



# For the recognition of the teacher-student relationship as Human Heritage



# Preamble

Education constitutes a basic human right, enabling access to all other rights and a privileged place for the promotion of human rights.

The history of humanity is marked by the permanence of the teacher-student relationship, at all times and in all latitudes. The strength of this relationship is reflected in the diverse Eastern and Western philosophies, in the cultures of African and Indigenous peoples, and in Asian, American, and European traditions.

The act of teaching and educating corresponds to one of the most significant and relevant forms of human activity, at the foundation of which lies a transformative relational dynamic, led by duly qualified professionals – teachers.

Teachers play a crucial role in realizing the universal right to education, as human professionals responsible for guiding and monitoring each student's educational path.

The teacher-student relationship is one of humanity's most important shared heritages.



# Principles

- The teacher-student relationship has unique and specific characteristics, significantly influencing educational pathways, student learning, and their life stories.
- The teacher-student relationship has universal characteristics, serving as a fundamental pillar of educational processes, regardless of the cultural, political, or geographic context.
- The teacher-student relationship has characteristics that cut across all levels of education, from early childhood education to higher education, constituting a structuring element of the teaching profession.

In a context of increasing digitalization of human and social life, the physical presence of those who teach and educate takes on increased importance, as was clearly demonstrated during the disruptive experience caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

As stated in the UNESCO report on the futures of education, *Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education*:

*“Teaching requires compassion, competence, knowledge, and ethical determination. Wise and learned figures have been recognized in cultures around the world, and from this tradition, the ‘teacher’ emerges as a specialized actor in the context of a school. Teachers are key figures upon whom the possibilities for transformation lie.”*



The educational heritage developed throughout history within the framework of the teacher-student relationship, in the diversity of historical and cultural contexts, constitutes a precious treasure of humanity that, as such, needs to be appreciated, known, and recognized.

To fully realize their status as human professionals within the framework of the universal right to education, teachers need to find adequate working conditions for the development of truly meaningful and transformative pedagogical and educational relationships.

The existence of motivated and qualified teachers, valued in their professional authority and esteemed by their communities, is an integral and substantive part of a new social contract for education.

The slogans chosen for World Teachers' Day over the past three years, a joint initiative of UNESCO, the International Labour Organization, UNICEF and Education International, translate these concerns well and draw attention to key ideas:

- The transformation of education begins with teachers (2022);
- The teachers we need for the education we want: The global imperative to reverse the teacher shortage (2023);
- Valuing teachers' voices: Towards a new social contract for education (2024).



The enshrinement of the teacher-student relationship as a heritage of humanity responds to a fundamental need to dignify the act of teaching and educating, constituting an imperative of humanity and universal citizenship.

A decision of this kind has incalculable symbolic value for the prestige and dignity of teachers and will constitute a decisive milestone in the history of the teaching profession, representing a factor in the valorization and attraction of young people to teaching.

Thus, in line with international recommendations on education and the teaching profession, it is considered very important that UNESCO recognizes the teacher-student relationship as a heritage of humanity, drawing attention to its unique, universal and transversal nature, to its specificity and relevance in guaranteeing quality, inclusive and equitable education, and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (ODS 4).



# Proposal

Considering that UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Agency, and that throughout its history it has always devoted special attention to teachers;

Considering that the UNESCO General Conference can adopt Declarations covering topics of universal importance and raising awareness in the international community about crucial issues not yet covered by international regulations (Resolution 33 C/20, adopted at the 33<sup>rd</sup> Session of the General Conference, 2005);

Recognizing the importance of various documents and initiatives taken within the United Nations and UNESCO, such as:

- the *ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers* (1966);
- the *UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel* (1997);
- the *Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4* (2015);
- the *UNESCO report Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education* (2021);
- the *Recommendations and Deliberations of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession* (2024);
- *UNESCO's Global Report on Teachers: Addressing Teacher Shortages and Transforming the Profession* (2024);
- *The Conclusions of the UNESCO International Forum on the Futures of Education* (2024).

UNESCO is called upon to initiate the process leading to the General Conference's adoption of a Declaration recognizing the teacher-student relationship as a World Heritage Site.



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## Education International

Education International (EI) is the Global Union Federation that brings together organisations of teachers and other education employees from across the world. **Through 375 member organisations, EI represents more than 33 million teachers and education support personnel in 180 countries and territories.**

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