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Education and Teacher Transformation In the Age of Innovation, Nationalism and Fake News

The global society of today is without a doubt plagued by a myriad of dreadful uncertainties which have instigated acts of terror, fear and hatred. Three significant phenomena of the 21st century include: the emergence of an era of innovation; the prevalence of international migration and resulting rise in nationalism; and the increasing awareness of unreliable yet highly influential sources of news.

Innovation by nature is a state of constant change. Traditional education systems which encourage uniformity will not only hinder the creative and dynamic growth of learners but produce a generation of compliant individuals lacking vital skills and intellectual curiosity to design solutions addressing the endless flow of global challenges.

One of the perceived biggest threats to society today is migration, as it brings together an intersection of concerns regarding economic opportunity, cultural identity and terrorism. Horrific incidents of terrorist attacks in recent times have indisputably exacerbated the populist rhetoric and inflamed rabid anti-immigration and anti-Muslim sentiments across countries. The loss of innocent lives and looming danger in once-safer public spaces have understandably festered feelings of resentment and confusion. In a state of fear and anger, people often become vulnerable to manipulation, distorted interpretations and poor judgements. Such vulnerability is often worsened by the injurious recurring narratives presented via news and media platforms, wrapped with political agenda and supported by selective information.

With mounting urgency, education has the responsibility to foster a generation of resilient, creative, dynamic and independent learners grounded in sound morals, in order to ensure the growth of a sustainable and inclusive global environment for the future. Educational programs, if implemented correctly, might be the most essential key to extricate humanity from the labyrinth of false beliefs and ignorant mind sets that impede good judgement and rational actions.

The concept of schooling is at a turning point. In response to the pressing global uncertainties, education systems and the teaching profession should undergo fundamental changes at its core, beginning with reversing the trend of de-professionalization of teachers in countries worldwide. Standardized testing, reduced autonomy of teachers, low remuneration and minimal barriers to entering the teaching profession are all factors that have and will continue to contribute to the erosion of quality of education in many countries. As such, it is time that governments and policy makers acknowledge that an educational reform is due.