



For the
recognition of the
teacher-student
relationship as
common heritage
of humanity



Preamble

Education is a basic human right that enables access to all other rights. It is also a privileged space for the promotion of human rights.

The teacher-student relationship has always been central to the history of humanity, across millennia and in all regions of the world. The importance of this relationship is highlighted 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 is one of the most significant forms of human activity. It is based on a strong relational dynamic led by teachers as qualified professionals.

Teachers play a crucial role in realising the universal right to education, as the professionals who guide and monitor each student's educational path.

The teacher-student relationship is at the heart of humanity's shared heritage.



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 where all aspects of life are becoming increasingly digitalised, the physical presence of those who teach and educate takes on increased importance. This point 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 on the foundation of the teacher-student relationship, in all historical and cultural contexts, constitutes a precious treasure of humanity that must be appreciated, known, and recognised.

To fully realise their status as professionals within the framework of the universal right to education, teachers require good working conditions for the development of truly meaningful and transformative pedagogical and educational relationships.

Motivated and qualified teachers who are valued for their professional expertise and respected by their communities are an integral and substantive part of a new social contract for education.

Over the last three years, the slogans chosen for World Teachers' Day, a joint initiative of UNESCO, the International Labour Organization, UNICEF, and Education International, highlight these concerns:

- 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 common heritage of humanity responds to the fundamental need to recognise the act of teaching and educating as an imperative of humanity and universal citizenship.

This decision would have incalculable symbolic value for the prestige and dignity of teachers and would be a decisive milestone in the history of the teaching profession. Recognising and valuing the work of teachers would also contribute to attracting more young people to the profession.

Thus, in line with international recommendations on education and the teaching profession, it is essential that UNESCO recognise the teacher-student relationship as common heritage of humanity, drawing attention to its unique, universal and transversal nature, to its specificity and relevance in guaranteeing “inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all” (SDG 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 33rd Session of the General Conference, 2005);

Recognising 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);
- *The Santiago Consensus* emerging from the *World Summit on Teachers* (2025);

UNESCO is called upon to initiate the process leading to the General Conference's adoption of a Declaration recognising the teacher-student relationship as common heritage of humanity.



Education International
Internationale de l'Éducation
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Education International

Education International (EI) is the Global Union Federation that brings together organisations of teachers and other education workers from across the world.

Through its 375 member organisations, EI represents more than 33 million teachers and education support personnel in 180 countries and territories.

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