

CIES 2019: “Education for Sustainability”



By David Post



Why “Education for Sustainability” in our next CIES meeting? For me, as for most Presidents-elect, the answer is based partly on personal history, and partly as a response to the current age.

For most of my professional life (and I’m 62) we advocates for education and for CIE research didn’t waste a lot of time asking what more education or better schools were actually FOR. Like many American CIES researchers, I researched how to get kids into schools, how to help them finish, why some didn’t enroll or continue, and how to make accessible and quality education equitable. I didn’t think too much about the purpose of all this good.

Now, looking back, I can see that, like many education professors of my generation, and perhaps like others of you reading this newsletter, we thought of good education as a kind of human right. This meant that mainly it was a valued good, an “end-in-itself” rather than an instrument or a means toward any other good end. Now can I see that, about the same time that I was finishing graduate school, my generation in the CIES was rejecting the earlier, economic developmentalism that we associated with human capital theory and with the UN Development Decade of the Sixties. While editing the CER, I saw hardly anyone submit manuscripts about what good education supposedly accomplished for the world. I didn’t mind that, because I liked reading the theoretical critiques of developmentalism (which we usually liked to label and situate as “Western” developmentalism).

But current times require CIES advocates and researchers to take up the old question of what good education for all can do for all. The question is urgent, especially for US-based organizations like ours, because the current US administration

is withdrawing the country from the multilateral institutions that the US originally promoted. Withdrawing from the Paris Climate Accord, and from UNESCO, means that organizations like CIES must re-examine questions that my generation too often took for granted about the outcomes of education for all. Fortunately, the UN Sustainable Development Goals offer a perfect opportunity to interrogate these questions, because for the first time we are being challenged to integrate our agenda for education into a framework with sixteen other important goals that could help improve the human and natural world.

How fitting that CIES will meet in San Francisco, where representatives of war-torn nation-states gathered at the Herbst Theater to negotiate and sign the UN Charter in 1945. This historic event must not be forgotten. Here is an official UN photo of Dr. WU Yifang, one of only four women representatives who signed the Charter at the Herbst (representing China).



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Up to now, the international institutions emerging from this historic encounter have endured through economic crises and war. They endured partly because the United States played a positive role supporting them. The US Commission for UNESCO, for example, met in San Francisco in 1969 to discuss what could be done to improve the natural environment. That meeting led the way to a worldwide recognition of Earth Day. In 2019 CIES will return to the Herbst Theater to learn what we as scholars and educators can do to marshal new evidence and craft a sustainable future.

Individuals and groups planning to participate in 2019 will have new options regarding both their session format and type of contribution. You can select the format type that best fits your proposed contribution. If there is enough space, we will give accepted contributors their first choice for a format. If there are more contributions than we can easily accommodate

in full-paper sessions, then based on assessments from peer review we may allocate a submission to a round-table session, which I personally have always found to be the most productive and collaborative format for my own work. New for this year, proposals will be peer reviewed according to criteria that you select as most appropriate for your submission depending on whether your contribution comes closest to: a conceptual/critical/theoretical analysis; an applied/programmatic reports; or empirical research.

Our submission system will open in August 2018 and will close in October 2018, in order to give reviewers time to make quality assessments and offer suggestions.

You can find our complete “Call for Proposals” at www.cies2019.org. You can also find full explanations about our “Education for Sustainability” theme in English, Chinese, Japanese, and Spanish.