



**Manifesto for the
Future of Education:**
Expanding human potential
amidst accelerating change

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Executive Summary

The role of education in preparing people around the world to survive and thrive is a fundamental human right. Yet the size, scope, and speed of technological and planetary change challenge the most advanced educational systems to keep pace. Continuous adaptation—through visionary transformations and more micro but culturally significant modifications—will place new demands on every teacher, administrator, and student in the decades to come. So, the question becomes: **How do we prepare people to thrive in a time of extraordinary accelerating change?**

Coaching, as a method for expanding human potential, can play an instrumental role in enabling positive adaptation across the full spectrum of roles and responsibilities in educational systems. This thought-provoking and creative process that inspires people to achieve their full potential becomes a distinct asset for managing unpredictable events.

The [United Nations \(UN\) Sustainable Development Goal #4](#) aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. However, 25% of primary school classrooms around the globe lack electricity and basic sanitation, while 50% of those classrooms lack computer and internet access, demonstrating how significant these challenges remain.¹

On June 9, 2022, the International Coaching Federation (ICF) Thought Leadership Institute held a virtual convening, *Manifesting the Future of Education: Think, Learn, Transcend*, to explore how coaching can facilitate progress in education. Our main goal was to foster a space to examine the current state of education and envision its future in the domains of K-12 education, digital transformation, higher education, and lifelong learning as an integral component of work. The convening brought together 34 [Wisdom Weavers](#), or experts in systems thinking from 15 different countries.

During the convening, [Olli-Pekka Heinonen](#) framed the challenge for us by stating that education serves two comprehensive purposes:

1. To transfer past human achievements to the next generation; and
2. To provide the next generation with capabilities to confront the future.

Our conversation revealed that past and current tools, strategies, and ways of thinking are becoming outdated and will not close the widening gap of inequitable access to education. Moreover, the methods and models that are effective in affluent regions are less valuable to areas of the world that are more resource constrained.

To manifest a better future for all global citizens, we must change the questions we ask and how we imagine the future. To do this, we turn to the practice of coaching. A coaching approach can unlock untapped sources of imagination, productivity, and leadership. At its core, coaching is a tool that increases the potential of individuals. Therefore, we offer coaching as one of many solutions for supporting students, educators, administrators, policymakers, parents, and community members worldwide in transforming education systems to expand access to education and adapt practices that foster a sustainable future.



Alicia Hullinger, Ph.D.
Executive Director/VP
ICF Thought Leadership Institute



José Justel Miguel, Ph.D., MCC
Director of Board, Chair of Future of Education Task Force
ICF Thought Leadership Institute

¹Goal 4. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Sustainable Development. 2022.

Purpose of this Manifesto

This *Manifesto for the Future of Education* establishes a vision for transforming education around the world while integrating the role of coaching as a catalyst for positive change and a mechanism for amplifying human potential.

Objectives

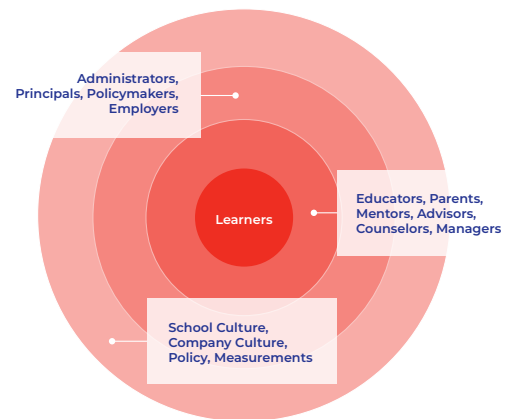
1. **To increase awareness among educational stakeholders** (students, educators, administrators, policymakers, parents, and community members) that a coaching approach can enhance educational outcomes, measured by survey results prior to publication of the Manifesto and one year after publication.
2. **To build a community of global leaders** dedicated to transforming the future of education through a coaching approach and who connect via the ICF Thought Leadership Institute website: thoughtleadership.org within one year of publication.
3. **To support decision-making** at a minimum of 250 global educational organizations reflected by pledges from global educators, education leaders, or institutions within one year of publication.
4. **To activate at least three new partnerships** among educational stakeholders and coaching professionals that result in substantive and imaginative improvements for the community served within one year of publication.
5. **To identify at least three new coaching practices** rooted in wisdom from educators within one year of publication.

Global Stakeholders

An educational stakeholder is passionate about and committed to achieving the education objectives Olli-Pekka Heinonen established:

1. To transfer past human achievements to the next generation; and
2. To provide the next generation with capabilities to confront the future.

When we examine educational stakeholders, we consider not only K-12 learning but also vocational, higher education, and continuous learning that occurs throughout a person's career. Always, the learner is at the center. The outer rings in the image to the right reflect people and topics that influence the learning process and outcomes.



Coaching and Sustainability

Societies everywhere are learning to adapt to the rapidly changing world around us. Each stakeholder plays a part in this effort:

- **Students** must develop agency as co-leaders in the learning process.
- **Educators** must develop facilitation skills to create space for student leadership in the classroom and offer instruction addressing future trends and forward-thinking skillsets.
- **Administrators** must reframe measures for success to include skillsets of the future.
- **Policymakers** must partner with students, teachers, and administrators to create policies aligned with future trends and allocate appropriate resources to enact these policies.
- **Parents** require socio-economic opportunities and community support to assist their children in accessing education and its required resources.
- **Community members** must foster a culture that values education and supports the infrastructures needed for students to thrive.

A coaching approach can support all stakeholders by facilitating growth and transformation. While the grand scale of the following trends may seem bigger than any one individual, a coaching perspective can identify strategies for taking smaller-scale steps toward practical, sustainable action.

Major Trends

At the outset of our convening, we embraced the framework set forth by the UNESCO Futures of Education report and drew on additional reports from major international collaborations.² These major international reports identified global trends that have the potential to influence the future of education.

Synthesizing these reports, the following five trends emerge:

1. Widening social and economic inequality within and between countries.
2. Climate change and resource depletion, which put future generations in peril.
3. Increasing violence and democratic backsliding, which destabilizes societies.
4. Disruptive technological change and accelerating globalization.
5. Expanding migration and urbanization, which intensify social and cultural diversity.

What we find most noteworthy across these themes is their shared emphasis on varied and potentially disruptive change. We also viewed these trends through the lens of visionary and bold thinking, such as the [Salzburg Statement for Education Transformation](#):

A growing global consensus for education transformation is emerging to prepare young people for their futures, and our sights need to be set on transformation, not reform. While reform starts with processes and improves the system, transformation begins with values and mindsets and changes the purpose of the system. Reform results in a better version of existing systems; transformation results in different systems. To equip every young person to thrive throughout life, we must focus on transformation and less on reform and incremental improvement.

The process of transformation is often easier for technology than it is for people. Human resistance, fear, and uncertainty prevent people from thinking imaginatively, creatively, and hopefully. For this reason, we believe that coaching, as an approach to learning and expanding human potential, can help educational stakeholders think positively, collaboratively, and productively about the future.

Skills Needed in the Future

According to the World Economic Forum's [The Future of Jobs Report 2018](#), the in-demand skills of the future do not look like the top skills of prior decades. The shift from yesterday's skills to the skills of the future is largely a shift from hard to soft skills. To teach soft skills, changes must be made to education delivery and student experience as opposed to merely developing new curricula.

Growing: Soft Skills³

- ✓ Analytical thinking and innovation
- ✓ Active learning and learning strategies
- ✓ Creativity, originality, and initiative
- ✓ Technology design and programming
- ✓ Critical thinking and analysis
- ✓ Complex problem-solving
- ✓ Leadership and social influence
- ✓ Emotional intelligence
- ✓ Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation
- ✓ Systems analysis and evaluation

Declining: Hard Skills

- ✓ Manual dexterity, endurance, precision
- ✓ Memory, verbal, auditory, spatial abilities
- ✓ Management of financial, material resources
- ✓ Technology installation and maintenance
- ✓ Reading, writing, math, active listening
- ✓ Management of personnel
- ✓ Quality control and safety awareness
- ✓ Coordination and time management
- ✓ Visual, auditory, speech abilities
- ✓ Technology use, monitoring, control

²REPORTS

- [Reimagining our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education](#). UNESCO. 2021.
- [The Future of Education and Skills: Education 2030](#). OECD. 2018.
- Glenn, Jerome C. [Millennium Project Future of Work/Technology 2050](#). 2019.
- Sengeh, D. & Winthrop, R. [Transforming Education Systems: Why, What, and How](#). Brookings Institution. June, 2022.
- Salzburg Global Fellows. [Salzburg Statement for Education Transformation](#). Salzburg Global Seminar. 2022.
- [High Performing Systems for Tomorrow: Dialogues for the Future of Education Systems in a Changing World](#). NCEE, OECD. May 2022.

³ Moiola, F. [Top 10 skills in 2022: at the end, the core skills will be critical thinking, creativity, and...having an heart](#). LinkedIn. April 24, 2019.

During the ICF Thought Leadership Institute's June 2022 convening: [Manifesting the Future of Education](#), our experts identified a list of in-demand skills that reflect key themes of the [World Economic Forum's list](#). Our [Wisdom Weavers](#) identified the following list of essential skills for this century, many of which require distinct modes of student-centered, project-oriented teaching that coaching methods and practices can support.

Skills needed to shape the future:

- ✓ Trustworthiness
- ✓ Collaboration and solidarity
- ✓ Creativity, critical thinking, systems thinking, and ethical thinking
- ✓ Flexibility, adaptability, and resilience
- ✓ Future thinking; ability to anticipate, shape, and co-create the future
- ✓ Global citizenship and ecological stewardship
- ✓ Growth mindset, lifelong learning, self-driven learning, and unlearning
- ✓ Digital technology skills
- ✓ Action-oriented initiative and contribution making
- ✓ Problem solving
- ✓ Ethical and sustainable decision making
- ✓ Head, heart, and hand integration
- ✓ Willingness to challenge the status quo

Call to Action

In 2020, the United Nations acknowledged that the window for manifesting change was rapidly approaching and would close in 2030. This awareness gave birth to the UN's [Decade of Action](#) to deliver on the Global Sustainable Development Goals.

We invite global educational stakeholders to support the UN's Sustainable Development Goal #4: Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All. You, as an educational stakeholder, can realize this critical [Sustainable Development Goal](#) now by putting into action our five-step program:

INVEST in and commit to developing a coaching culture in your organization or team (See ICF reports on Building Strong Coaching Cultures for the Future).

COLLABORATE across boundaries, both disciplinary and geographic, to affect inclusive change.

INITIATE open and curious discussions that include multiple stakeholders (Watch our convening recordings to see how thought-provoking and engaging a discussion can be!).

ENGAGE in coaching conversations by actively listening, asking questions, and making space for discovery.

REFLECT on how things are going: ask transformational questions (see our list below); and be curious, open, and optimistic about what is possible.



Coaching Practices to Shape Global Trends

Each of the five major trends require educational stakeholders to develop new skills and behaviors. In this section, we examine three notable skills that are relevant to each trend and illuminate coaching practices that facilitate skill development.

TREND 1: Widening social and economic inequality within and between countries.

Key Skills	Coaching practices to facilitate skill development
Empathy	Develop empathy by listening and asking questions to fully understand another person.
Respect for diversity	Create meaningful dialogue among administrators and teachers to explore, create, and learn from diverse perspectives. Create a safe environment for students and enable open and honest communication around learning, challenges, preferences, and biases.
Emotional awareness (Awareness of others and self)	Evoke awareness in students by asking reflective questions and encouraging different perspectives when looking at a problem.

TREND 2: Climate change and resource depletion, which put future generations in peril.

Key Skills	Coaching practices to facilitate skill development
Ecological stewardship	Help teachers develop goals that support global missions.
Complex problem-solving	Guide students in developing systems thinking that helps them expand the range of choices for solving a problem.
Future thinking	Support administrators in future scenario thinking to reveal multiple options for acting.

TREND 3: Increasing violence and democratic backsliding, which destabilizes societies.

Key Skills	Coaching practices to facilitate skill development
Ethics	Guide administrators through conflict resolution that emphasizes the common good.
Adaptation	Support educators in introducing coaching skills in the classroom by identifying strengths, encouraging growth, and asking powerful questions.
Resilience	Help students to test and learn from their ideas and to be open to feedback and continuous improvement.

TREND 4: Disruptive technological change and accelerating globalization.

Key Skills	Coaching practices to facilitate skill development
Technology design and programming	Help students of all ages foster a growth mindset.
Ethical decision-making	Develop ethical decision-making by examining how technology can prioritize sustainability.
Lifelong learning	Reveal interdependencies and help students see learning as a continuous process.

TREND 5: Expanding migration and urbanization, which intensify social and cultural diversity.

Key Skills	Coaching practices to facilitate skill development
Interpersonal skills	Guide teachers to use coaching skills in the classroom to support empathy and collaboration.
Collaboration and teamwork	Bring together administrators and teachers to support professional collaboration and open communication.
Global citizenship	Help students to see how their individual actions can contribute to large-scale change, address inequality, and promote justice for humanity and a sustainable planet.

Questions to Catalyze Action

At the ICF Thought Leadership Institute, we believe creating space to ask transformational questions can inspire imagination and visualize possibilities that ultimately shape the future. A transformational question probes our assumptions to create awareness, support behavior change, and open us up to possibilities.

The following questions are intended to inspire stakeholders interested in beginning the transformation journey in their school or region.

STUDENTS

- ✓ What are real-life applications of knowledge you gain from school?
- ✓ Why are you learning this?
- ✓ How do you work with your classmates to learn from one another?
- ✓ How do you express your opinion to your teacher about what you are understanding or learning?
- ✓ Why is sustainability important? What can you do to contribute to a sustainable future?

TEACHERS

- ✓ How would you teach if you had unlimited resources?
- ✓ What is the most important change you would implement in the educational system?
- ✓ How do you plan your lessons to ensure all students have an opportunity to learn?
- ✓ What is the most important skill you teach your students that prepares them for the future?
- ✓ How would you know that your work is successfully done in class?

ADMINISTRATORS

- ✓ What is the most important part of your role in the educational system?
- ✓ What can you do to move the school/ educational institution into the right direction?
- ✓ How do you support students' learning?
- ✓ If it was entirely up to you, what would be the most relevant goal to achieve in the educational system?
- ✓ How do you measure the success of your work?

POLICYMAKERS

- ✓ What is the greatest change the educational system needs to make to face the future?
- ✓ What is the role of policy in promoting quality and equitable education?
- ✓ How do you support change in the educational system?
- ✓ What are the challenges of matching the educational system with the needs of the future workforce?
- ✓ How do your policies integrate the parents and other stakeholders in the student's learning process?

PARENTS

- ✓ Why should your child learn this?
- ✓ How do you support your child's learning?
- ✓ What is your role as a contributing stakeholder in your child's school?
- ✓ How do you improve your parenting skills, and what is the role of education systems in helping you with your parenting goals?
- ✓ Does your child take an active role in learning? How can you foster self-awareness and self-advocacy for your child?

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- ✓ What is your role in helping students learn?
- ✓ How can the community support students, teachers, administrators, policymakers, and parents in designing policies that benefit the future of education?
- ✓ What is the community's role in mentoring students?
- ✓ How do you provide resources for under-served students and their families?
- ✓ How can you contribute to the education goals of your community in supporting sustainable efforts that ensure every child receives quality education?

Timeline for Action

Our Wisdom Weavers find it useful to think about action—especially transformative action—in three different categories: Sensible, Daring, and Imaginative. This model aligns with McKinsey & Company's [three horizons of growth](#) framework and UNESCO's framing questions: what to continue, what to abandon, and what to create afresh.

Consider how you and your team can commit to change in the short-, medium-, and long-term.

SENSIBLE: *What can we do today?*

These are bite-sized actions that can be taken in the short-term and do not produce significant disruption.

DARING: *What can we do tomorrow?*

Paving pathways toward sustainability in 2030, these bigger and braver goals inspire action and engagement.

IMAGINATIVE: *What can we imagine for the future?*

What will the world look like in 7 generations? Can we cast our minds forward to 2547? This type of scenario-planning helps people think more creatively by abandoning structures and norms of the present day.

Sign the Pledge

The world's leading education agencies, including UNESCO, UN SGD, and OECD, declare that transforming education is essential to the flourishing of humanity and the planet. Transforming education is not just a cause for teachers, administrators, or policymakers. It's everyone's responsibility. And transformation is within reach right now. At the ICF Thought Leadership Institute, we invite you to embrace the opportunity to partner together in this quest to transform education through coaching.

Together, we can shape the future of education. Join our quest to transform education through coaching by taking action:

- Share this Manifesto on social media and with your networks.
- Use this Manifesto as a working tool in meetings, research, and future initiatives.
- [Reach out to partner with TLI](#) to further the Manifesto's mission.
- Download the *Manifesto for the Future of Education*.
- [e-Sign the pledge to join our efforts.](#)
- [Keep us posted on your progress!](#)

[e-Sign the Pledge](#)

Our Collaborators

2022 Future of Education Convening Task Force

Alicia Hullinger (United States)
José Miguel Justel (Puerto Rico)

Les Joynes (United States)
Karen McClymont (Malaysia)

Maryam Mohaghegh (United States)

2022 Future of Education Manifesto Working Group

Brian Ambrosio (Ecuador)
Elena Espinal (Mexico)
Dinuka Gunaratne (Canada)
Tim Harrison (United States)
Stephanie Hirsh (United States)

Isaías Hernández (Nicaragua)
Alicia Hullinger (United States)
José Miguel Justel (Puerto Rico)
Grace Lee (Malaysia)
Anthony Mackay (Australia)

Karen McClymont (Malaysia)
Maryam Mohaghegh (United States)
Atul Nischal (India)
Harinder Sraw (India)

2022 Future of Education Wisdom Weavers

Alejandro Adler (Mexico)
Bryan Alexander (United States)
Nicole Bien (United States)
Adejoke Chukwumah (Nigeria)
Nina Adler Disney (Malaysia)
Elena Espinal (Mexico)
Jayne Fleener (United States)
David Geffen (Israel)
Dinuka Gunaratne (Canada)
Tim Harrison (United States)
Olle-Pekka Heinonen (Switzerland)
Isaías Hernández (Nicaragua)

Stephanie Hirsh (United States)
Alicia Hullinger (United States)
Raúl Hernández Jorge (Spain)
Les Joynes (United States)
José Miguel Justel (Puerto Rico)
Merella Karam (United Arab Emirates)
Tom Kolditz (United States)
Gayathri Krishna (India)
Ruddy Laddaga (Mexico)
Grace Lee (Malaysia)
Anthony Mackay (Australia)
Karen McClymont (Malaysia)

Cordy McJunkins (United States)
Ananya Mehta (India)
Eduardo Ávalos Mendez (Mexico)
Maryam Mohaghegh (United States)
Atul Nischal (India)
Aruturo Gómez Quijano (Spain)
Sanangeeta Sharma (India)
Noah Sobe (France)
Anna Tavis (United States)
Gabriella Teasdale (Paraguay)

The 2022 ICF Thought Leadership Institute Board of Directors endorsed this Manifesto:

Anna Gallotti, Chair (United States and France)
Donna P.A. Eiby, Vice Chair (Australia)
Pinar Dolen, Treasurer (Switzerland)
Silvia Tassarotti, Secretary and GE Representative (Italy)
Richard Boyatzis, Director (United States)
José Miguel Justel, Director (Puerto Rico)
Marcus Ranney, Director (India)
Alicia Hullinger, ex officio Director (United States)
Magdalena Nowicka Mook, ex officio Director (United States)
Pat Mathews, ex officio Director (United States)