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Education in Crisis: a liberal way forward

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International Academy for Leadership
IAF
Gummersbach, Germany

Objectives

- To elaborate why education is, and should be, a central concern of liberalism and a priority in liberal policy-making
- To spell out how education can secure and promote freedom and, at the same time, serve as a gateway both to self-improvement and self-fulfilment on the one hand and to economic and social progress on the other
- To list the most important challenges faced by the educational sector throughout the world – especially those related to rapid technological progress, employment and peaceful coexistence (or lack thereof)
- To specify the manifold problems of bad service delivery in the field of education and their underlying reasons
- To identify the central features of education policies that can be considered to be liberal, how they are different from other policies, and explain how and why they would meet the challenges and deficiencies detected

To detail the kinds of reforms required in the organisation and provision of education so that it becomes more relevant to the needs of individuals, their ambitions and their entrepreneurial or career activities.

Content

The demand that basic education must be available for all people throughout the world – shared by liberals – is on the verge of being met. This demand is to the idea that the best of opportunities must be available to everyone in society irrespective of gender, social status, ethnic origin or religious belief. In our contemporary world, however, access to basic education only leaves us at square one. Being able to read and write does very little in opening up opportunities. Today we need much more because of a pace of technological and economic development never experienced before.

Liberals all over the world express concern at the poor quality of education. The claim is that today's realities demand radical changes in education policies. Our criticism is that these are not forthcoming. Poor education means being unable to seize the full potential of opportunities being created, being left behind and even means exacerbating the inequalities that exist in society.

Liberals believe that part of the problem is a) the way in which education is organised and financed and b) the way independent of the state and how can this be achieved? Should higher education be run by business? How do we achieve a match between what universities teach and what the economy

in which the educational establishment and teachers have become entrenched in their opposition to modernisation. Today it is becoming increasingly clear that state-run education systems, favoured by most reformers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, are not in a position to adapt in the ways we need them to. Can we force them to change? Or should we try to challenge them instead through providing and promoting private, commercial and civil society-based alternatives?

Another important question covered by the workshop is the teaching profession and its future. Do teachers have a future of will learning increasingly become an online activity? Will future teachers be tutors and coaches rather than teachers in the traditional sense of the term? How would we recruit the right kind of people for such new roles? Who would members of such a profession be accountable to? What should curricula consist of and who determines the content? Do parents have a right to organise learning activities for their children – choosing from a menu of different products? How should performance of children be measured, if at all?

We will look at different models of financing education: should education be promoted through dedicated tax and savings incentives, should it be financed through voucher systems or should governments establish funds-follow-pupils systems? Should education be for profit? Would alternative ways of financing education exclude the poor and not-so-well-off from education? As far as higher education is concerned, do we still have a need for conventional universities in our high-tech world? Does scientific research require universities? If scientific knowledge has a "half-life" of less than two years, what should students focus on? Given the exploding costs of good university education, are online academic courses a viable alternative?

A three-day excursion will take us to south-west Germany and focus on experiences that provide added value to our workshop: eg, the importance of civics education in strengthening democracy; a decentralised school system and the advantages of competition; pre-school education as a means of overcoming social disadvantage; creating human capital through a dual system of education including vocational training.

needs?
In the final part of the workshop we will try to

- summarise points of general agreement. What would liberal reforms consist of? Are they realistic and how should they be achieved? How would liberal reforms differ from those of its rivals? Should the system be competitive and to what degree? Is it enough to focus on those members of society aged 5 to 25 or do we need to deal with those under 5 (pre-primary education) and over 25 (life-long learning) as well?

- discuss strategy and the best ways of communicating reform policies vis-à-vis political parties and the general public. How can one generate support for reform, given the vested interests we face from members of the education bureaucracy, teachers and their respective lobbies? Can liberal parties win support on a platform of education reform and how?

Target group

The workshop is designed for liberal politicians and think tank members specialising in education policy, interested leading members of the educational profession and journalists who cover educational issues in their work. It is essential that all participants have a proven track record as liberals, seek reform in the field of education are not averse to unconventional approaches to the subject.

Those interested in taking part will be invited to participate in an online event designed to select participants for the workshop in Germany. It is scheduled **7 August – 3 September 2017**.

The best 24 participants from the Online Phase will be invited to the seminar in Gummersbach.

Facilitators



Dr Stefan Melnik

Born in Oldham, UK, 16 September 1952, married, two daughters.
Universities: Cambridge, UK (history, specialising in economic and social history), Bochum, Germany (mass communication, psychology and political science).
Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom: 1980-1987, various positions.
Independent consultant from 1987 onwards, specialising in training programmes for executives [communication and facilitation, coalition-building, basics of negotiation, conflict resolution]. Furthermore, he designs and directs workshops on human rights (with a focus on property and minority rights), the market economy, environmental issues, basics of liberalism, secularism and education reform. He has authored and/or edited books and articles on many of the aforesaid subjects.



Manali Shah

Manali enjoys working with organisations as a facilitator of engaging and productive conversations as well as longer term participatory strategy. Besides her independent consulting, she co-facilitates with other organisation development groups in India and teaches „training and development“ as guest faculty to masters students of Development Communications at Jamia Millia Islamia University. She has worked with Indian and international organisations since 2001 spread across organisational functions (programs, HR, training, fundraising, OD) and profile (implementor and funder) gave her a realistic understanding of the big picture as well as the nuts, bolts and fuel for getting there. She has had a varied experience working with different types of organisations (civil society, political organisations, networks) working on diverse issues (education, economic freedom, governance) in South Asia and Nigeria. She worked at the South Asia regional office of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation as a programme executive from 2009-12. Her learning journey: Certification in Organisation Change Facilitation (Human and Institutional Development Forum-HIDF, Bangalore); Training in Facilitation, Moderation, Strategic Planning (Friedrich Naumann Foundation-Germany; Genuine Contact Space-Delhi)

Venue

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260€

