

The Transformation of Education: Democracy and Humanism in Achieving SDGs Amidst Global Challenges and Post-Humanistic Policies

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ABSTRACT

Global education policies influenced by post-humanism and technocracy risk shifting the focus from democratic and humanist values to technical efficiency. International frameworks, such as those from UNESCO and the OECD, emphasize productivity and technical skills, often at the expense of social values, human rights, and democratic participation. This approach neglects character development and critical thinking, essential for socially aware citizens. To counter this, education policies must align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Citizenship education should foster awareness of social rights, responsibility, and active participation. SDG 4.7 highlights the importance of inclusive democratic education that promotes diversity, equality, and empowerment. Additionally, integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) enhances collaboration, critical thinking, and respect for differences, reinforcing democratic societies. By aligning education with SDG targets, policymakers can ensure that education fosters ethical leadership, civic engagement, and sustainable social development. This approach underscores the need for policies that balance quantitative outcomes with character formation, building a more inclusive and democratic future.

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INTRODUCTION

Democratic and humanistic education has become a highly relevant issue in the context of current global education policies, particularly amidst international policy shifts increasingly influenced by post-humanism and technocracy [1]. Contemporary global education tends to shift away from a humanistic approach that prioritizes human values and individual freedom, moving instead toward policies that are more technocentric and efficiency-oriented [2]. These policies, as promoted by organizations such as UNESCO and OECD, often neglect the importance of character development, human rights, and social awareness in education. Post-humanism, which frequently views humans as part of a broader ecosystem and prioritizes technology and technical solutions, has the potential to diminish the role of democratic values in education [3].

The presence of global challenges such as climate change, social inequality, and rapid technological advancement further underscores the importance of maintaining education rooted in democratic and humanistic values. Education that emphasizes active participation and equality in society is crucial for fostering social awareness capable of addressing global problems [4]. In this regard, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), highlight the need for an education system that not only enhances technical skills but also promotes human rights, inclusivity, and democratic participation. However, education policies that tend to focus on quantitative outcomes and technocratic

solutions often overlook the importance of shaping individuals with a critical understanding of society and the world around them [5].

Recent literature indicates a significant shift in international education policies, which are increasingly influenced by technocentric perspectives that emphasize efficiency and productivity. Policies advocated by organizations like UNESCO and OECD prioritize economic and technological aspects over social, humanistic, and democratic values. For instance, global education policies such as "sustainable futures" and "techno-solutionism" emphasize technology-based solutions, which can sometimes reduce the role of humans in the educational process itself [2]. This creates a stark contrast between the vision of democratic education, which prioritizes participation and social awareness, and the vision of a more pragmatic and technical approach to education [6].

The current research gap remains limited in examining the impact of post-humanistic policies and technocentrism on democratic and humanistic education. Most studies tend to focus more on the economic and technical aspects of global education policies, while paying insufficient attention to the importance of social and political values that must be preserved in education. Policies that prioritize efficiency and measurable outcomes often overlook the need to create individuals with social awareness and the ability to actively participate in democratic life [7]. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring how global education policies can better support education that emphasizes democratic and humanistic values [8].

This research provides novelty by analyzing the relationship between democratic education and global education policies within the context of post-humanism and technocracy in greater depth. Unlike previous studies, which predominantly discuss education within the framework of globalization or technocracy, this study offers a new perspective on how international education policies can better support democratic and inclusive education [9]. The research aims to offer fresh insights into how education policies can serve as effective tools for strengthening democratic values in addressing global challenges, and for counteracting the influence of post-humanism, which tends to diminish the role of humanistic values in education [4].

By fostering a deeper understanding of the implications of global policies on democratic education, this study is expected to make an important contribution to the formulation of more humanistic and democratic education policies in the future. This approach will emphasize the importance of education that is not only based on efficiency and productivity but also prioritizes moral development, social growth, and active participation in society. In this way, education can fulfill its role as a tool to strengthen democracy and humanistic values amid the ever-evolving global challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative interpretative literature review approach to critically examine scholarly works, policy reports, and books related to democratic education, humanism, and global education policies promoted by international organizations such as UNESCO and the OECD. The literature review method was chosen because the aim of this research is not to test hypotheses but to understand and critique conceptual constructions of democracy and humanism within global educational discourses. By analyzing and synthesizing a range of sources, this study seeks to identify emerging themes and theoretical trends that reveal how global education policies influence democratic and humanistic values in education.

The data for this research are drawn from academic journal articles, policy documents, and books published within the past decade, focusing particularly on materials discussing democratic education, humanism in education, and global education policy orientations toward sustainable futures and techno-solutionism. The sources were collected through systematic searches of major academic databases such as Scopus, ERIC, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate, using keywords including "*democratic education*," "*humanistic education*," "*UNESCO education policy*," "*OECD*

global competence,” and “*techno-solutionism in education*.” Each selected source was reviewed to extract its main arguments, theoretical orientation, and implications for educational practice and policy.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis following the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This process involved a comprehensive reading of the selected literature to identify recurring concepts, theoretical alignments, and critical perspectives. Key themes such as the decline of humanism in education, the influence of global governance on educational values, the intersection of sustainability and democracy, and the rise of techno-solutionism were identified and analyzed. Through iterative categorization and synthesis, the study develops a conceptual understanding of how global education policies may contribute to the erosion or transformation of democratic and humanistic dimensions in education.

To enhance validity and reliability, the study applies source triangulation, comparing insights from academic research, international policy documents, and institutional reports. Interpretative accuracy is strengthened through peer debriefing and cross-checking with existing theoretical frameworks in global education and democratic theory. This methodological rigor ensures that the analysis remains balanced and critically informed.

Ultimately, the research method emphasizes a critical and interpretive stance toward global education policy. It seeks to uncover how policy frameworks—often framed around efficiency, sustainability, and technological innovation—can inadvertently marginalize democratic participation and humanistic character formation. By engaging with diverse scholarly and institutional perspectives, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the tensions between global policy imperatives and the foundational values of education as a democratic and humanistic enterprise [4], [6].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Shift in Educational Paradigms in Global Policies

In recent years, there has been a significant shift in the global educational paradigm, moving away from democratic and humanistic approaches toward policies that are more technology- and sustainability-focused. Education, which was originally aimed at developing critical thinking skills and fostering participatory engagement in society, is now increasingly centered on mastering technological competencies and addressing sustainability-related challenges [10]. These policies, promoted by international organizations such as UNESCO and OECD, place greater emphasis on the importance of technical skills in tackling global challenges such as climate change, social inequality, and technological advancement. This approach prioritizes the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in education for sustainability, leading to the integration of STEM and STEAM into curricula [11].

This paradigm shift is also evident in the policies implemented by UNESCO and OECD, where the focus on global competencies and technical skills has become increasingly dominant. For instance, the OECD, through its PISA program, aims to assess educational achievements more comprehensively, while also emphasizing non-cognitive skills relevant to the workforce, such as problem-solving and collaboration. With the growing focus on “learning outcomes,” education is increasingly viewed as a tool for preparing individuals to enter the global job market, rather than equipping them to actively participate in democratic processes [12]. This emphasis on practical skills often diminishes attention to deep learning about the democratic and humanistic values that underpin education in many countries [13].

The paradigm shift is further reflected in the increasing use of technology in education. With growing reliance on technology, many education policies now stress the importance of digital skills and the use of technology to support a more inclusive and sustainable global education system. International organizations, including UNESCO, have launched various initiatives to integrate digital technologies into education, particularly to improve accessibility and the quality of education [14]. However, while technology holds the potential to enhance education, there are concerns

that this technology-driven approach may neglect the importance of education that prioritizes active participation in democracy and the development of social and humanistic values [15].



Figure 1. Shifting Paradigms in Education from Humanistic to Technocratic

Although efforts have been made to link education policies with sustainability and global competencies, the greatest challenge remains balancing the focus on technical skills with the need to preserve education that fosters active engagement in democracy. Policies that are overly focused on measurable outcomes, such as test scores or skills that can be immediately applied in the workforce, risk neglecting the importance of education that instills democratic and humanistic values [16]. For example, while UNESCO supports education focused on the SDGs, its implementation within overly technocentric education systems can exacerbate social inequality and reduce opportunities for individuals to fully develop as active citizens [6].

Therefore, even though there is strong momentum to integrate technology and sustainability into education, it is crucial to continually recognize the role of democratic and humanistic education in shaping individuals with a deep understanding of society and their responsibilities in addressing global challenges [17]. The educational paradigm must account for the need to foster active participation in democratic life while ensuring that the skills taught remain relevant to contemporary developments and global challenges [18].

Table 1. Comparison of Humanistic and Technocratic Education Approaches in Global Education Policies

Aspect	Humanistic Education	Technocratic Education
Educational Goal	Character development, critical thinking, and democratic participation	Enhancement of technical skills and workforce efficiency
Curriculum Focus	Citizenship education, human rights, creativity, and empathy	STEM, digital skills, and economic productivity
Role of Teachers	Facilitators encouraging discussion and exploration of social values	Instructors delivering specific skill-based training
Role of Students	Active participants developing social and political awareness	Future workers prepared for the labor market
Teaching Methods	Dialogue-based, reflective, and problem-solving approaches	Target-driven, output-focused, and data-driven evaluation
Measure of Success	Ability to think critically, social responsibility, and democratic participation	Test scores, job skills, and industry readiness
Contribution to SDGs	Supports SDG 4.7 (global education & human rights) and SDG 16 (peace & justice)	Supports SDG 8 (decent work & economic growth)

Challenges of Post-Humanism to Democratic Education

Post-humanism, with its primary focus on technology-based solutions, often conflicts with the principles of education that emphasize individual development and social justice values. This approach prioritizes technology as the main tool for solving global problems, reduces reliance on humans as agents of change, and frequently overlooks the critical role of education in fostering social and political awareness [2]. In this context, post-humanism risks diminishing attention to the development of individuals' capacity to participate in democracy, which is a central goal of democratic education. Policies that prioritize technical solutions often neglect the teaching of human rights, social justice, and political participation as integral components of the educational process [19].

The technology-driven approach of post-humanism often aims at efficiency and resource optimization but can limit opportunities for critical thinking and democratic dialogue. For example, education policies focusing on "sustainable futures" and "techno-solutionism" place greater emphasis on technical skills that can be quantitatively measured, often at the expense of civic education that introduces democratic values and the importance of participation in political processes [20]. This not only hampers the development of active and socially conscious citizens but also inhibits the growth of critical thinking, which is an essential aspect of democratic education. Technology is frequently viewed as a tool to address social and environmental issues without adequately accounting for the complexities and inequities present within society [21].

Global policies that promote technology-based solutions often overlook the critical aspects of civic education, which emphasize the development of critical thinking and active engagement in democracy. For instance, global citizenship education focused on sustainability (sustainable citizenship) faces significant challenges in post-authoritarian contexts, where education must lay the groundwork for new forms of citizenship that support democracy [22]. In many countries, education curricula tend to prioritize the mastery of practical skills to address environmental issues while failing to sufficiently emphasize the importance of active political participation grounded in democratic values [23].

The challenges faced by democratic education have grown significantly with the emergence of the post-humanist paradigm, which emphasizes solving social problems through technology, ultimately reducing space for more humanistic citizenship values [24]. Technology is often regarded as a quick solution to major challenges, but this perspective risks overlooking the importance of learning that focuses on human relationships and an understanding of social responsibility. Technology-based solutions, as reflected in education policies that prioritize measurable outcomes and global competencies, often fail to sufficiently address the need for education that shapes individual character within a broader social and political context [25].

The shift in focus from democratic education, which underscores the importance of political participation, to more technocentric education risks exacerbating existing social inequalities [26]. Reliance on technology, without considering the active role of communities in education and policymaking, can widen the gap between individuals with access to technology and those without. This inequality may further hinder efforts to cultivate an inclusive democratic culture, where every individual has the opportunity to actively participate in social and political life. Therefore, truly democratic education must strive to create spaces where every individual can participate and develop their capacity to contribute to societal improvement [27].

Although technology-based solutions promoted by post-humanism offer potential for addressing global challenges, they must not overshadow the importance of education that emphasizes democratic values and active participation in social and political processes. The global policy implications for inclusive and democratic education can be seen in efforts to design curricula that not only prioritize technical skills and global competencies but also support the development of individuals' capacity to engage in democratic life [4]. Technology-based education must be

implemented alongside efforts to strengthen civic education and social awareness, ensuring that individuals are not only part of an efficient system but also agents of change in inclusive and democratic societies [28].

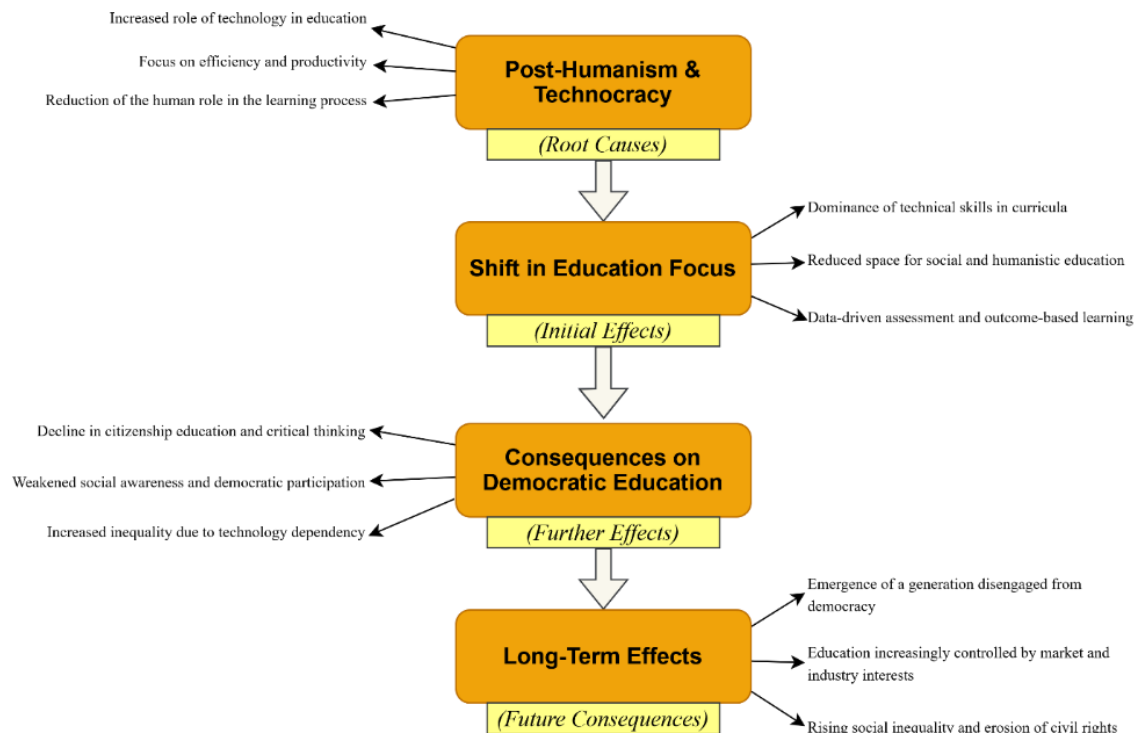


Figure 2. The Cause-Effect Flowchart of Post-Humanism Challenges to Democratic Education

The Implications of Global Policies on Inclusive and Democratic Education

Global education policies in recent years have had a significant impact on inclusive education and social equality. Although efforts have been made to expand access to education for all levels of society, policies that prioritize efficiency and quantitative outcomes often reduce attention to the values of inclusivity and social justice [29]. For instance, policies driven by international performance indicators, such as those implemented by OECD and UNESCO, tend to emphasize objectively measurable outcomes without adequately considering the diverse needs of students or the existing inequalities within societies. This can lead to disparities in access to education, hindering the achievement of truly inclusive and democratic education [30].

Meanwhile, policy approaches that focus heavily on technology and efficiency frequently overlook the importance of education that encourages active participation in democratic life [31]. Policies centered on the use of technology as a solution for improving global education outcomes can diminish the space for teaching citizenship and social values, which are essential for building inclusive and just societies. In some cases, technology can exacerbate inequalities, particularly in developing countries where challenges persist in providing adequate technological access to all students, both in terms of infrastructure and training [32].

The tension between policies promoting active student engagement in democratic processes and those prioritizing efficiency highlights a significant challenge in contemporary global education. On one hand, education policies that emphasize student involvement in democratic processes stress the importance of deep learning about social and political rights and the development of students' capacities to actively participate in community life [33]. On the other hand, policies that focus more on technology and efficiency risk reducing opportunities for students to learn about

these values. Policies that are primarily focused on technical skills and measurable outcomes often fail to provide sufficient space for the development of critical awareness, which is essential for functioning democracies [34].

Education policies that prioritize social equity and democratic participation require a more holistic approach to curriculum and teaching practices. Inclusive education, which not only ensures access to education for all students but also guarantees that all voices are heard in decision-making processes, is key to building a fair and equitable society [35]. Applying the principles of social justice in education policies, as suggested by inclusive approaches focused on diversity and political representation, is essential to achieving truly inclusive education [36].

However, while inclusive policies aim to address social inequalities and provide access to education for all students, their implementation is often hindered by policies that place greater emphasis on efficiency and measurable outcomes. Education systems that focus on measurable results risk overlooking the social and cultural factors that influence students' participation in the educational process [37]. Effective and inclusive education should be responsive to individual differences rather than relying solely on standardized parameters such as test scores or academic outcomes [38].

Inclusive and democratic education requires greater attention to active participation from all stakeholders, including students, teachers, and the broader community, in educational policymaking [39]. The success of education policies that are truly inclusive and democratic depends on a commitment to ensuring equal and fair access for all individuals and on guaranteeing that everyone involved in education can play an active role in decision-making processes. The implementation of education policies that support diversity and equity must take into account the diverse perspectives and experiences of students while providing space for the development of their social and political identities [40].

Recommendations for Future Education Policies

To strengthen democratic and humanistic education amidst global policy changes, future education policies must place greater emphasis on learning that prioritizes humanistic values and active participation in society. Democratic education, which focuses on developing critical thinking skills, dialogue, and respect for diversity, should be at the core of education policies [8]. The implementation of more inclusive curricula that promote diversity throughout global education systems will foster a more equitable and empowered society. This recommendation aligns with research showing that direct experiences with democratic practices in schools can enhance political participation and trust in political institutions [41].

It is also crucial to create education systems capable of addressing social inequalities and facilitating the full participation of all individuals, regardless of their social or economic backgrounds [42]. Policies that promote diversity and inclusion, both inside and outside the classroom, should be prioritized to ensure equal opportunities for all students. In this context, education must emphasize the development of emotional and social skills, such as the ability to collaborate and appreciate differing perspectives, which are vital in democratic societies [43].

Education grounded in humanistic values and diversity can also be advanced by strengthening curricula that prioritize participatory democracy. Curricula that teach about human rights, social justice, and the importance of active roles in democratic processes can enhance students' understanding of their responsibilities as citizens [44]. Research shows that involving students in classroom decision-making and school governance can deepen their understanding of democracy and political participation [45].

Furthermore, promoting active participation and equity through education can be achieved by introducing more interactive and dialogic approaches to teaching [46]. Teaching methods that emphasize collaboration among students, teachers, and the community can enhance students' understanding of the importance of diversity and justice in social life. These strategies include project-based learning and problem-based learning, which require students to work

together to address social and political issues. This approach not only improves academic skills but also develops their citizenship skills [47].

To realize truly inclusive education, future policies must encourage closer collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and civil society [48]. Strengthening these relationships will create an environment that supports diversity and equality, as well as provide opportunities for all students to participate in social and political life. The establishment of intersectoral networks that reinforce inclusion and diversity in education, while promoting open dialogue among communities, will help address global challenges such as migration and social inequality [49].

As a final step, policies should support the active involvement of students in educational decision-making, not only teaching them about democracy but also providing them with direct experience in participating in such processes [50]. Through policies that prioritize student participation in educational decisions, we can ensure that each new generation is prepared to contribute to the development of an inclusive and just democracy [51], [52]. This approach will help create a fairer society where every individual has equal opportunities to grow and participate in social and political life [53], [54].

CONCLUSION

Global education policies, though designed to address pressing global issues such as climate change, inequality, and technological transformation, often risk overlooking the essential values of democracy and humanism. The increasing dominance of post-humanistic and technocratic paradigms has redirected education from cultivating critical, ethical, and socially conscious citizens toward producing technically competent individuals who meet market-oriented objectives. This shift undermines the moral and civic mission of education as a means of nurturing empathy, equity, and participatory democracy. Therefore, education must be repositioned as a human-centered process that harmonizes technological innovation with ethical awareness, civic engagement, and social responsibility. Policies should prioritize inclusivity, character formation, and active citizenship alongside digital and technical competencies, ensuring that education remains both transformative and humane.

Future education frameworks should integrate humanistic and democratic perspectives into global agendas by embedding civic education, ethics, and intercultural understanding within curricula in alignment with SDG 4.7 and SDG 16. Policymakers, educators, and civil society must collaborate to design participatory systems that give voice to all stakeholders, including students and teachers, in educational decision-making. Governments and international bodies such as UNESCO and OECD are encouraged to develop balanced models that merge humanistic learning with technological literacy. Further research should explore context-specific approaches to implementing democratic and humanistic principles in education, with special attention to teacher training, curriculum design, and community participation. Strengthening these dimensions will ensure that education remains not only a vehicle for economic progress but also a foundation for social justice, democratic resilience, and sustainable human development.

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Author Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the conception, design, analysis, and writing of this study. Emir Kaya was primarily responsible for developing the theoretical framework and drafting the initial manuscript. Selim Aydın contributed to the literature analysis, data synthesis, and critical revision of the content. Defne Kaya coordinated the manuscript structure and ensured the overall coherence of the discussion and conclusion. All authors discussed the results, provided input at every stage, and approved the final version of the manuscript for publication.

Conflicts of Interest

The author(s) declare no conflict of interest related to this research.

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