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## THE EDUCATION DILEMMA: ECONOMIC GROWTH VS. HUMAN VALUES IN TIMOR-LESTE

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**Abstract:** This article explores the education dilemma in Timor-Leste and its implications for sustainable development. Drawing on the perceptions of various stakeholders, including government officials, educators, students, parents, community leaders, religious leaders and industry, the study examines the tension between the imperatives of economic growth and the promotion of human values in the education system. The main arguments highlight the importance of balancing vocational training with humanistic education, fostering inclusive decision-making processes and promoting stakeholder collaboration.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Development; Economic Growth; Human Values, Vocational Training; Holistic Education.

### O Dilema da Educação: Crescimento Económico Vs. Valores Humanos em Timor-Leste

**Resumo:** Este artigo explora o dilema da educação em Timor-Leste e as suas implicações para o desenvolvimento sustentável. Com base nas perceções de várias partes interessadas, incluindo funcionários do governo, educadores, estudantes, pais, líderes comunitários, líderes religiosos e indústrias, o estudo examina a tensão entre os imperativos do crescimento económico e a promoção dos valores humanos no sistema educativo. Os principais argumentos destacam a importância de equilibrar a formação profissional com a educação humanística, fomentando processos de tomada de decisão inclusivos e promovendo a colaboração das partes interessadas.

**Palavras-chave:** Desenvolvimento Sustentável; Crescimento Económico; Valores Humanos; Formação Profissional; Educação Holística.

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## I. Introduction

Education in Timor-Leste stands at a crossroads, torn between the imperatives of economic growth and the preservation of human values. As one of the youngest nations in the world, Timor-Leste emerged from decades of conflict and occupation with aspirations for rapid development and prosperity. Central to this vision is the role of education as a catalyst for economic advancement and social transformation (Odit, 2021, p.143-145). However, this pursuit of economic growth often clashes with the fundamental values that underpin a holistic education system, such as critical thinking, empathy, and cultural preservation.

Economically, Timor-Leste, despite its rich natural resources, grapples with significant economic challenges. According to recent World Bank data, Timor-Leste's GDP per capita stood at \$1,357 in 2020, making it one of the poorest countries in Southeast Asia (the World Bank report, 2020). This economic fragility underscores the urgent need for strategies to boost economic growth and improve living standards for its population.

While Timor-Leste has made strides in expanding access to education since gaining independence in 2002, significant disparities persist. UNESCO data indicates that primary school enrolment rates have increased steadily, reaching 95% in 2019 (the World Bank Report, 2020). However, quality remains a concern, with high dropout rates and low literacy levels among children and youth (the World Bank Report, 2020). Furthermore, access to higher education remains an issue, particularly in rural areas, exacerbating inequalities in educational attainment.

The labour market in Timor-Leste is characterized by a mismatch between the skills demanded by employers and those possessed by the workforce. The Asian Development Bank reports that while agriculture employs most of the population, there is a growing need for skilled workers in construction, tourism, and services (ADB Report, 2023, 237-239). This highlights the importance of aligning education and training programs with the evolving needs of the labour market to foster economic growth and reduce unemployment.

Timor-Leste's education system grapples with the delicate balance between preserving cultural heritage and embracing global trends. The country's



diverse linguistic and cultural landscape presents both opportunities and challenges for education policy. While efforts have been made to promote local language (maternal language) and cultural practices in schools, there are concerns that the emphasis on technical and vocational education may marginalize traditional knowledge systems and undermine cultural identity (Taylor, 2015, 119-135).

Timor-Leste receives significant support from international donors and development agencies to strengthen its education system. However, the influx of aid comes with its own set of challenges, including donor-driven agendas that may prioritize short-term economic gains over long-term human development goals (ADB Report, 2023, 237). Balancing the expectations of international partners with the need to uphold national sovereignty and cultural integrity is a key consideration for education policymakers in Timor-Leste.

By examining these data points and explanations, we gain a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics shaping the education dilemma in Timor-Leste, setting the stage for a nuanced exploration of the challenges and opportunities ahead.

## II. Economic Growth Imperatives

### *2.1. Importance of Education in Economic Growth*

Education plays a pivotal role in fostering economic growth and development, as emphasized by various global organizations and reports.

According to the World Bank, education is a critical determinant of economic advancement, particularly in low-income countries such as Timor-Leste. The World Bank's report in 2020 indicates that each additional year of schooling correlates with an average increase of 0.37% in GDP per capita (the WB report, 2020).

UNESCO's Education for All Global Monitoring Report underscores the substantial returns on investment in education. Estimates from UNESCO suggest that every dollar invested in education yields between \$10 to \$15 in economic growth over an individual's working life (UNESCO, 2021).

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) further supports this perspective by highlighting education's role in boosting productivity and competitiveness.

Studies referenced by the ADB in 2019 demonstrate a positive correlation between higher educational attainment and increased labour productivity in developing countries (ADB, 2019).

In conclusion, these insights underscore the indispensable link between education and economic growth. Investing in education not only enhances individual earning potential but also contributes significantly to national prosperity by fostering a skilled workforce and promoting sustainable development in countries like Timor-Leste and beyond.

### *2.2. Government Policies and Initiatives*

The Timorese government's Strategic Development Plan (2011-2030) places significant emphasis on education as a cornerstone for achieving sustainable development and reducing poverty. This comprehensive strategy sets ambitious goals for increasing enrolment rates, improving educational quality, and aligning education with the needs of the economy.

Aligned with this overarching strategy, the National Education Strategic Plan (2011-2030) provides a structured framework for educational reform. It prioritizes key areas such as curriculum development, teacher training, infrastructure investment, and the expansion of technical and vocational education (PDN, 2030).

A pivotal aspect of the government's efforts is the establishment of technical schools such as the Betano Technical School (IPB), the Hera Polytechnic of *Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL)*, and other Vocational Training (TVET) initiatives (Ximenes, 2022, 5-15). These programs aim to enhance the employability of youth and adults by equipping them with skills that are directly relevant to the market. The policy emphasizes partnerships with industry stakeholders and the nationwide establishment of vocational training centres (Fairman, 2017, p. 20).

Supporting these initiatives is the Education Sector Investment Program (ESIP), which mobilizes resources from both domestic and international sources (FDCH, 2017, 1-30). This program plays a crucial role in funding priority education projects that improve access, enhance quality, and promote equity and inclusiveness within the education system (Beck, Margie, 2024, 1-19).



By leveraging these interconnected policies and initiatives, policymakers and stakeholders in Timor-Leste aim to strengthen the link between education and economic growth. These collaborative efforts are essential for developing a skilled workforce capable of driving sustainable development and fostering broader socio-economic prosperity across the country (Beck, Margie, 2024, 1-15).

### III. Human Values and Education

#### *3.1. Significance of Human Values in Education*

Human values form the moral and ethical foundation of society, guiding individuals in their interactions with others and shaping their behaviour and decision-making (Mijuskovic, 2021, 155-160). In the context of education, the cultivation of human values is essential for nurturing well-rounded individuals who are not only academically proficient but also empathetic, compassionate, and socially responsible (Toomey, 2023, 30-35). By instilling values such as integrity, respect, tolerance, and solidarity, education plays a pivotal role in fostering inclusive and cohesive societies where diversity is embraced, and conflicts are resolved through dialogue and understanding (Eden, 2024, p. 23).

Furthermore, human values contribute to the holistic development of individuals by promoting their emotional and psychological well-being (Bojanowska, 2021, p. 700). Research has shown that students who receive education emphasising human values exhibit higher levels of self-esteem, resilience, and interpersonal relations, leading to better academic performance and overall life satisfaction (Kristjansson, 2023, 210-215). Moreover, a values-based education equips individuals with the moral compass to navigate ethical dilemmas and make ethical choices in their personal and professional lives, thereby contributing to the greater good of society (Kristjansson, 2023, 210-215).

#### *3.2. Importance of Values in the Educational Curriculum*

Values such as critical thinking, empathy, and social responsibility are pivotal in modern educational discourse, yet their integration into curricula varies among different educational systems (Lovat, 2011, 150-151).

In Timor-Leste, the educational curriculum emphasizes foundational subjects such as language, mathematics, social studies, and natural sciences at the elementary level. However, compared to other educational frameworks, the explicit incorporation of critical thinking, empathy, and writing skills may not be as prominent.

As students progress through secondary education, encompassing lower secondary (grades 7-9) and upper secondary (grades 10-12) levels, the curriculum continues to prioritize these core subjects while introducing more specialized topics. While the curriculum aims to equip students with academic knowledge and practical skills relevant to their future careers or further education, the explicit teaching of logic, ethics philosophy and other skill writing may receive less emphasis than in some other educational systems.

In higher education institutions in Timor-Leste, such as universities and vocational schools, there is a focus on deepening knowledge in specific fields of study (Ximenes, 2022, 5-15). While critical thinking and empathy by obtaining logic, ethics and philosophy are recognized as valuable skills for navigating complex issues and fostering understanding in diverse contexts, their integration into the higher education curriculum may vary depending on the discipline and educational goals (Southworth, 2022).

Critical thinking empowers individuals to analyse information critically and make informed decisions, skills increasingly crucial in today's globalized world (Southworth, 2022). Similarly, empathy promotes understanding and respect for diverse perspectives, logic helps in rigorous reasoning, and philosophy encourages deeper reflection on fundamental questions, all contributing to a more inclusive and cohesive society (Lovat, 2011, 150-152). While these values and subjects are acknowledged as essential for personal and societal growth, their integration into educational practices in Timor-Leste may benefit from further attention and development.

In conclusion, while Timor-Leste's educational curriculum prioritizes foundational subjects and practical skills, enhancing the explicit inclusion and emphasis on critical thinking, and empathy by obtaining logic, ethics and philosophy could better prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. By nurturing these values and subjects



alongside academic knowledge, education can empower students to become thoughtful, compassionate, intellectually rigorous, and socially responsible global citizens.

## IV. The Dilemma Unveiled

### 4.1. *Conflict Between Economic Growth and Human Values*

The pursuit of economic growth in Timor-Leste may at times conflict with the promotion of human values in education, as economic imperatives often prioritize short-term gains over long-term societal well-being (Rogers, 2001, 501-503).

One such conflict arises from the emphasis on technical and vocational education geared towards meeting the immediate needs of the labour market. While technical skills are essential for economic productivity, an overemphasis on vocational training may marginalize the cultivation of humanistic values such as critical thinking, empathy, and social responsibility in the educational curriculum (Colley, 2003, 480-490).

Additionally, pressure to increase enrolment rates and improve educational outcomes may lead to a narrow focus on standardized testing and rote memorization, neglecting the holistic development of students and diminishing their capacity for ethical decision-making and civic engagement.

### 4.2. *Economic Priorities Often Overshadow Humanistic Values*

In response to labour market demands, Timor-Leste's education system has placed significant emphasis on technical and vocational training programs aimed at equipping students with job-specific skills (Ximenes, 2022, 10-15). However, these programs may inadvertently prioritize economic outcomes over the holistic development of students, leading to a neglect of humanistic values in the educational curriculum.

Moreover, limited resources and funding constraints may compel educational institutions to prioritize investments in infrastructure and technology at the expense of programs promoting human values and character development (Ximenes, 2022, 5-15). Consequently, schools may lack adequate resources and support systems to integrate values-based education into their teaching practices effectively.

Additionally, donor-driven agendas and external pressures from international aid organizations may shape educational priorities in Timor-Leste, sometimes favouring economic goals over humanistic values (Kim, 2017). For example, funding tied to specific development projects or initiatives may incentivize policymakers to prioritize technical and vocational education programs aligned with donor priorities, sidelining broader efforts to promote values-based education and social-emotional learning.

These examples illustrate how economic priorities can overshadow humanistic values in Timor-Leste's education system, highlighting the tensions between economic growth imperatives and the promotion of holistic development and human flourishing (Ximenes, 2022, 13-15). By acknowledging and addressing these tensions, policymakers can work towards reconciling the pursuit of economic growth with the promotion of human values in education, fostering a more inclusive and equitable educational environment for all students.

## V. Implications and Consequences

### *5.1. Potential Consequences of Prioritizing Economic Growth over Human Values*

Prioritizing economic growth over human values in education can have far-reaching consequences that extend beyond short-term gains, impacting the fabric of society and the well-being of individuals.

Moreover, a narrow focus on economic outcomes may exacerbate existing inequalities within society (Aghion, 1999, 1630-1650). Specifically, individuals from marginalized communities or socio-economic backgrounds may be disproportionately affected by limited access to quality education that promotes human values (Aghion, 1999, 1630-1635). Consequently, this can perpetuate cycles of poverty and social exclusion, widening the gap between the privileged and the marginalized in the country.

Additionally, neglecting humanistic values in education can erode social cohesion and trust within communities (Giannakakis, 2020, 365-380). As a result, individuals may prioritize self-interest and material gain over collective well-being and shared values. This fragmentation can manifest in heightened social tensions, conflicts, and divisions along socio-economic, cultural, or religious lines, thereby undermining social harmony and stability.





Furthermore, a narrow focus on economic growth may lead to ethical dilemmas and moral compromises in decision-making processes (Graafland, 2006). This occurs as individuals and institutions prioritize short-term gains over long-term ethical considerations. Consequently, this can result in practices that exploit natural resources, violate human rights, or perpetuate social injustices, thereby undermining the ethical integrity of society and eroding public trust in institutions.

### *5.2. Long-Term Implications for Sustainable Development and Societal Well-being*

Considering the long-term implications, the consequences of prioritizing economic growth over human values in education can hinder sustainable development and societal well-being in several ways.

Therefore, sustainable development encompasses economic, social, and environmental dimensions, necessitating a balanced approach that integrates humanistic values into economic policies and practices (Landorf, 2008, 227-230). Neglecting human values in education undermines the foundation for sustainable development by perpetuating inequalities, fostering social fragmentation, and compromising ethical integrity. Consequently, this hinders progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and broader development objectives.

Finally, societal well-being encompasses factors such as health, education, social inclusion, and cultural vitality, reflecting the overall quality of life and happiness of individuals within a society (Hopkins, 2002, 15-20). Thus, prioritizing economic growth at the expense of human values in education undermines societal well-being by perpetuating inequalities, weakening social cohesion, and eroding the moral fabric of society. This can lead to widespread disillusionment, social unrest, and diminished overall quality of life for individuals and communities.

In summary, prioritizing economic growth over human values in education can have profound and long-lasting implications for societal development and well-being, thereby undermining the foundations for sustainable development and social progress. By recognizing the interconnectedness between economic growth and human values, policymakers can work towards a more integrated approach to education that promotes inclusive development, social cohesion, and ethical integrity, fostering a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

## VI. Stakeholder Perspectives – The Perspectives of Various Stakeholders on Addressing the Education Dilemma in Timor-Leste

### 6.1. *Government Officials’ Perspective*

Government officials in Timor-Leste emphasize the critical role of education in driving economic development and reducing poverty. They prioritize strategic investments in infrastructure, curriculum development, and teacher training to align educational goals with economic needs.

However, despite curriculum alignment with economic priorities, a significant challenge lies in the quality of teaching. Many teachers lack the necessary qualifications to effectively deliver the curriculum to students. This issue undermines the education system’s effectiveness. Teachers often rely on Google for teaching materials, which can leave students feeling they have not gained meaningful knowledge (Gusmão, Timor Post, 2024, p.10).

Recognizing this, the government has taken steps to address the issue. They are subsidizing universities to improve teacher training and resources. As part of these efforts, the IX Constitutional Government has begun selecting qualified teachers at basic and secondary levels to enhance teaching standards. The Minister of Education highlighted this initiative, stating:

To improve teacher quality, we are re-evaluating current teachers and recruiting qualified graduates from institutions like UNTL, KRISTAL, the Teacher School of Marista in Baucau Municipality, and João de Brito School in Dili to replace unqualified volunteers from the past (ME, TP, 10).

### 6.2. *Educators’ Perspectives*

In contrast, educators advocate for a holistic approach to education that balances economic imperatives with human values. One educator stated the following:

“In our daily teaching, we integrate critical thinking, ethics, and citizenship education into the curriculum to develop students who are not only intellectually qualified but also morally, ethically, and socially responsible” (Pereira, 23 July 2024).

Their focus is on empowering students with both practical skills and ethical principles to navigate the challenges of a rapidly changing society.



### *6.3. Students' Perspectives*

From the students' perspective, they are seeking educational opportunities that not only prepare them for meaningful employment but also nurture their personal and ethical development. They actively support initiatives that offer practical skills training, internships, and career guidance. Ronaldo Sequeira highlights this viewpoint:

As students, we need science and technology to enhance our skills for future employment. However, equally important is self-discipline and good character in society. Without these, even if people excel in science, they may engage in conflicts, violence, corruption, and other negative behaviours (Santos, 23 May 2024).

Furthermore, students desire a curriculum and qualified teaching staff that may encourage creativity, critical thinking, and social responsibility, in addition to vocational skills.

### *6.4. Parents' Perspectives*

Similarly, parents prioritize their children's future economic prospects while valuing moral and ethical education. They advocate for schools to offer a balanced curriculum that prepares students for both employment and responsible citizenship. Below is a statement from Jose de Jesus, a parent:

We intend for our children to excel in science and technology to secure good jobs in the future. However, we also prioritize their development as responsible members of society. Achieving mastery in both science and good character requires a comprehensive educational curriculum from elementary school through university (Guterres, 15 June 2024).

Their focus is on ensuring that educational reforms lead to tangible benefits for their children's future well-being and contribute to societal cohesion.

### *6.5. Community Leaders' Perspectives*

From the perspective of community leaders, they stress the importance of education in addressing local socio-economic challenges and preserving

cultural heritage. They actively support community-based initiatives that enhance access to education, promote Indigenous knowledge, and empower marginalized groups. Their advocacy is for educational policies that are responsive to community needs and values, thereby fostering inclusive development.

### *6.6. Religious Leaders*

In Timor-Leste, religious leaders underscore the moral and spiritual dimensions of education alongside economic and social development. They believe education is more than just acquiring skills; it is a transformative process that shapes individuals' character and values. Amo Domingos Godinho Araujo highlights this perspective:

Education is not just about mastering theories but about shaping character and fostering critical thinking. It enables individuals to make informed decisions and adapt to their social realities. Good education not only prepares youth for employment but also moulds them into responsible, engaged citizens crucial to national development. Education is the pathway to freedom and independence. (Araújo, TP, 2024, p. 7).

Derived from religious teachings, virtues like compassion, empathy, and respect for others are emphasized. Religious leaders advocate for including religious and moral education in the curriculum to cultivate ethical responsibility and foster communal harmony among students. This approach aims to build a cohesive society grounded in shared values.

### *6.7. Industry Representatives*

Industry representatives in Timor-Leste emphasize the critical need for a skilled workforce to drive economic growth and enhance global competitiveness. They advocate for educational reforms that align closely with industry needs. Industry representatives are unanimous that universities need to provide some practical skills and vocational training adapted to specific sectors such as agriculture, tourism, technology, oil and gas. Most of the curricula at higher education institutes do not correspond to the needs



of the market, so when we employ people, we must retrain them to meet our needs. Therefore, any curriculum development must involve the industries, to insert some needs into the curriculum, so that the results of the education or training can be easily used by the markets.

In line with this, Jorge Serrano, president of the CCI, believes that “we need to increase the quality and quantity of students in the agricultural sectors to produce and achieve our food sovereignty without depending on imports. In doing so, we must encourage all agriculture graduates to go to the farm and not to the office” (15 June 2024).

Their perspective underscores the importance of partnerships with educational institutions. This is to provide students with direct training, internships, and mentorship opportunities. They bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world employment demands.

## VII. Consensus and Divergence in Education Perspectives in Timor-Leste

### 7.1. *Areas of Consensus*

In Timor-Leste, there is widespread consensus regarding the pivotal role of education in national development. Stakeholders unanimously agree that a robust education system is crucial for fostering human capital, promoting national unity, and achieving sustainable development goals. This shared perspective underscores the nation’s commitment to leveraging education as a cornerstone of its socio-economic progress.

Furthermore, stakeholders, including religious leaders, share a recognition of the profound impact of education on shaping individuals and societies. They unanimously agree on the importance of instilling moral and ethical values within educational frameworks. This approach nurtures responsible citizenship and promotes social cohesion. The consensus also acknowledges the complementary roles of formal education and religious teachings in fostering holistic development. This ensures that education not only prepares students academically but also equips them with ethical principles essential for personal integrity and societal well-being.

Additionally, stakeholders in Timor-Leste emphasize the importance of equipping students with both practical skills and ethical values. This consensus

reflects the nation's aspiration to prepare its youth not only for the workforce but also to uphold cultural integrity and ethical standards crucial for societal cohesion and progress.

Moreover, all stakeholders recognize the imperative need for significant investments in education infrastructure, teacher training, and curriculum development in Timor-Leste. This collective acknowledgement underscores concerted efforts to enhance educational quality, expand access to education in remote areas, and align educational outcomes with the country's socio-economic priorities for sustainable growth.

There is also widespread recognition among stakeholders, including industry representatives, of the pivotal role education plays in preparing individuals for the workforce and boosting economic productivity. They agree on the necessity of collaboration between industries and educational institutions to ensure that educational programs meet industry standards and equip students with relevant skills. This consensus acknowledges the valuable role industries play in providing insights into evolving skill requirements and career pathways, which inform educational policies and curriculum development.

### *7.2. Areas of Divergence*

Despite areas of consensus, government officials in Timor-Leste often prioritize economic growth and job creation through education reforms. They emphasize vocational and technical training to meet immediate employment needs and stimulate economic productivity. In contrast, educators and community leaders advocate for a more holistic approach that integrates critical thinking, creativity, and cultural preservation alongside vocational skills development.

However, differences emerge in priorities between religious leaders and other stakeholders, such as government officials and educators. Religious leaders often prioritize spiritual and moral development as foundational to education, emphasizing values that transcend economic considerations. In contrast, government officials and educators may prioritize economic outcomes, viewing education primarily as a tool for enhancing national productivity and competitiveness. This divergence can lead to tensions over



the inclusion of religious education in the curriculum, balancing the need to respect diverse beliefs with concerns about secularism and inclusivity in a multicultural society like Timor-Leste.

Moreover, stakeholders hold varying perspectives on the balance between vocational training and the integration of humanistic values in Timor-Leste's education system. While some emphasize technical skills to support key economic sectors like agriculture and tourism, others stress the importance of incorporating humanistic values such as civic responsibility, environmental stewardship, and gender equality to foster a socially conscious and resilient society.

Furthermore, parents in Timor-Leste frequently prioritize their children's immediate economic prospects, seeking assurances that education will lead to stable employment and financial security. Educators, however, emphasize the long-term societal benefits of education, aiming to prepare students as active citizens capable of contributing to democratic governance, sustainable development, and cultural preservation.

Nevertheless, differences in priorities emerge between industries focused on addressing immediate skills gaps and educational stakeholders. Industry representatives prioritize specialized skills training to fill specific job vacancies and drive economic growth in key sectors. In contrast, educators may emphasize a curriculum that promotes critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability, preparing students for long-term career success and societal contributions beyond immediate employment needs. These divergent perspectives can create tensions regarding the balance between meeting industry demands and nurturing students' holistic development.

### *7.3. Collaboration and Partnership*

Engaging religious leaders in dialogue and collaboration with other stakeholders is crucial. This enriches the discourse on education reform and contributes to the development of inclusive and values-based education policies. By bridging these divergent perspectives, stakeholders can develop inclusive and values-based education policies. It respects both economic imperatives and the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of Timor-Leste. This collaborative approach ensures that education not only meets immediate

economic needs but also fosters a sense of moral responsibility and ethical awareness among future generations. It contributes to a harmonious and resilient society.

Engaging industries in the education dialogue is essential for aligning educational outcomes with evolving economic trends and technological advancements. By fostering partnerships and collaboration between industries, educational institutions, and policymakers, Timor-Leste can develop a dynamic and responsive education system. This system meets the current workforce needs. It equips students with the skills and competencies necessary to navigate future challenges. Moreover, it contributes effectively to national development.

In summary, the perspectives of Religious Leaders and Industry Representatives in Timor-Leste highlight both shared goals and potential areas of divergence in shaping the education landscape. Balancing these perspectives through inclusive dialogue and collaboration is essential. This develops comprehensive education policies. These promote both economic prosperity and the ethical development of individuals within a culturally diverse society.

## VIII. Towards a Resolution

It is essential to develop a curriculum that integrates vocational training with humanistic education, focusing on critical thinking, ethics, and civic engagement alongside practical skills (Boon, 2020). This balanced approach ensures that students not only acquire employable skills but also become active and responsible participants in society.

Investing in comprehensive teacher training programs is crucial (Elmore, 1997). These programs should empower educators to effectively deliver holistic education, providing ongoing professional development to keep them updated on best practices in pedagogy and curriculum content.

Collaboration among various stakeholders is key. Governments, educational institutions, industries, community organizations, religious leaders, parents, and students should work together (UNICEF Report, 2010, 77-81). This collaboration ensures that educational policies and programs reflect diverse perspectives and priorities.





Recognizing and accommodating diverse learning pathways is essential (UNICEF Report, 2010, p.32). By offering options such as vocational education, technical training, distance learning, and apprenticeship programs, educational pathways can be tailored to individual interests, aptitudes, and career aspirations.

Integrating entrepreneurship education is also vital, focusing on ethical practices, sustainability, and social responsibility (Sluis, 2008). This equips students to innovate responsibly, contribute to economic growth, and address societal challenges.

Engaging local communities in the education process is beneficial (Zeichner, 2016). By involving them in decision-making and leveraging community resources, communities take ownership of education and advocate for their needs.

Establishing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms ensures that educational reforms achieve both economic and humanistic objectives (UNICEF Report, 2010, 77-81). Using data-driven insights informs policy adjustments and continuous improvement efforts.

Promoting values-based leadership throughout the education system fosters integrity, transparency, and accountability (Shapiro, 2016). Cultivating ethical leadership among educators, administrators, and policymakers ensures that human values guide educational practices and decision-making.

Inclusive and participatory decision-making processes are crucial. Creating platforms for stakeholder engagement, fostering transparency, building stakeholder capacity, and respecting cultural diversity ensures that educational reforms meet diverse needs and aspirations (Kochung, 2011, 144-147).

By implementing these recommendations and fostering inclusive decision-making, Timor-Leste can reconcile the tension between economic growth and human values in its education system. This approach aims to foster a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable society.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the education dilemma in Timor-Leste presents a complex challenge that requires a multifaceted approach to reconcile the tension between economic growth and human values. Throughout this article, we have explored various perspectives from stakeholders representing government officials, educators, students, parents, community leaders, religious leaders, and industries.

Key arguments presented include the importance of balancing vocational training with humanistic education, the need for inclusive decision-making processes, and the significance of fostering a culture of collaboration and partnership among stakeholders. While there may be divergent views on the prioritization of economic growth versus human values, there is consensus on the transformative power of education in shaping individuals and societies.

Addressing the education dilemma is crucial for Timor-Leste's sustainable development. A well-rounded education system that equips students with both practical skills and ethical principles not only enhances economic productivity but also fosters social cohesion, responsible citizenship, and cultural preservation. By investing in education reforms that prioritize both economic prosperity and human flourishing, Timor-Leste can pave the way for a brighter and more inclusive future for its citizens.

Therefore, we call for collective action and commitment from all stakeholders to shape an education system that promotes holistic development and addresses the diverse needs and aspirations of Timor-Leste's population. By working together towards this common goal, we can build a more resilient, equitable, and prosperous society for generations to come.



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