainable production and consumption behaviours and disruptive technological automation, which is placing the survival of humanity and the planet at risk.

d. Emphasize that COVID-19 has exacerbated these multidimensional, complex challenges but at the same time has also demonstrated how important schools and teachers are for the well-being of individuals and communities.

e. Endorse the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030, and in the spirit of the Incheon Declaration, recognize that education is a human right, indispensable for the exercise of all other human rights and an enabler for all SDGs.

f. Highlight that this Joint Invitation builds on UNESCO's work, emphasising education as a global common good and as a key enabler for equitable, inclusive and sustainable societies.

g. Call to take action to realise the ambitions and aspirations emerging from this Joint Invitation and to contribute to achieving the SDGs and subsequent Agendas for human and planetary flourishing and well-being.

The UNESCO Associated Schools Network (ASPnet)
Established in 1953, ASPnet contributes to UNESCO's function as a laboratory of ideas by pioneering and experimenting with innovative and creative contents and pedagogies to translate the Organization's values and objectives into practices at the school level. The network contributes to the transformation of education systems and policies by reinforcing the humanistic, ethical, cultural and international dimensions of education. Current membership covers more than 11 500 educational institutions from all levels of education in over 180 countries. Non-ASPnet members are welcome to join. Find out more: https://aspnet.unesco.org/en-us

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Sustainable Development Goal 4 Target 7
"By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, education for health and well-being, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development."
Sustainable Development Goal 4 Target C
"By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States."

2. Vision & Mission

2.1 A peaceful and flourishing world: We envision a world where all human beings have the knowledge, power and agency to shape their lives and shared futures in harmony with each other and with nature.

2.2 Education transforms lives: We strongly believe that the extent to which planetary flourishing can be realized depends on education. It is through educational processes that people develop their potentials, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to take collective action and to transform societies and institutions to become more just, equal, peaceful, healthy and sustainable. However, it cannot depend on education alone, other systems and practices also need to change to bring about this vision.

2.3 Reimagining education for flourishing futures: We endorse the vision of 2500+ ASPnet teachers and students from 25 countries in all regions who participated in UNESCO's focus groups on the Futures of Education and who converged around 3 key trends on how education needs to be reimagined looking towards 2050 and beyond:

a. *Education beyond the classroom*: Educational approaches include globally oriented issues, exposures, and actions, with learning environments that spread across home, schools, and communities. Together, learners and teachers develop a sense of belonging to a shared humanity and nature.
b. *People-driven learning*: Education stakeholders challenge prescriptive policies and practices that discourage or prevent teachers from setting learning goals and methodologies, and/or equally constrain opportunities for students to set meaningful learning priorities and reclaim the role of the teacher in face of the rise of digital technologies.
c. *Social and emotional well-being*: Holistic, whole-student, whole-school, and whole-community approaches build on and move beyond academic progress and assessment and address socio-emotional skills, strategies, resources, and opportunities for learning that empower learners to succeed in school, the world of work and life as responsible citizens.

2.4 All can contribute to just transitions: We have confidence in everyone's intentions and abilities to make positive contributions. Teachers are expert facilitators who empower and challenge the learners, as well as themselves. Transformative educational practices and systems involve interactive, learner-teacher approaches that allow for investigation, innovation, critical reflection, open dialogue, exploration and action-oriented learning. Working together, teachers and students can alter their worldviews, contribute to paradigm shifts and engage in practices that disrupt violence, injustice and inequality and that lead to the co-creation of new knowledge in a world at peace.

2.5 Experiencing transformation: In order to teach learners of all ages to become agents of positive global change and contributors to peace, we do not want to erase and override long-established educational practices of instruction. Nevertheless, we clearly see the need for an additional – more engaging – layer. It may be more challenging but is more productive, if we are to achieve transformation. To enable relevant and powerful learning[1], teachers seize opportunities to personally experience this transformation.

2.6 TEIs' unique role: TEIs have an important and unique role in helping society achieve the SDGs and in re-imagining our futures. TEIs can make a crucial contribution in rethinking why, what, where, when and how we learn, and to promote and strengthen transformative approaches to education as enshrined in SDG 4 Target 7 in teacher education and training.

2.7 Our Mission: As ASPnet TEIs, we play a pivotal role in strengthening education as a collection of regenerative practices for the global common good. We will not tell others what to do. We engage in these practices ourselves, full of hope yet courageous, and make our efforts visible. **Together we set out to form a global community. Within that community we co-create (big and small, local and global) imaginative and innovative practices. We design, we experiment, we investigate. We fail forward. We make our voices heard by demonstrating our practices to the world and by inviting others (inside and outside education) to participate and join with us.**

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[1] The 4 Ts of learning: **Transformative** (encourage cognitive and emotional perspective shifts that potentially lead to political/socio-ecological change and the affirmation of species being on our planet) **Transgressive** (explicitly challenge normalised practices, cultures and systems that have become oppressive with critique, empathy and reflexivity) **Transdisciplinary** (crossing boundaries to co-create new concepts and forms of human activity in iterative and collaborative ways) and **Together** (working with others to right and re-write the wrongs, strengthen collective agency and system wide change) – Heila Lots-Sisitka from Rhodes University Environmental Learning Centre at the UNESCO World Conference for Education for Sustainable Development (2021).

3. Commitments

3.1 Our shared commitments as UNESCO ASPnet

As part of ASPnet, we share a set of commitments to achieve ASPnet's vision and mission, as set out in the [ASPnet Guide for Members](#) and the [ASPnet Guide for National Coordinators](#).[2]

3.2 Our shared commitments as UNESCO ASPnet Teacher Education & Training Institutions

Our unique position as ASPnet TEIs commit us to key roles and responsibilities in connection to ASPnet objectives and education at large. We envision four major roles and responsibilities, which are neither 'consecutive', nor can they be 'separated' from one another. We take on each of these roles simultaneously:

a. **Initiators and educators of teachers**

As teachers of teachers, we have a double focus on 'learning about teaching' and 'teaching about teaching'.[3] One of the most important ways to contribute to a just, peaceful and sustainable world is to support student teachers and education practitioners to develop the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to co-create today's and tomorrow's world through education. We do this by building and nurturing relationships with (student) teachers in order to initiate them to the teaching profession and set up career long learning support systems and training initiatives. We also do this by continuously questioning and developing our own knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.[4]

b. **Investigators**

Life is about trying out, evaluating and investigating more promising, just and sustainable ways of living. All humans are life-long and life-wide learners. With this spirit in mind, we are curious investigators, able to sharply identify and interpret (educational) challenges. We aim to bridge research and practice by developing and testing new theories of teaching and learning, building evidence-based practices and continuously engaging in reflexive practices to discover better ways of teaching, learning and living.

c. **Innovators & example setters**

As innovators, we design, create, and work with others. We strive to permanently improve practices by continuously experimenting with new ideas and approaches. The examples we set are what carries the power of our practices. We act as role models to (student) teachers and in this sense we don't just 'tell' (student) teachers how to teach but exemplify the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values ourselves and show agency in addressing tensions and dilemmas we perceive in our communities and societies. We 'walk the talk' and 'practice what we teach' at all times to be reliable and credible partners in the educational field.

d. **Intermediaries**

We play a valuable intermediary role. This means connecting with learners, of all ages, and supporting them to connect, in a meaningful way, with the world around them. For this, we aim for whole-institution and whole-community approaches, to embed the institution in the community and include lifelong learning beyond the school. We empower (student) teachers to harness technologies with a holistic and human-centred approach. We build bridges between policymakers, schools, (student) teachers, curriculum developers and experts. We also play a valuable role in representing those whose voices are quiet or unheard such as the voices of future generations.

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[2] UNESCO Associated Schools Network: Guide for Members (https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000368992) & Guide for National Coordinators (https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000261994)

[3] Loughran, J. (2006). *Developing a pedagogy of teacher education: Understanding teaching and learning about teaching.* London/New York: Routledge. Russell, T. (199). Teaching teachers: How I teach IS the message. In J. Loughran & T. Russell (Eds.), *Teaching about teaching: Purpose, passion and pedagogy in teacher education* (pp. 32-47). London: Falmer Press.

[4] UNESCO (2021) Progress update of the International Commission on the Futures of Education (https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000375746/) & UNESCO (2017) Education for Sustainable Development Goals: learning objectives (https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247444)

4. Invitation

4.1 Courage, boldness and creativity: *"We need courage, boldness and creativity to imagine new paths for regenerative education as a global public and common good."[5]* We know that bringing about change is not easy. What can be done depends on one's particular context, capacity and starting point. The 'inertia' that comes along with the 'grammar of schooling' calls for ingenuity and creativity. Nevertheless, since this is the beginning of our future, we commit to action.

4.2 By resonating the vision, mission and commitments of ASPnet with a unified voice, we call upon:

ASPnet Teacher Education & Training Institutions to:

a. Reflect on how to fulfil our roles as ASPnet members and as 'initiators & educators', 'investigators', 'innovators & example setters' and 'intermediaries' in meaningful and powerful ways;
b. Investigate whether our TEIs practices are in line with the (changing) needs, wants and aspirations of the community, taking into account the particular TEIs context;
c. Collaborate and take action with other ASPnet members, and engage with our communities and society at large;
d. Contribute to building the evidence base for transformative education enshrined in SDG Target 4.7.

ASPnet National Coordinators:

a. Support ASPnet TEIs to fulfil their key roles and responsibilities as ASPnet members and as ASPnet TEI community of practice members;
b. Identify ASPnet TEIs best practices to promote and strengthen transformative approaches to education and actively participate in the exchange and sharing of those practices with peer National Coordinators and the International Coordination;
c. Develop partnerships, both national and international, to support ASPnet TEIs activities and projects in collaboration with other ASPnet members, as well as sub-regional and regional cooperation;
d. Work closely with UNESCO on taking an integrated and coordinated approach to support ASPnet TEIs.

UNESCO:

a. Provide global leadership and ensure an integrated and coordinated approach, including adequate funding, to support the consolidation of the ASPnet TEI community of practice, in cooperation with governments, partners, private sector and civil society;
b. Harness partnerships and mobilise other networks to support UNESCO ASPnet TEIs, such as UNESCO Chairs, Centres, Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage Sites, as well as Clubs and Associations.

Academia and researchers:

a. Identify and propose research themes related to transformative education and SDG 4.7 to teacher educators and trainers to boost their engagement and skills in these areas.

Governments of UNESCO Member States:

a. Review the purposes and values that underpin education, assess the extent to which education policy and curricula are achieving the goals of SDG 4 Target 7 and ensure the education, training and professional development of teachers to successfully integrate the types of transformative education into teaching and learning;
b. Allocate and mobilise substantial resources to translate policies into actions, especially building necessary institutional capacities of TEIs.

Society at large to recognize the crucial role Teacher Education & Training Institutions play in embedding transformative types of education enshrined in SDG 4.7 in pre- and in-service education and training to support (student) teachers to become agents of change and global citizens for sustainable development.

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[5] Tyack, D., & Tobin, W. (1994). The "grammar" of schooling: Why has it been so hard to change? *American Educational Research Journal, 31* (3), 453–479. (https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312031003453)