

UPF Int'l: Educating the Heart - Unification Thought and Global Education

Tageldin Hamad
January 24, 2026



January 24 marks the [International Day of Education](#), established by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 73/25 in 2018. Each year, this observance invites the global community to reflect on education as a foundation for personal integrity, social cohesion, and sustainable peace. The Universal Peace Federation ([UPF](#)) understands education not merely as a technical system of instruction, but as a formative process that shapes character, values, and social responsibility. When education focuses exclusively on technical competence, it risks reinforcing fragmentation; when grounded in values, it becomes a force for dignity and cohesion.

Within Unification Thought, which provides the philosophical foundation of UPF, education is understood as the integrated development of three interrelated dimensions: the cultivation of empathy and inner motivation, the formation of ethical responsibility, and the acquisition and responsible application of knowledge and skills. Together, these dimensions aim to form the whole human being.

The first dimension is often described as the education of the heart. It emphasizes emotional intelligence, empathy, responsibility, and the capacity to live for the benefit of others. UPF founders [Dr. Hak Ja Han](#) and the late [Rev. Sun Myung Moon](#) consistently affirmed that education fulfills its true purpose when it shapes character and conscience, not when it merely transmits information.

Building on this foundation, the second dimension focuses on the education of norms. This stage involves ethical reasoning, respect for human dignity, and social responsibility. Families, communities, and educational institutions collectively provide the environment in which honesty, self-discipline, mutual respect, and civic responsibility are learned and practiced. When ethical norms are internalized, individuals become constructive members of society, contributing to social trust and cooperation across differences.

The third dimension concerns education for creative and responsible knowledge application. It encompasses academic, technical, and professional learning, as well as the ethical use of human creativity in relation to society and the natural world. Grounded in empathy and moral responsibility, innovation is

directed toward the common good rather than narrow self-interest. In this way, intellect is guided by values, and achievement is oriented toward service.

This threefold understanding of education closely aligns with contemporary international frameworks. [Sustainable Development Goal 4](#), particularly [Target 4.7](#), emphasizes education's role in promoting sustainable development, global citizenship, human rights, and a culture of peace. UNESCO's initiatives on [Global Citizenship Education](#) and ethics education further underscore the importance of empathy, critical thinking, and shared responsibility in an interconnected world. These principles were also highlighted in the UNESCO [Futures of Education](#) initiative, which called for whole-person education as the basis for human dignity and social cohesion.

UPF actively promotes character education, ethical leadership, and responsible citizenship across diverse cultural contexts. This vision resonates with the emphasis on human flourishing articulated at the United Nations [Transforming Education Summit](#) in 2022, which highlighted the integration of learning, values, and responsibility throughout the life course.

From the perspective of UPF's founders, human development is a progressive formation of relational competence. Education enables individuals to develop empathy and self-regulation, acquire ethical judgment, and assume responsibility within families, institutions, and society. Learning is thus understood not as knowledge accumulation alone, but as the cultivation of mature social agency that strengthens intergenerational responsibility and sustainable peace.

This educational philosophy is reflected in institutions inspired by the founders, such as [Sun Moon University](#) in the Republic of Korea, which integrates academic excellence with character formation, and the [HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership](#) in the United States, which emphasizes ethics, peace studies, and leadership. These institutions and other schools embody the conviction that schools and universities are formative spaces where future leaders develop both competence and moral direction.

The vision consistently articulated by the founders of the Universal Peace Federation affirms that lasting peace is sustained when individuals, families, and societies are guided by shared values and mutual responsibility. Education plays a central role in nurturing this vision by forming people capable of empathy, ethical judgment, and cooperation beyond cultural, religious, and national boundaries.

In an era marked by division and misinformation, education that integrates character, values, and knowledge offers a durable foundation for peace. When learning shapes both the heart and the mind, it prepares individuals to act with wisdom and responsibility. For UPF, the education of the heart is a strategic contribution to peacebuilding and sustainable development. Lasting peace begins when education forms human beings who recognize humanity as one family under God and are prepared to cooperate across boundaries in service of the common good.