

Is Education ready for the shift?

Reflection paper of the
Nova Helvetia working
group on Education

(SDG 4)

About Nova Helvetia

Nova Helvetia is a process to address the urgent need to reinvent the human-made systems that are causing and aggravating the current crisis, or being outed as inadequate by it.

With numerous partner organisations, collaboratio helvetica launched a 3 month process to engage pioneers and stakeholders in sense-making, discovering the root causes of the current crisis, and sharing reflections and possible solutions that address them.

[Find out more about Nova Helvetia on our website.](#)



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In a nutshell

Our education system is based on the principles of functional knowledge learning, underlined by timetables, instructions and the school clock, where productivity and performance are key elements. Personal development and natural growth are undervalued, both in a scholastic and in a corporate environment. Many economic sectors are in the midst of a huge transformation process and industrial processes are being completely automated. The question arises, as to how this system can be changed, to focus on future skills with tailored individual support? A new culture of self-organised learning is needed, to empower the current and future generations to resolve ecological, economic and social issues.

During crises, many initiatives or projects get a real boost, and provide an opportunity to define new paradigms.

Context and calling question

The special circumstances, caused by COVID-19 this spring 2020, have created challenges, with new issues for society, especially the education system. This has exposed limitations and also the flexibility and creativity of organisations and people in education. The responses depended very much on the infrastructure available in the respective school, how adaptable the teachers were and under which circumstances children and young people could implement unfamiliar homeschooling.

The varied reactions and solutions raise the following questions:

- What are the lessons learned from homeschooling?
- How can we make schools and learning more playful and individual?
- How can the successful examples of homeschooling be made visible, and the lessons learned be implemented in future?

Reflections and conclusions in Education

What effects were and are visible?

The current crisis made visible the differences in how schools were equipped for distance learning, and how the lessons were adapted to the needs of children and young people.

The infrastructure: Ranged from fully networked schools to schools without any useful infrastructure.

The teachers: Teachers who brought the printed documents to the children's homes and teachers who were free to organise the lessons without predetermined topics and project work.

The parents: From the viewpoint that they had to replace the teacher, to households without technology and equipment, to organised self-help groups, everything showed up.

The children and young people: Some used the time for independent learning and discovery and others who **were bored or spent time gaming.**

The system: Examinations and grading were completely absent. This relaxed learning environment facilitated the motivation of the young.

How does it feel consciously or unconsciously?

In general, the emotional interaction was intensive, and the well-being of the counterpart was a regular topic of conversation. There was increased interaction between parents, teachers and children. The mutual understanding for one other strengthened the relationships.

It was remarkable that children and adolescents worked more calmly and concentrated at home, as the stress factors of school were no longer experienced. Overall, the young people were more satisfied, especially those above 12.

The opinion of many, from this crisis, is that space is required for more self-initiative, and a hybrid combination of classroom and distance learning, to be established in schools.

The motivation to learn has increased by leaps and bounds, where free space has been created and fewer constraints have been exercised.

The key element is social contact, whether at home, outside or at school. On account of distance learning, many missed personal interaction with their fellow students and teachers at school.

Where does the will or need for change show itself?

The experience has shown that the system requires adaptation for future challenges. There is a need for change, and initiatives are required to demand new forms of playing, learning and school structures, so that society, especially the next generation, becomes more adaptable. Only this change can resolve the ecological, economic and social problems of current society.

At the core, the problem lies in a system which is focused on fulfilling demands of the industrial age, training young people to become functioning individuals and consumers.

This system is based on outward orientation, in fulfilling plans, examinations, time slots and egalitarian learning, where personal initiative and free creative thinking are not encouraged or even suppressed. As a result, future employees are trained to be leaders who deny or suppress their own needs.

Vision of the future learning

In the year 2030, people will bring together the core questions of their being, their origin and their visions and dreams on individualised playing fields to form their vocations. This will take place in communion with peaceful coexistence, with all living beings of this wonderful planet, which they protected from destruction as a young generation. The pandemic was a wake-up call from nature for a radical rethinking of humanity and the ability to exploit resources and dispose of waste without further impact on the earth and cosmos.

Conclusions and new questions that arise

From this crisis, many parents are of the opinion that more freedom for personal initiative as well as hybrid learning (classroom and distance) should be established by the school, giving room for personal initiative and motivation for better learning.

Many schools recognise that it is a return to a "new normality", the future of which is unknown. Relationships amongst teachers and with parents and children play a vital role.

Conclusions are to open learning spaces and let young people experience and learn to create, communicate, criticise and collaborate.

The communication between parents, teachers and authorities should focus more on the needs and challenges of the current time.

Arising question: "How can we activate systemic change to reach a new paradigm for self-guided learning?"

Various Initiatives emerged in our working group

We identified four examples with a direct link to members of the Nova Helvetia education group.

- **New culture of self-organised learning as a paradigm shift (system)** - How do we reach people who recognise the need to develop the structures of elementary schools and activate them to contribute to change? With 'Schulwandel.ch' Nils Landolt and Markus Roos have started an initiative to change education at the grassroots level. Through local networking, people interested in education can share their ideas and become active. For example, supporting or co-creating new spaces in cooperation with elementary schools, so that self-organised learning becomes possible. www.schulwandel.ch
- **"Facilitator of learning" (teacher) as central hub function** - What is the value and appreciation of these important people and how do we strengthen them so that they can support young people in self-organised learning. www.vikariart.ch
- **Networking as an opportunity for change** - How do we create a network of innovative forces in education? How do we find the right answers to questions on education issues? How do we support collaboration for sustainable education? (Swiss Education Forum www.bildungsforum-schweiz.ch)
- **Ability to change** - What is that? What does it take to strengthen it?
Experiential space to change learning:
 - From the existing system into the new procedure. www.kosmos.schule
 - Areas completely outside of normal structures. www.toptotop.org

A prototype to address key challenges that we found

Project: "Schulwandel on tour" - 5 local events & 1 nationwide bootcamp to connect people

Project-Impact

We want to coalesce people to step into action. In our group, we had a central discussion about unifying people who are willing to contribute to systemic change. Especially in the creation of a "new normality" in schools to break up old structures and change approaches.

Importance

We want to engage people awakened through the crisis. Many people have recognised that systemic change begins with their mindset and own activities.

Planning

We organize 'Schulwandel on tour' and invite people to meet us. There, we present our initiative and other projects in the field. We want to concretise and validate a network of interested people in education and public schools. Five reunions in different areas in Switzerland to communicate the current situation and share their experiences. Picking up ideas and step into actions. (Newsletter: End July; tour, August to September 2020)

Finally, we invite all people with initiative for a nationwide Social innovation Lab by end of October 2020.

Healthy post-COVID-19 Switzerland

We see a time where many more citizens are made aware and to make this issue ripe for change. Let us put together positive energy in the field.

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