

## Education and Social Progress? Challenges to the IPSP Chapter on Education

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**“What’s next: disruptive/collaborative economy or business as usual ”**  
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### agenda

- education chapter: contributors, cornerstones and main messages
- social progress in IPSP, values and principles
- challenges, questions to chapter

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## IPSP (<https://www.ipsp.org/>) International Panel on Social Progress

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### IPSP education chapter (ch19), contributors, core group

– Christiane Spiel	ed.psychologist	Austria, EU
– Barbara Schober	ed.psychologist	Austria, EU
– Marius Busemeyer	polit.scientist,	Germany, EU
– Lorenz Lassnigg	soc.sc.ed.researcher	Austria, EU
– Michele Schweisfurth	comparative ed.	Scotland / int.
– Gili Drori	sociologist, org.th	Israel / (US)
– Simon Schwartzman	sociologist, h.e	Brazil, Lat.Am
– Nico Cloete	h.e. researcher	South Africa
– Suman Verma	ed.psychologist	India, Asia

**BIAS:** European („Germanic“), high-middle-income-countries, **BRICS**

#### **NOT REPRESENTED**

- young researchers
- economics, global/int.ed.policy, philosophy, admin.science
- low-income and post.socialist countries; wider African, Asian regions, Oceania, US

## education chapter, overview

- cornerstones, conceptual
  - deliberate focus on **formal education**
  - **policy orientation** for broad audience
  - generalised argument, ‚main trends‘
  
- basic understanding of education and social progress
  - education as part of culture (not further defined)
  - expansion of formal education endemic aspect of social progress, emergent increasingly complex structures (description)
  - contribution of education to social progress broken down to four purposes: **humanistic, civic, economic, equality/justice** to be considered by politics in a balanced way (discussion main part)
  - focus on **two policy dimensions**: a.pedagogy/curriculum, b.governance
  - policy **recommendations** („no silver bullet“)
    - Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*
    - early education*
    - school quality*
    - educators*
    - h.e. and VET, inclusive roles and social relevance*
    - digitalisation*

## education chapter, some specifications, difficulties, debates

- about purposes
  - **concept of purposes**, goals? How relate to concept of social progress?
  - how to weigh the **economic** purpose against the others?
  - how to define the **humanistic** purpose, skip it?
  - **equality/justice** separate purpose, or subsumed to others?
  - **preserving environment** additional purpose or to be subsumed (where)?
  
- addressed policy dimensions
  - a. pedagogy/curriculum/(assessment)
    - pedagogy: learner centred education (LCE)*
    - curriculum: core curriculum, competences*
    - assessment: standards and flexibility*
  - b. governance (mainly descriptive)
    - public support;*
    - decentralisation;*
    - privatisation;*
    - research-informed policy;*
    - global governance*

## education chapter, messages, recommendations

- not really new points, rather attempt towards **agenda setting**:  
topics proposed that should be selected for priority...
  - ...however, not very much specified in relation to mainstream or hegemonic political proposals... (assessment of prevailing politics missing)
  - ...neither in relation to the overall IPSP proposals (see below)
  - ...resources-issues not emphasised (enormous global disparities)
- main message: **humanistic and civic purposes** should be weighted more than / at least as much as / the economic ones...
  - ...economic growth will not automatically improve all other aspects of progress/wellbeing, education plays a mediating role (**culturalist view**)
  - ...economic indicators/role of education for development **disputed** among contributors (e.g., political role of returns measures?, priorities for certain sectors/institutions of education, basic-VET-h.e.?)
- to some extent qualifying mainstream/hegemonic strategies
  - flexible standards and assessment, critical to privatisation (regulating market)
- focus on **teacher professionalisation** and **learner centred** education

## education chapter, overview and challenges

- cornerstones, conceptual
    - deliberate focus on **formal education**
    - **policy orientation** for broad audience
    - generalised argument, 'main trends'
  - basic understanding of education
    - education as part of culture (not further)
    - expansion of formal education ends
    - emergent increasingly complex structures
    - contribution of education to social progress
    - **humanistic, civic, economic, equal** to be considered by politics in a balance
    - focus on **two policy dimensions**: a. **early education**
    - policy **recommendations** („no silver bullet")
      - SDGs
      - early education
      - school quality
      - educators
      - h.e. and VET, inclusive roles and social digitalisation
- CHALLENGES**

  - impact of **context**, informal ed.
  - **analytic** approach, pol. limitations
  - diversity of global conditions
  - education as an **instrument** vs. societal **field/sector**  
(spanning state and civil society)
  - concept of **social progress**, educational implications  
(deliberate movement instead of instrument, contextualisation)
  - preserving **environment** as a fifth purpose
  - assessment of hegemonic strategies/proposals vis-a-vis understanding of social progress  
(alternatives to **GERM: Global Educational Reform Movement**)

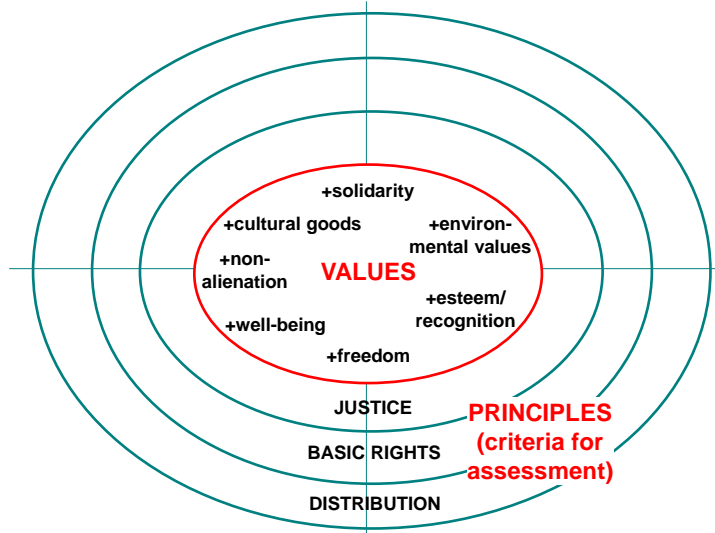
## social progress in IPSP, a compass

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- **values** and **principles** as basic elements for defining and assessing social progress
- **a. seven (basic, irreducible) values, basis for evaluation:**
  - **well-being, freedom, non-alienation, solidarity, esteem/recognition, cultural goods, environmental values**
- **b. principles, should give direction, rather (complex) dimensions than clear listing:**
  - **justice** (reparative, criminal, social-distributive)
  - **basic rights** (problems of threshold, weighing, entitlement)
  - **distribution** (criteria/conception of fairness; entities: liberties, welfare, resources)
  - problem: different/competing conceptions of principles, and ways of relating the principles to each other (libertarianism, egalitarianism[s], prioritarianism, utilitarianism...)
  - basic issue for education: **equality of opportunity**, what does it mean?  
*however, contested issue: how to define/understand? refers to values-principles...*

## social progress in IPSP, a compass

- ...values and principles stylised



## social progress in IPSP a compass

- ...main points: **reflexivity**...

how relate  
education to the  
compass?

1. Education is related to **all values** of social progress, however, in political terms in **complex** ways: **no kind of unified strategy for social progress is possible**, the situation must be assessed concretely according to the values, based on criteria

2. Education is **complex** in many ways (structure, values and interests, practices), so politics will always be contested and conflict-loaden; politics for social progress must evolve as a **struggling movement of interested actors** within this complex field (opposed to an understanding of instrumentalist policies)...

3. ...therefore **a clear understanding of the values and principles** among the proponents of social progress is a necessary condition (underlined by the key role of education in societal discourse, that is in fact pushed down by instrumentalist policies)

## social progress in IPSP a compass

**CHAPTER**  
Four purposes (weakly defined, not related to IPSP concept):

- ...values and principles stylised

how relate education to the compass?

**HUMANISTIC**  
human virtues, enlightenment  
science/technology  
humanities  
responsibility  
environment

**CIVIC/ DEMOCRATIC**  
content & practice  
active citizens in complex society

**ECONOMIC/ PRODUCTIVE**  
direct skills  
wider competences

**EQUITY/JUSTICE**  
mobility & inclusion vs. divisions & inequalities  
antidiscrimination, *„ensure universal equitable access to quality education“*

**VALUES**

+solidarity  
+cultural goods  
+non-alienation  
+well-being  
+freedom  
+environmental values  
+esteem/recognition

JUSTICE  
BASIC RIGHTS  
DISTRIBUTION

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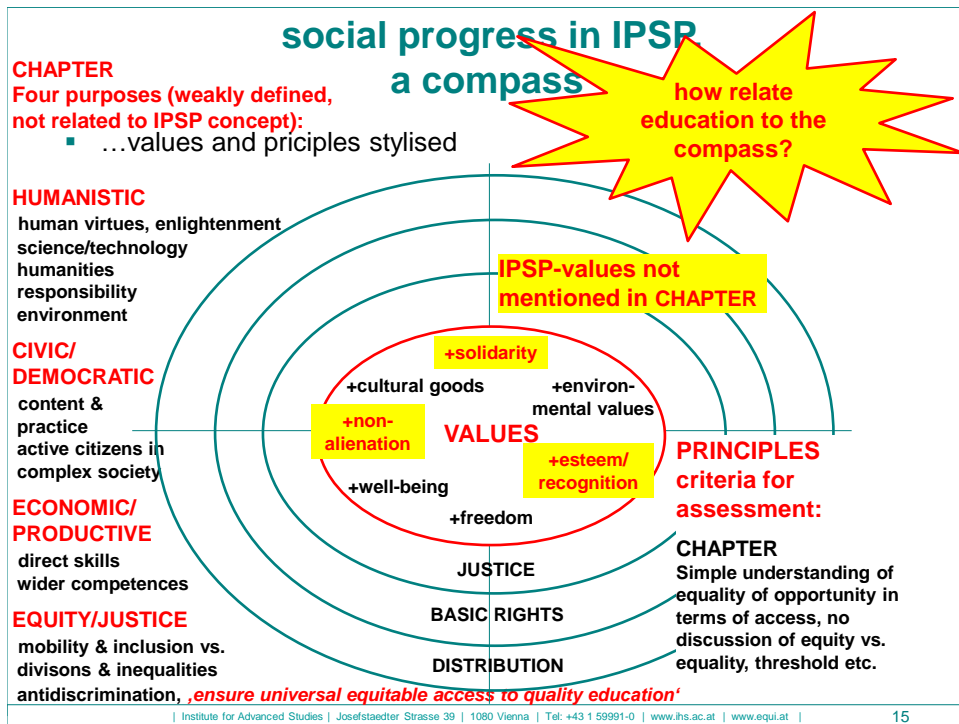
JUSTICE  
BASIC RIGHTS  
DISTRIBUTION

**PRINCIPLES criteria for assessment:**

**CHAPTER**  
Simple understanding of equality of opportunity in terms of access, no discussion of equity vs. equality, threshold etc.

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## social progress in IPSP, four purposes related to the values

- Humanistic virtues for human development**

To **save the environment and other species** against the overuse of the planetary resources must be pushed as a main dimension of humanistic development. Furthering humanist virtues need access to the available **cultural goods** and are closely related to the values of **non-alienation** and to giving and receiving personal or group **recognition**
- Enhancement of civic life and political participation in a democratic polity**

The enhancement of civic life appears most closely related to the values of **solidarity** and **freedom**
- The third contribution is economic productivity**

The economic contribution of education is clearly related to the value of **well-being**, whereby a main current debate concerns the relationship between the material aspects of well-being (GDP growth and distribution) and the broader aspects concerning **esteem and recognition**
- The fourth contribution is furthering of social equity and justice**

Furthering social equity and justice concerns the realization of **all basic values of social progress**, and **need an understanding of the principles of justice** to be applied. In particular in relation to public education, a deliberation about the **threshold** up to which the public must secure universal equal access is necessary.



## ...back to challenges

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- ...why are politics/policies towards education so difficult, contradictory, and contested? **main aspects of current politics/policies:**
  - economic rationality
  - privatisation, delegitimation the public & state
  - incentives/sanctions based
  - **ASSESSMENT/ASSESSMENT/ASSESSMENT**
- ...main point:

**'education is special'**, this is not sufficiently considered!

cannot easily subsumed under other concepts/sectors,  
e.g., production, capital, currency, welfare, poverty...  
even if it carries communalities with them

this must be considered in politics and policies, and related proposals...

- ...political discourses always take only certain aspects out, and often put them against others...
  - in particular fight against teachers...

## ...back to challenges

- cornerstones, conceptual
    - deliberate focus on **formal education**
    - **policy orientation** for broad audience
    - generalised argument, ‚main trends‘
  - basic understanding of education
    - education as part of culture (not further)
    - expansion of formal education under emergent increasingly complex structures
    - contribution of education to social progress: **humanistic, civic, economic, equit** to be considered by politics in a balanced way
    - focus on **two policy dimensions**: a. **input** side
    - policy **recommendations** („no silver bullet“)
- SDGs  
early education  
school quality  
educators  
h.e. and VET, inclusive roles and social  
digitalisation*

### CHALLENGES

- impact of **context**, informal ed.
- **analytic** approach, pol. limitations
- diversity of global conditions
- education as an **instrument** vs. societal **field/sector**  
*(spanning state and civil society)*
- concept of **social progress**, educational implications  
*(deliberate movement instead of instrument, contextualisation)*
- preserving **environment** as a fifth purpose
- assessment of hegemonic strategies/proposals vis-a-vis understanding of social progress  
*(alternatives to GERM: Global Educational Reform Movement)*

## 5 challenges

- (1) input side: embeddedness of formal education into context, informal learning/education (more) important, mostly not considered in political discourse
- (2) output side: political proposals focus on outcomes (economic, social, political) that cannot directly be influenced by (formal) education  
*education in other IPSP chapters...*
- (3) considering global diversity in social progress (e.g. role of market in different regimes; resources disparities and priorities)
- (4) ‚ontology‘ of education: perceiving as instrument or as a complex societal field/sector?  
*outcome orientation; who should take instrument; soc.pr. as a movement*
- (5) taking position vis-a-vis the hegemonic/mainstream political proposals, ‚Education Gospel‘ and GERM  
*standardization/outcome orientation; core subjects; easy/low-risk teaching; NPM; test-based accountability*

## challenges 1

### impact of context and of informal education

- politics/policies (must) focus on formal (state provided/supported) education, however, education/learning is a universal activity, that goes on all the time informally, and main parts are also institutionalised in various forms in civil society,
- thus, the practices of formal education always must play together with these contextual and informal practices, and, importantly, the impact of the formal practices is – and cannot be – really known
  - it also does not make sense to isolate them artificially, because the contextual processes will persist
- as a consequence, formal education is necessarily reduced to an intention (Niklas Luhmann), that can play out in various ways, that are in turn countered in various ways...
- professionals must work at the edge with context and informal processes, micro processes beyond policies are essential for impact

## challenges 2

### analytic approach vs. ‚another policy strategy‘

- education is a key object of politics, however, without much success
- it is difficult to accept for the political community, and related forces/actors that it/they cannot sufficiently control such important practices, so they constantly try to find ways to get grip of these processes
- this is reinforced by the high importance of education for societal development that is theorised and proved in various ways
- so another contextual issue arises, as educational interventions have effects beyond their immediate reach of supporting learning, today often named outcomes (economic, political, sociological, etc.)
  - these outcomes are indirect, and are always produced in interaction with actors/mechanisms/fields outside of education (enterprises, social structures, political parties, etc.)
- so paradoxically, politics/policies ask from education, or try to impose, impacts that cannot be directly influenced by it
  - other IPSP-chapters more than 100 pages referring to aspects of education

## occurrence of education related terms in other IPSP chapters

chapter no.	education	train	learn	skill	educat	total
19 education	654	9	139	40	56	898
3 inequality	153	3	12	91	9	268
7 jobs*	108	91	16	114	4	404
17 families	58	1	1	0	7	67
16 religion	57	6	7	3	5	78
8 social justice	54	15	10	21	8	108
18 health	48	5	2	5	7	67
4 growth-dev-welfare	42	2	8	13	4	69
14 inequality-democra	28	4	5	4	4	45
9 democracy	26	0	4	8	2	40
11 int.organisations	24	3	7	0	0	34
13 media	23	4	6	2	0	35
5 cities	21	8	12	9	0	50
1 trends,geography	20		3	12	3	38
6 capitalism	12	3	4	1	0	20
2 compass	9	0	5	0	2	16
15 culture	7	1	1	1	4	14
12 governance	6	2	5	0	1	14
10 peace	4	4	6	1	0	15
sum ch 1-18	700	152	114	285	60	1382
*total also includes human capital: 71 hits						

▪ 'education' or related terms (train, learn, skill, educat) totally occur more often in other chapters compared to education chapter

## challenges 3 diversity of global conditions

- the main picture of educational development is the spread and expansion of formal education as enlightening the world in Western ways, thus supporting capitalism and democracy globally, etc.
  - this was the scientific concept of progress by modernising traditional societies invented by (US) Sociology in the last century
- to evaluate the global conditions against the IPSP values and principles remains a task to be done
- looking at available political proposals and projects, it seems not easy to escape of this Western or Eurocentric thinking
  - maybe it holds a serious evaluation, I have not found one, that would go beyond the global application of Western educational standards

## challenges 4

### education as instrument vs. societal field/sector

- in particular from the outcome-related perspective education appears as an instrumental device for providing the desired outcomes, however, without having sufficient power to do this...
- interestingly, an instrumental view is also often taken from the educationalists' side
  - within the chapter there were different views; however, not really solved, so there is no explicit common 'ontology' of education taken in the chapter
- education is an too complex entity to be taken by someone as an instrument (who should this be?), but it is a contested field in society, in which several actors (try to) interfere
- so social progress can be taken up as an orientation to fight for from actors within the field, who should be as clear as possible about what they want to achieve
  - recommendations to policy makers about providing social progress is in this view a wrong approach

## challenges 5

### assessment of hegemonic strategies/proposals

- a kind of global education strategy has emerged, that includes first the 'EDUCATION GOSPEL' (education is key to change everything), and second a set of policy instruments that have been termed GERM (Global Education Reform Movement), including:
  - standardization of education, following outcomes-based education reform
  - focus on core subjects in school, literacy and numeracy, eventually science
  - search for low-risk ways to reach learning goals
  - use of corporate management models for improvement
  - test-based accountability policies for schools
- in some way or another, these instruments are applied, seemingly 'evidence-based', however, increasingly research shows that these instruments do not work, and counter-movements are arising
  - a main thrust of these instruments is that they pave the way for privatisation
- in terms of the (preliminary) IPSP conclusions a main path for social progress can be a second great transformation that tries to put the market in its sustainable limits,
  - and this seems clearly not the case with GERM

<https://pasisahlberg.com/global-educational-reform-movement-is-here/>

## ...conclusion

- ...main points: reflexivity...

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1. Education is related to **all values** of social progress, however, in political terms in **complex** ways: **no kind of unified strategy for social progress is possible**, the situation must be assessed concretely according to the values, based on criteria

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3. ...therefore **a clear understanding of the values and principles** among the proponents of social progress is a necessary condition (underlined by the key role of education in societal discourse, that is in fact pushed down by instrumentalist policies)

## Material

<http://www.equi.at/de/team/Lorenz+Lassnigg>

