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EDUCATION, TRAINING AND AGENDA 2030: WHAT PROGRESS ONE YEAR ON?

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Network for international policies and cooperation in education and training

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What is NORRAG?

NORRAG is a worldwide, multi-stakeholder network which has been seeking to inform, challenge and influence international education and training policies and cooperation for 30 years. Through networking and other forms of cooperation and institutional partnerships, it aims in particular to:

- Stimulate and disseminate timely, concise, critical analysis and act as an incubator for new ideas
- Broker knowledge at the interface between research, policy and practice

NORRAG's current programme focuses on the following themes:

- Education and training policies in the Agenda 2030
- Global governance of education and training and the politics of data
- Urban violence, youth and education
- International perspectives on technical and vocational skills development (TVSD) policies and practice

For more information, please visit: www.norrag.org

What is *NORRAG News*?

NORRAG News is a digital analytical report that is produced twice a year. Each issue has a large number of short, sharp articles, focusing on policy implications of research findings and/or on the practical implications of new policies on international education and training formulated by development agencies, foundations and NGOs. The niche of NORRAG has been to identify a number of 'red threads' running through the complexity of the debates and the current aid and cooperation discourse, and to dedicate special issues of *NORRAG News* to the critical analysis of these themes.

Many issues of *NORRAG News* have been translated into French and Spanish, as well as into Chinese and Arabic from 2014 onwards.

NORRAG News is supported by the Open Society Foundations (OSF) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), whilst its translation into Arabic is made possible thanks to the support of the Ministry of Higher Education of the Sultanate of Oman. None of these organisations is responsible for the content of *NORRAG News*.

Other ways to engage with NORRAG:

- NORRAG NEWSBite: http://norrag.wordpress.com/
  NORRAG's Blog about international education, training and development aid and policy.

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NORRAG News 54

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND AGENDA 2030:

WHAT PROGRESS ONE YEAR ON?

Initiating Memorandum for *NORRAG News (NN) 54*

'Like the 2030 Agenda as whole, SDG 4-Education 2030 resulted from what is arguably the most inclusive process of consultation in the history of the United Nations' (Naidoo, 2016 emphasis in original).[1]

Given this powerful claim about the consultative process, it is crucially important to know for education and training what has actually transpired globally, regionally and nationally since the education and other goals were confirmed in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) just a year ago in September 2015. Following the goal and target agreement for 2030, the question is 'What next?' How will these new targets be achieved? How will they be measured, and which indicators will be used? How will they be financed? Since the SDGs are aspirational global goals, the key issue now is if, and how, they will be translated into national and international policies around the globe over the coming years.

The formal governance and follow-up mechanisms are already in place, including the SDG 4-Education 2030 Steering Committee, and indicator frameworks are being developed and finalized. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) is playing a crucial role. Meanwhile, the *Global Education Monitoring Report 2016* has already started its annual reporting role on monitoring education in and across the SDGs.

There are a series of very major issues around implementing and monitoring raised by the world's new development agenda, and particularly its education and training dimensions. Here are some of them:

For the UN family, and especially the bodies concerned with education, training and capacity building: The SDG agenda is absolutely central to the UN's raison d'être and will be a core concern of many of its specialist agencies, including in education. Is the same true for other multi-lateral agencies and multi-stakeholder bodies?

For more developed, emerging and less developed economies: There is an ongoing discussion about the universality of the world's SDG agenda. What is the evidence that the world's largest economies are taking account of the SDG 4 agenda for their own ministries of education which is the intention of the UN's 2015 document on Transforming our world? See the claim: 'These are universal goals and targets which involve the entire world, developed and developing countries alike' (UN, 2015: 3).

For donor countries themselves as well as their development agencies: For most of the OECD countries as well as a substantial number of non-DAC donors, there may be two sides to the SDG agenda in education.

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1 http://deliver2030.org/?p=7007

On the one hand, is the agenda perceived to be applicable to their own development cooperation agencies? On the other, is it seen to have direct implications for their own national ministries of education? In some of the earlier consultations about the post-2015 agenda, it was clear that some spokespeople from OECD countries saw the debates as targeted at the South and not at their own countries. How has this changed?

For non-state actors, both for profit and non-profit: Many non-state actors played a crucial role in determining aspects of the SDG agenda. But to what extent has the agenda re-shaped the programmes and policies of this very diverse group?

If SDG 4 Education 2030 covers all of education – are there no more priorities? Given that SDG 4 on Education covers all levels of education and a great deal more in its ten targets, it may not be too difficult to argue that the education programmes of most agencies, NGOs and education ministries are already engaged with the SDGs in some manner. In the brave new world of the SDG 4 and its targets, is there is no longer a key focus area?

Going for post-basic education before basic education is in place? For 25 years, since Jomtien in 1990, the international education priority of many development agencies has been with an expanded vision of basic education. This was reinforced by the Education for All (EFA) Dakar Goals and by the MDGs. Now, quite suddenly, post-basic education and training are back on the world's development agenda. Arguably, this dramatic shift is being supported long before basic education of quality has been secured in many parts of the world, either through schools or through adult literacy and numeracy.

The return of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to the world's agenda? TVET was not really captured at all in the EFA Dakar Goals, but is now very clearly present in several of the SDG 4 targets. How will this affect support for TVET nationally and internationally?

From Education for All to Education for all other SDGs? A case has been made that education is not just about SDG 4, but is relevant to all the other 16 SDGs. This massively raises the aspirations, ambitions and challenges for education monitoring. See the 2016 Global Education Monitoring Report (chs. 1-6).

Will the SDG indicators determine the character and pattern of implementation? The broad ambitions of the SDGs and their targets may be sharply narrowed by the scope of the indicators. Will it be the lens of the 11 so-called 'global indicators' that will shape the monitoring of the 10 education targets rather than the 30+ 'thematic indicators'? Especially as it is the data from the global indicators that will be fed into the UN's SDG Annual Report. Will the indicator tail wag the SDG dog?

A dramatically expanded financing focus? With the publication of the report of the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, what will be the new priorities for domestic and international financing of education and skills? The International Commission argues it is possible to get all young people into school and learning by 2030 – but at what cost? - -$3 trillion per year by 2030!

Foreword

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A few paragraphs of history: RRAG 40 years and NORRAG 30 years on

Forty years ago, in 1976, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada had supported the formation of a Research, Review and Advisory Group (RRAG) which was charged with critically reviewing and disseminating education research related to the developing world (See Myers, this issue). In time this initiative led to Regional RRAGs, and in due course, in 1986, to what at that time was called the Northern Research Review and Advisory Group (NORRAG).

This birth was made possible by support from the Swedish International Development Authority (Sida) and in particular by its Education Division, led by Lennart Wohlgemuth with Ingemar Gustafsson.

Although it was a few years before 'Northern' was changed to 'Network', from the very first issue of *NORRAG News (NN)* in November 1986, edited by Christine McNab and Kenneth King, it was a priority to send NN to all the other regional RRAGs in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia and the Caribbean. So it had a global reach.

Also from the very beginning, its members and contributors were drawn from academia, from development agencies, and from civil society. This was evident in the three presidents which it had in its early years: Noel McGinn (Harvard), Aklilu Habte (World Bank) and Ingemar Gustafsson (Sida).

NORRAG News has always been one of NORRAG's principal knowledge products both under the support of Sida, then under ODA/DFID of the UK, and currently under the Open Society Foundations. In parallel with this shift, the institutional management of NORRAG moved across Europe from Stockholm to the Centre for the Study of Education in Developing Countries (CESO) in The Hague, to the IUED then to the Graduate Institute in Geneva. Since that move to Switzerland in 1992, the management of all NORRAG activities apart from NN has been supported by Swiss Development Cooperation.

Michel Carton has been associated with NORRAG from the beginning, and has been joined in Geneva by other core staff, notably Joost Monks in management and, for communications, Aude Mellet (see Mellet & Monks, this issue).

NN has over the years been joined by several other key knowledge products, such as working papers, the NORRAG Bulletin (edited by Aude), and from 2012 the NORRAG Blog, catalysed by Robert Palmer (https://norrag.wordpress.com). In addition, NORRAG has considerably expanded its service offerings over the last few years, including a wide range of policy dialogue events, capacity building and the development of institutional partneships in the global South.

Over the last two years, NN has been available both in Arabic and in Chinese. Its French edition is currently being relaunched. The Ministry of Higher Education in Oman has supported NN in Arabic, and this will be continued by the Al-Qasimi Foundation, Ras Al-Kaimah, UAE.

Some future NORRAG engagements

NORRAG is planning a meeting in New Delhi early in the new year, linked to the SDGs and to the launch of NN54; we hope that many of the almost 300 NORRAG members in India will come. NORRAG will also be present in CIES, Atlanta, with two panels. In May 2017 we are planning a meeting with Zhejiang Normal University in Hangzhou, again linked to the launch of NN54, but also to an exploration of the human resources dimension of the One Belt One Road initiative. As usual, since the UKFIET Oxford International Conference on Education started in 1991, NORRAG will be present in its conference during 5-7 September 2017 and will organize an open meeting. The Conference focus is on *Learning and Teaching for Sustainable Development: Curriculum, Cognition and Context.*

NORRAG members' involvement

Although a much larger number of readers access NORRAG's knowledge products, including *NORRAG News* and the NORRAG Blog, without being members, we are aware that there are some positive benefits of membership. One of these involves access to NORRAG's many meetings, information about which is often circulated to members in particular countries where meetings are located. Another benefit is that members can search the entire data base of other members, in order to identify expertise in any particular country, or to network with other members in their field of interest through the networking tool: www.norrag.org/en/about/norrag-networking-tool.html

NORRAG is currently exploring other ways of involving the membership, through its current re-building of the NORRAG website and other modalities. Ideas are always welcome (See Mellet and Monks, this issue): www.norrag.org

A new face in NORRAG in its 30th year

We are very pleased to announce the arrival of Professor Gita Steiner-Khamsi as the new Director of NORRAG. The Network will be co-directed by Dr Joost Monks, who will serve as Executive Director. Professor Michel Carton will take the position of Senior Advisor.

Professor Steiner-Khamsi has been seconded by Columbia University, where she is a Professor of Comparative and International Education at Teachers College, to strengthen the field of international education at The Graduate Institute in Geneva. She will hold a dual academic affiliation as a full professor, splitting her time between the two institutions. In parallel, she will join NORRAG as the new Director as of February 2017 with the aim of expanding the Network's research capacities and outreach.

Kenneth King

19th December 2016

Saltoun Hall, Pencaitland, Scotland, UK

CONTENTS

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION, FOR THEM OR FOR US? 75

NON-STATE ACTORS, FOR-PROFIT AND NON-PROFIT 95

Mike Douse, consultant, Ennis, County Clare, Ireland

Anne Sørensen, OxfamIbis, Copenhagen and Anjela Taneja, Global Campaign for Education, Copenhagen

Samantha Ross, Link Community Development, Edinburgh

Ulrike Hanemann, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Hamburg

Ben Ogwo, State University of New York, Oswego

Sunita Sanghi, NITI Aayog, New Delhi

Steve Klees, University of Maryland

Simon McGrath, School of Education and Aoife Nolan, School of Law, University of Nottingham

Kathleen Moriarty, University of Sussex

Silvia Montoya, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Montreal

Hersheela Narsee, Department of Higher Education and Training, Pretoria

EDITORIALS

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) One Year On; The Case of Education –SDG4

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Inclusive Goal and Target development process

Compared to the very restricted process whereby the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were selected out of the much wider agenda of the Millennium Declaration (Maher[1]), the SDGs evolved out of a hugely interactive process of meetings, lobbying and advocacy at every level, national, regional and international. Arguably, there were more meetings organised by UN bodies and by international organisations based in the North than by developing countries; even so, there will be many NORRAG members reading NN54 who will have attended well over 20 meetings related to 'post-2015' and the SDGs in the brief period between 2012 and 2015. Most of these meetings will have been related to just one of the SDGs, e.g. SDG4 on Education; hence the wider SDG process may not have been followed.

But who is determining the global indicators for the SDGs?

By contrast with the tens of thousands of people involved in proposing what should be included in the text of the 17 SDGs, a very much smaller number have been involved in advising the UN's Statistical Commission on what should be the global indicators by which the implementation of the SDGs should be monitored and reported upon annually to the UN. This is the Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG) on SDGs. Apart from UN bodies, there are just 27 Member States involved in the IAEG. It could be said that this 'highly technocratic process of indicator-setting', with no non-'expert' voices (McGrath & Nolan) will be extremely influential in determining what dimensions of the 17 Goals and their 169 Targets actually get taken seriously at the national and international levels.

Aligning national plans and priorities with the SDGs

In the key UN document which contains and cele-brates the SDGs, *Transforming our world*, there is a storyline about the alignment of the SDG ambitions and aspirations with national planning priorities. Some countries such as China appear to have taken this process very seriously with the issuing of position papers on the SDGs and their implementation (Zhang). In others, such as India, the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) has taken the place of the former Planning Commission and its five-year plans, but is mandated to implement the SDGs with the same timeframe of 15 years as the SDGs (Mehrotra; Bhavani & Monks). Japan's prime-minister inaugurated the SDGs Promotion Headquarters for Japan in May 2016, to promote the implementation guidelines for the nation (Arakawa & Kayashima).

Recalling that alignment is not just with Education but with the 16 other goals, it can be seen that this is a massive challenge if it is to go beyond the rhetorical or the planning level to the demands of implementation. Then financing may prove to be a snag as in Mozambique or the government may prove to have just 4 development priorities and not the whole 17 (Mukora). Elsewhere, there has emerged a challenge that cannot be unique to Pakistan: what happens when there is already an agreed education sector plan, negotiated at every level, but at certain points it does not align with the new SDG agenda in education? Which takes precedence? It is a dilemma that justifies a longer quotation (Ali):

> Here is a classic case, more than two years spent in developing a plan – SESP; but just when it is being rolled out at the district level, the SDG-4 comes in to identify yet more gaps. Yes, the gaps will continue to exist but, if local priorities and plans are undermined by these global targets, what kind of local ownership of these global targets can we expect? Will it be surprising then, if SDG-4 also fails?

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1 Here and throughout this editorial, a name in brackets with no date refers to an article in NN54.

At the continental level, there may be similar concerns for example between the priorities of the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the SDG Agenda 2030, as illustrated in the title of the next ADEA Triennale: *"Revitalizing education towards the 2030 Global Agenda and Africa's Agenda 2063"*. Even within the EU, there will need to be careful determination of the synergies and priorities of the EU's ET 2020 Framework for education co-operation and its links and overlaps with Agenda 2030 (Morel).

It cannot be expected that so soon after September 2015, the terminology of SDGs will be known about at the level of the ordinary secondary school, whether in the capital or outside (O'Sullivan; Bermingham). Any more than it can be assumed that SDGs are common parlance amongst all NORRAG members (De Moura Castro). But what may perhaps be surprising to many readers is just how rapidly a really large number of national consultations (40+) on SDG4 have been organised over the last 12-18 months to begin an alignment process with national plans (Naidoo). Of course, UNESCO will have doubtless played a role in many of these, as it is in their mandate and interest to do so. The same will have been true of other UN specialised agencies in relation to the other SDGs.

What does SDG4 really mean, stand for and signify?

SDG4 certainly leaves the sheer simplicity of the two Education MDGs far behind (UPE & gender parity), even if that simplicity has not yet resulted in anything like universal primary education (UPE). Arguably, in education, the world has agreed to move on to a massively more ambitious agenda before delivering on either UPE or on the six Education for All (EFA) goals. It has signed off on securing a basic level of knowledge and skills for all at both lower and higher levels – as compared with the MDG's main focus on mere access to primary. This is surely close to a paradigm shift (Yamada).

It is a very particular challenge, because the arenas of secondary, TVET and tertiary are hugely more complex than organising access to and completion of UPE. We can't merely extend to the complexity of secondary education the approaches that have been learnt about primary access over the 15 years of the MDGs (Naylor). There are also many more demanding principles involved in SDG4, such as lifelong learning and education for sustainable development (ESD); so national EFA coordination

cannot simply become national SDG coordination, with business as usual (Hayashikawa).

Nor can we be blind to the current failure to achieve universal basic education (UBE), especially in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). An average of 20% of SSA children are still currently out of school, and the school-age population will increase by a third by 2030. But through these changing priorities, the new SDG4 agenda of universal access to secondary, TVET and higher education by 2030 'could contribute to many SSA countries not reaching UBE by 2030' (Fredriksen). Nor is universal basic education just a national 'nice to have'. Essentially, UBE 'is a development stage that no country can "leapfrog"' (ibid). However, it may well prove increasingly hard to promote UBE politically 'and leave no one behind' when the SDGs also call for the popular, middle-class agenda of wider access to post-basic education. These concerns cannot be separated from literacy, jobs and even from migration in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Costing the earth

The sheer cost of securing universal access to post-basic education has not yet been sufficiently taken on board, despite the Education Commission reporting its findings within a year of the world agreeing the SDGs. It is estimated that an additional $39 billion of aid is needed annually for securing just some of the main SDG education targets. This underlines just how wide the international financing gap is. But there are also competing international mechanisms proposed for bridging this gap (Klees; Naidoo). This is happening when the essential domestic sourcing of education and skills through economic growth is stagnating especially in SSA. It is also problematic that even in OECD countries there is apparently no simple relationship between doubling or tripling education expenditure and reaping improved learning outcomes (Schiefelbein & McGinn).

From SDG policy alignment to implementation

It is one thing to review issues of policy alignment between SDG4 and national or international planning. But implementation is something else. The SDGs are concerned with goals, targets and indicators. But they contain no evidence on the strategic changes countries may need to make if they are to reach the education SDG and its many

targets (Schiefelbein & McGinn).[2] For example, there is now a good deal of material and strategy around how to improve what children are learning (and often not learning) in primary school. But most lower and lower-middle income countries have very little similar evidence of improved learning strategies for secondary (Naylor).

There are, however, at least four differing lenses on implementation. One, illustrated from Beijing, would be where it is claimed that 'free, equitable and quality public education' has already been on the agenda since 2000 (Liu). Arguably, however, the decision by the National People's Congress in November 2016 to ban 'for-profit private schools' is driven by national politics, and only happens to coincide with the spirit of SDG4.1. In many other countries, including Kenya, it is clear that national issues are in the foreground, even if there seems to be alignment with the SDG4 agenda at certain points (Jowi).

A very different lens on 'free, equitable and quality' education comes from Jamaica where this SDG discourse falls on an education system deeply divided between high quality traditional high schools and upgraded high schools for those who fail the grade six achievement test (Jennings). Jamaica is of course very far from being the only country with substantial divisions within its secondary system. Jennings's reference to the impact of 'British grammar school type' institutions will have a resonance today in many other countries, including in Britain.

A third perspective on the implementation of SDG4 comes from Timor Leste whose primary school curricular reforms towards skills and agriculture are linked explicitly to SDG4 with its targets of 'relevant skills' and 'education for sustainable development' (Hill). At the international level, UNESCO and its Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) have, respectively, promoted curricula and teachers' guides on preventing violent extremism and on global citizenship (Chung).

A fourth version might be where the SDGs are really more a 'wish list' rather than a policy priority (Andres).

What is starkly clear in these and many other illustrations in NN54 of implementing the education SDG is that 'the SDG4 and its targets demand a huge amount of political will and enthusiasm' (Van Damme). A crucial dimension of this educational politics is likely to be the mechanism chosen by the UN to monitor implementation. And we shall turn to these critical indicators of success in a moment. But first we should glance at whether the SDGs are perceived to be 'for them or for us'.

SDGs: for them or for us?

A substantial number of OECD and upper-middle income countries can consider SDG4 for their own education systems, but they can also consider its implications for their role as donors or development partners. Unlike the MDGs which were considered by many OECD countries as primarily for developing countries, national consultations on SDG4 have taken place already in just over half of the OECD's 35 countries, including the following: Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, USA (Naidoo).

On the other hand, though *Transforming our World*, the 35-page document which also contains the full text of the 17 goals and their targets, talks about these being 'universal goals and targets which involve the entire world, developed and developing countries alike' (para. 5), the fact is that the actual text does not give that impression. To illustrate with just a little textual analysis: the term 'developing countries' occurs no less that 69 times in these 35 pages, and the term 'least developed countries' 44 times. By contrast 'developed countries' can only be found 8 times compared to the 111 total for the other two terms.

Despite this apparent emphasis on developing countries, there is little doubt that countries such as China and Japan are taking very seriously the relevance of the SDGs for their own country as well as for their cooperation partners. Japan's prime-minister put forward the country's education cooperation strategy at the September 2015 UN Summit – *Learning strategy for peace and growth* (Arakawa & Kayashima). As chair of the G7, Japan has encouraged SDG cooperation measures for the other members through its own international commitments. And in education it is currently drafting an SDG guideline that prioritises both education and health as foundations

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2 Readers may want to note that these authors' book: *Learning to educate: Proposals for the reconstruction of education in developing countries* will be launched in the CIES March 2017 Conference.

of development (ibid). Meanwhile, China has put in place its *Implementation of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development*, focusing on South-South cooperation (SSC), with new funding and a new SSC Institute (Zhang). China also sees its new One Belt One Road initiative as aligned with the Agenda 2030, not least because of its support for human resource development (Lou).

The UK illustrates a rather intriguing position since its Secretary of State for International Development will be responsible for coordination of the domestic response to the SDGs, as well as support for implementation overseas (*UK Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals*). By contrast, Germany's National Sustainable Development Strategy faces two ways, in both national and international cooperation. In the specific challenge of migration to Germany, policy looks to education incorporation within Germany as well as to the improvement of development in migrants' countries of origin (Ress).

In other donor countries such as India, its substantial international aid for education has not yet been rebranded in SDG terms (Varghese), whilst in the Gulf, too, international education cooperation is not widely seen in relation to SDG4, but future collaboration around this SDG is seen as a positive opportunity (Kippels). By contrast, Portugal has had a 'national' consultation on SDG4, and despite the rhetoric about universality, 'the majority of the promoters of these consultative processes are from the development sector' (da Silva).

The impact of the SDG4 indicators?

Though I can still recall very clearly the news that the MDGs were replacing the International Development Targets, I don't remember any sharp discussion around their indicators, including for their two education targets - UPE completion and gender disparity in schools. I wonder how many *NORRAG News* readers knew that there were six indicators for these two targets. These include: 2.3 Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds, women and men, and 3.2: Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; and 3.3: Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament. I confess I didn't.

By contrast, there are currently no less than eleven indicators for SDG4 and its ten targets, and there may eventually prove to be thirteen global indicators for SDG4. It may be valuable to give these some critical attention as they will be used as one of the key elements in the annual national reporting on the SDGs to the UN.

At the most general level, it can be argued that the very minimal thresholds proposed by the SDG4 indicators for quality, breadth and length of education are contrary to the spirit of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, and the *Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (McGrath & Nolan).

Also, very generally, the International Council for Science has argued that 'the expanded set of SDGs and targets cover a wide range of topics for which current, detailed, and trustworthy data may not yet exist and for which traditional data collection and integration methods may be technically difficult – or very expensive – to implement' (Narsee).

The Education SDG may indeed have a more complex monitoring challenge than some of the other sectoral SDGs. Thus, the 2016 *Global Education Monitoring* Report (GEMR) admits that the '11 global indicators do not by any means capture the full scope of the [SDG4] agenda' (UNESCO, 2016: 17). Aware of this challenge, UNESCO had developed no less than 43 thematic indicators which include the global group. However, only 29 of these 43 are yet 'fit for purpose'; so there is still a good deal of methodological work to do, including on some aspects of the global indicators. For instance, the global indicator on minimum proficiency in reading and maths at the end of primary and the end of secondary is now methodologically sound, but data are only available on this for less than 50% of the countries in each UNESCO region (Montoya; Sachs-Israel).[3]

As we shall see, the sheer scale and ambition of the thematic indicators ensure that they are a closer fit with the SDG4 targets, but the resultant complexity and cost need to be borne in mind. Also in reality, perhaps the majority of countries will find themselves providing data simply on the core global indicators. This could mean that core concepts in the SDG4 such as **free** primary and secondary education are not reported on, since they are not currently present in the global indicators (Moriarty). Here it must be recalled that huge amounts of time were spent by many dif-

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3 further UIS blog of 8th December 2016 by Luis Benveniste and Silvia Montoya https://sdg.uis.unesco.org/2016/12/08/education-sdg-indicator-on-learning-outcomes-gets-a-major-upgrade/

ferent bodies in meetings, lobbying and advocacy to ensure that the terminology of 'free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education' was there in SDG4.1.

A similar point could be made about the situation of skills and technical and vocational education and training. A great deal of time went into ensuring that the SDG4 targets talked of 'relevant skills' and 'technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship'. However, these large ambitions are translated into a global indicator that proposes just to measure 'proportion of youth and adults with information and communication technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill' (ibid). Doubtless, ICT skills are vitally important, but they cover just one particular dimension of the very substantial world of skills development (King, 2016: 5). On the same issue, the ILO has argued that 'limiting a discussion about "relevant skills" to digital literacy and ICT skills also clearly has limited relevance to the wider debates that are required about what skills are needed in our dynamic economies' (Comyn).

Before leaving the world of indicators, we should note that an SDG index and dashboards have been developed by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and Bertelsmann Stiftung: http://sdgindex.org/data/dashboards/ These have been used by one of our contributors to construct a quality skills index for Sub-Saharan Africa (Ogwo). Since the Index and Dashboards cover all 17 Goals and all countries and regions, there are rich possibilities to utilize their data for other comparative purposes.

Non-state actors, for profit and non-profit

There is little mention of the private sector in the actual text of the 17 goals and their 169 targets. Just a single reference to public-private partnerships along with public and civil society partnerships (17.17), and a reference to both public and private research. In the longer text of *Transforming our world*, there is a little more about the role and diversity of the private sector as one of the means of implementation for the SDGs, and its place in multi-stakeholder fora. As part of this latter process, the private sector is now involved in some of the SDG-related bodies as well as other global coalitions concerned with education. Because there are wider concerns about the privatization of education and how this relates to the SDG4.1's commitment to 'free, equitable and quality' educa-

tion, and because this arena is currently under-researched, we have included a critical analysis of the status quo of private sector engagement with the SDGs (Fontdevila & Verger). But NN54 also raises the question of whether 'the SDGs provide a mechanism to legitimise private sector involvement, by making the case that profits can reasonably accumulate when the objectives are affiliated with the UN compact' (Eats).

 On the civil society side of non-state actors, there has been very active involvement with the SDG agenda, both in the whole process of goal- and target-setting, as well as in national consultations and in pressures for implementation. Of course, the SDG discourse, now agreed by governments, is a valuable resource for lobbying and advocacy by civil society. But it is useful to be reminded that 'the focus of much of national civil society has been and will always remain on the implementation of their national constitutional provisions, legislations, policies and strategic plans' (Sorensen & Taneja). A similar issue is raised in the case of a single civil society organisation in Ethiopia; it can be shown that Ethiopia, a country with its own indicators for learning, attendance and retention, has taken on board the SDG framework, and has begun the process of aligning its plans with this. But it is worth asking 'Will a country with limited finance and capacity also be able to measure any success against global SDG 4 indicators, and should they have to?' (Ross).

Other vital SDG-related issues - in conclusion

Adult literacy. One of the greatest disappointments in SDG4 when so many targets include the word 'all' (7 mentions in 10 targets) is that the long-standing commitment to universal adult literacy should be presented merely as 'a substantial proportion of adults' in the SDG text (Fredriksen). The background to this should be carefully investigated but a good start on this is provided by the following terse comment: 'The fulfilment of the right to basic education for all still has a long way to go. All means for all!' (Hanemann).

Learning from the cultures and contexts of small island developing states (SIDS). We are keenly aware that too much of what we have covered in NN54 is about how regions, states and communities, public and private, are aligning with the SDGs. Surely, it could be argued that we should also pay more serious attention to what the SDG process has actually learnt from different cultures and

contexts. The priorities of Japan and South Korea, for instance, have been reflected in the adoption, within SDG4, of Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Education, respectively. But 'there is certainly much that the international development community can learn from the distinctive experience of SIDS' (Crossley).

History, higher education and happiness. Following up directly on this issue of sourcing the SDG's core ideas is a concern with capturing the history of how this final text was actually arrived at. If this is expected to influence so much of the world's development over 15 years, who finally edited the SDG text - parts of which we know already so well? And who in particular took the decisions on the ten Education Targets? For instance, what editor signed off on the arguably tautologous target language of 'tertiary education, including university'? Who decided that expanding the number of scholarships available in developing countries (4b) was relevant? Is it now the case that higher education has come back from the cold in terms of global goals (Adriansen; Lolwana)? And what about the SDGs and happiness? Beyond all the concerns with access, quality and equity, is it sufficient for *Transforming our world* to pledge 'that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives'? (Douse).

A final word about positioning the SDGs. The SDGs are clearly vital to the UN community in terms of their mission, mandate, financing, and even their jobs. But these global concerns about alignment are actually a world away from the realities of teaching and learning in both the North and the South. For most of those learning and teaching today the daily round and its challenges continue to be the key:

> However, I do make an appeal to all of those involved in these international debates to remind themselves from time to time of the reality of the teachers, classrooms and homes in poorest and marginalised communities in every country in the world. (Bermingham).

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EDUCATION, TRAINING AND AGENDA 2030: WHAT PROGRESS ONE YEAR ON?

23

Agenda 2030 - SDG4 Education 2030 - One Year On: Challenges and Opportunities

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Summary: Reflections on consultations undertaken during year one, aimed at taking forward the SDG4-Education 2030 Agenda

It is just over a year ago on September 25, 2015 when global leaders adopted *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, in the 70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. Some may argue that little has changed in the global landscape since then, as war and conflict have intensified and the means to address the refugee situation continues to elude policy makers. Yet there have been a number of significant developments, not least on October 4th 2016, the historic Paris Agreement on climate change came into force — years sooner than expected. With regard to Education and SDG 4 – many of the 22 countries provided some reflection on progress in education during the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2016; the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) Initiative was launched; the cross-cutting SDG era Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report (UNESCO, 2016) was released and positively received, the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity presented its Learning Generation report (Education Commission, 2016) to the out-going Secretary General; and the former Executive Director of UNHCR, Antonio Guterres, was acclaimed as the new Secretary General of the UN, raising hopes that education generally and that of refugees will receive increased dedicated attention in the new agenda.

Over the course of the year the challenges of delivering on the expanded ambition SDG4/education were fully recognized, with many critics continuing to emphasize that the targets are unrealistic and unlikely to be achieved. However, many stakeholders particularly among civil society emphasised the need to remain committed to an expanded universal vision focused on leaving no one behind. At the same time there have been some significant developments at national, regional and global levels in attempts to come to terms with how to manage implementation that is not only greater in scope but also universal. First it has been fully recognized that such a comprehensive and ambitious agenda, requires country-level action linked to existing national or (only if necessary) new contextually defined plans based on an assessment of the current situation. This has been the clear message arising from the series of regional and sub-regional SDG 4 consultations held in Bangkok, Cairo, Dakar, Kathmandu, Nairobi, Lusaka, Sharjah, Paris etc. since September 2015.

This was also echoed in many national consultations most of which invariably and positively were not sector specific, but approached the SDG implementation from a cross-sectoral integrated perspective. In this first year many countries have devoted some effort, time and resources to analyse the implications of the Agenda 2030 and establish links between the SDGs and national priorities of the respective countries. Countries as diverse as Belize, Germany, Ghana and Vietnam among many others have undertaken reviews to align national development plans with the SDGs. With regard to SDG4 specifically, a host of countries have had consultations and aligned or started the process to align national education plans with SDG 4 including: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Cook Islands, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia Islands, Gambia, India, Kenya, Lesotho, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, Malaysia, Mauritius, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, Tonga, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Zambia and Zimbabwe.[1]

 SDG consultations thus far have improved under-

standing of the SDG agenda, but have been inadequate. There has not been enough communication and understanding among policy makers, education officers and other stakeholders from senior levels down to rank and file staff responsible for policy implementation on what it actually means for their day to day work. For example, many SDG targets may mean curricular changes – what these changes are and how they may be enacted at different levels of the system and especially at classroom level is not clear for most actors in country. This is also the case for other requisite adjustments related to expanded early childhood education provision, learning assessment, skills development, TVET and higher education opportunities and the complexities of target 4.7. While most discussions have noted teachers as central to the SDG4 agenda, the challenge of addressing teacher shortages or quality has not been fully comprehended.

Many of the consultations at global, regional or national level have also surfaced tensions around prioritization, and between the interests of sub-sector stakeholders and constituencies. While there appears to be some commitment to lifelong learning, most consultations and plans are still dominated by an emphasis on basic formal education with some discussion of the need to expand TVET access with higher education receiving little attention. In terms of Target 4.7 the discussion and prioritization appears to focus primarily on global citizenship and how to measure it or its role as an antidote to extreme violence, with other aspects of 4.7 being downplayed or ignored.

While civil society actors have been quite active at global level in demanding greater civil society participation in the implementation of SDG4, and have been involved in the HLP review process and other global consultations, their participation in most countries appears to be quite minimal. There is no doubt that governance is a critical factor for successful implementation of the SDGs, and that ensuring transparency and good governance requires continuous monitoring from citizens. So it remains to be seen, given the current levels of engagement of civil society on the SDGs at national level, whether the role of civil society in accountability which is critical for the success of the new agenda is being adequately served. Hopefully, the 2017 GEM Report, which will focus on accountability, will shed some light on this issue.

Monitoring and reporting mechanisms for tracking progress toward SDG provide an enormous opportunity for learning and building on existing efforts, but this too has been a challenge given the delay in finalizing the indicators for monitoring progress. The recommendations of the Interagency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), created to finalize a global indicator framework (and associated global indicators) were to be considered by the Statistical Commission at its forty-seventh session in March 2016, and endorsed by ECOSOC and adopted by the UNGA in September 2016. However, its remit and work was extended and it is yet to finalize the global framework, which is now projected for completion and adoption in March 2017. Accepting that delay was necessary to ensure necessary clarity in the indicators and to address issues related to methodology and data gaps, it has nevertheless resulted in a fair degree of confusion.

The readjusted IAEG timeline has in turn affected the work of the Technical Cooperation Group on Indicators co-chaired by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and UNESCO Education Sector's Division of Education 2030 Support and Coordination (UNESCO ED/ESC), comprising experts from governments, multilateral agencies and civil society. It works to produce comparable education data required to track progress and monitor Sustainable Development Goal 4. Part of this task is to finalize the thematic indicators for SDG 4 (of which global indicators to be finalized by the IAEG is a sub-set) as outlined in the SDG4-Education 2030 Framework for Action. Despite concerted efforts including two face to face meetings and several on-line consultations it has not been able to finalize the indicators for endorsement by the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee. The latest status is that it will present 18 Thematic Indicators and the 11 Global Indicators (or any additional that may be proposed by the IAEG) to the Steering Committee in December for tracking progress in 2017. Fourteen (14) indicators will require much more substantive work by the TCG before they can be endorsed. As a result, tracking progress across all targets of SDG 4 in a comprehensive way will not be possible in the immediate instance.

Another key area of concern in this first year are unanswered questions on the issue of the increased finances needed from domestic and

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1 The further OECD countries also had such national consultations: Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, USA

external sources for supporting the expanded agenda amid further evidence from GEM Report (UNESCO, 2016) and the Learning Generation (Education Commission, 2016) on the widening gap in funding. There is no clear indication at this point on increased commitments from either source. In this scenario, the role of the private sector while increasingly in the spotlight, is not clear both in terms of increased funding but also its impact on the right to education. The issue of funding is further complicated by some of the proposals from the Commission for Financing Education Opportunities, in particular that of a multi-lateral Bank for Education Financing. It is not clear where additional funding will come from or how it will co-here with exiting mechanisms such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) or the newly created Education Cannot Wait (EWC) fund.

Despite these and other challenges, in particular related to moving beyond slogans such as 'leaving no-one behind' and 'not business as usual', the general commitment expressed for SDG 4 and its fundamental importance for the overall SDG agenda give hope that action will be speeded up at all levels to ensure the promise of inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all. The overall commitment and enthusiasm at different levels are promising and must be capitalized to support effective action going forward.

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Will the SDG4 Post-Basic Ambition Delay Universal Basic Education in Sub-Saharan Africa?

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Keywords: Sub-Saharan Africa; education financing; ambitious SDG goals for post-basic education; basic skills; informal sector; economic growth; youth employment.

Summary: To reach universal basic education (UBE) by 2030 will be a major challenge for most Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. On average, 20% of their children are out of school and the school-age population will increase by one-third by 2030. Further, given that the informal sector will remain by far the largest source of employment and that about half of that sector's labour force is illiterate, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of universal access to secondary and higher education by 2030 is not warranted by labour market demands. Therefore, focusing on achieving that goal could contribute to many countries neither reaching UBE by 2030 nor producing the basic skills required to achieve the high level of shared economic growth necessary to fund education and to generate youth employment. It is high time to reset education priorities to better benefit the large population groups and the economic sectors that so far have benefited little from education spending (including from aid).

I believe the SDGs will have a positive impact, especially by focusing attention on actions that must be taken *now* in order to reach longer-term objectives. However, in this note, I want to caution that the very ambitious SDG for *post-basic education* – calling for 'equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university' by 2030– could mean that many SSA countries would not reach even universal basic education (UBE) – defined here as universal primary, lower secondary and at least youth literacy - by 2030. For most SSA countries, even universal **primary** education has become a moving target, shifting from 1980 (agreed in 1961 in Addis Ababa), to 2000 (Jomtien 1990) to 2015 (Dakar 2000), and now to 2030.

In fact, while the SDG for post-basic education is much too ambitious for most SSA countries, **the goal for literacy** – calling for a "substantial proportion of adults" to achieve literacy and numeracy by 2030 - **is *less* ambitious than the EFA goal** of a 50% increase in the literacy rate by 2015. Unfortunately, SSA's rate increased only marginally. This reflects modest progress on the two components determining this rate: *universal completion of primary education and provision of second chance programmes* for those who missed out on completing primary education. Despite impressive gains in access to primary education, the survival rate to the final grade remains as low as in the 1970s (around 60%). Further, a high share of those who do complete the cycle are not, or are barely, literate. Further, over the last two decades, very little funding (including aid) has been devoted to *second chance programmes*. As a result, SSA enters the SDG period with two in five adults being illiterate and one in five children out of school.

In the absence of vigorous actions in both areas, youth illiteracy in SSA risks stagnating at a high level. That would hamper progress towards most SDGs. In particular, one-third of SSA's labour force could still be illiterate in the 2030s, and more than one-third of SSA children could be born to illiterate mothers. As discussed below, the former would have serious negative impact on economic and social development, including youth employment. The latter would reinforce the intergenerational vicious cycle of poverty, low health and education status, slow demographic transition and marginalization. Combined, these two aspects of youth illiteracy would have major global implications including through increased economic migration. By 2050, SSA is projected to account for 38% of births worldwide, up from 25% in 2015.

There are at least three major interrelated reasons why, in the SSA context, the ambitious goals for post-basic education may slow down progress towards UBE:

First, over the 2015-30 period, SSA needs much higher growth in education funding than other regions. This is needed to *catch-up* in achieving UBE, enrol the projected *one-third growth in the school-aged population* (other developing regions will see a small decrease), and address sharply increased social demand for post-basic education. As noted below, mobilizing the funding required will likely become more challenging than during the last 10-15 years when a combination of resumed *economic growth*, an *increased share of GDP devoted to education and rising education aid* led to a much faster annual budget growth (4-5%) than during the 1980s and 1990s (about 1%). In turn, tighter budgets would **make the *political economy* of prioritizing UBE *even more difficult* than in the past.** Population groups missing out on UBE have much less political clout than those seeking entry to post-basic education, whose voice now is reinforced by the call for universal access to post-basic education in a context where UBE is far from being attained.

Second, economic growth accounted for about two-thirds of past decade's education budget growth. Economic growth is likely to become an even more important determinant of education budgets over the next decade: SSA's share of public budgets spent on education (17% in 2014) already exceeds the average for developing countries. Further, aid has stagnated globally in recent years, and SSA's share of aid for basic education has declined sharply (from 49% in 2002-03 to 28% in 2014). Even if the Education Commission's call for an increase in aid for SSA were to happen, it cannot substitute for strong per capita economic growth. IMF's October 2016 Economic Outlook estimates that SSA's GDP per capita grew annually by 4.1% between 2004 and 2008, 2.6% between 2009 and 2014, and 0.9% in 2015. It is projected to decline by 0.9% in 2016 and increase by 0.5% in 2017. If this stagnation in per capita growth over the period 2015-17 were to continue for several years beyond 2017, the fiscal space to meet the rapidly growing education funding needs is likely to become much more limited than during the period 2000-15.

The main causes of the economic slowdown have no easy short-term fixes. In addition to the end of the commodity boom, the slowdown is caused by severe structural constraints on the *economic transformation* from dual economies where 80% or more of the labour force is engaged in low productivity informal sector activities, to economies where growth is driven by rising productivity in that sector as well as growth in the manufacturing and modern service sectors. Constraints include poor infrastructure, chronic power shortages, limited access to credit, poorly trained labour, climate change and, in many cases, increased insecurity. To address some of these requires concerted regional and global action. However, **actions to drastically upgrade labour force skills in the informal sector depends *fully on national governments.***

Third, it is time to reset education priorities to better benefit large *population groups* and *economic sectors* that benefit little from education spending (including aid). In many countries, half of the 80-90% of the labour force engaged in the informal sector is illiterate. This causes low productivity and limits training opportunities and peoples' ability to move to more productive sectors. Over the last three decades, manufacturing's share of total employment has stagnated at around 6%, and the informal farm and household enterprise sectors remain the employer of last resort for the majority of youth at any level of education.

Countries must of course develop the upper secondary and higher education skills needed to support national development. But the labour market for such skills is very narrow and will not for decades warrant publically-financed *universal* access, especially not to higher education. Rather, education and training budget allocations should be guided by the "progressive universalization" called for by the Education Commission (2016), here taken to mean that UBE must be reached *before* prioritizing publicly-funded post-basic education *beyond what can reasonably be justified by national development needs*. To illustrate, in Ghana - with a tertiary Gross Enrolment Ratio of 16% (double the SSA average), less than 2% of the about 250,000 tertiary graduates joining the labour market annually find modern sector jobs (Ansu, 2013).

Reaching UBE is a development stage that no country can "leapfrog". Successful countries inside and outside SSA provide useful lessons about how to *sequence* skills development in terms of gradually shifting the priority from low-level, to middle-level and to higher-level skills in response to evolving labour market demands. In particular, the last three decades of rapid growth in Asia were largely driven by the availability of high levels of *basic education skills*, often supplemented by on-the-job training. Such foundational skills are core competencies and prerequisites for enhancing productivity and peoples' ability to sustain a live-

lihood, adapt new technologies and be better parents and citizens. These countries invested heavily in primary and lower secondary education in rural areas to prepare youth to join the modern lab or force.

In summary, to facilitate the economic transformation needed to achieve sustained, shared per capita economic growth, SSA governments must ensure that their provision of needed cutting-edge skills for the growing but still tiny modern sector is combined with much stronger efforts than in the past to enhance the skills of the majority of young people who will continue to be employed in the informal sector. This will help increase the productivity in their current jobs and facilitate their move to more productive jobs higher up the value chain. In addition to being crucial to generating youth employment, enhanced productivity is also a precondition for achieving key development objectives such as improved agricultural yields, rural incomes, and food security. UNESCO's 2016 Global Education Monitoring Report notes that in China "…agricultural growth is estimated to have been three times more effective in reducing poverty between 1980 and 2011 compared to growth in other sectors of the economy. Similar magnitudes are found in studies examining other developing regions" (UNESCO, 2016: 45-46) including 3-4 times in some SSA countries.

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Post-2015 and the SDG4 Framework: Shifting Focus to the Learners' Skills and Knowledge

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Keywords: Discourse analysis; learning outcomes; text mining; paradigm

Summary: Based on a large scale quantitative text analysis, this article demonstrates a major shift of emphasis, in the discourse of developing SDG4, from the provision of educational services to the learners and the knowledge they acquire. It accompanied redefinition of the meaning of knowledge and skills, with significant implications to the means of assessment.

Many observers argue that the fundamental nature of SDG4 (4th Sustainable Development Goal) hasn't changed from that of EFA (Education for All) goals. Out of seven targets, four (1, 2, 3, and 5) aim to expand the access to education from early childhood to technical, vocational and tertiary education in an equitable and inclusive manner. Unlike EFA, which mainly focused on basic (early childhood to lower secondary) education, the SDG4 enlarged the scope of coverage. Those who could go to primary school would aspire for secondary school. Accordingly, the areas to be promoted as a human right, and hence under the responsibility of the society to provide, have broadened. Despite being more ambitious, such extension is along the linear progression from the basic to higher or other diverse channels of formal schooling and training. However, a fundamental change happened with three of the other targets. A common characteristic of targets 4, 6, and 7 is that they shift the attention of the targets from the provider of educational service to the learner, and commit to improve the knowledge and skills acquired by the learners.

This shift of attention is significant in three ways. Firstly, the quality of education, which used to be monitored by the amount of inputs to education system such as facilities, textbooks, and teachers, is now measured by the amount and the type of knowledge and skills of learners. Secondly, the outcomes of learning are considered to be the improved capacities of learners to adapt knowledge to the daily contexts and to solve problems, not simply the abilities to recite the contents of curriculum. The perspective of so-called outcome-based or competency-based education not only focuses on learners, but also redefines the meaning of knowledge that it should be relevant and adapted to the contexts. A practical but significant implication of this, which was already a matter of heated discussion in the consultation process toward developing SDG4, is the difficulty of developing the measurable and globally comparable indicators of such learning outcomes. Thirdly, and closely related to the second point, the domains of learning outcomes are not restricted by the framework of curricular subjects, but are cross-cutting and broad in nature. Target 4 of SDG4 highlights the relevant skills for the workplace, Target 6 the literacy and numeracy skills, and Target 7 the values and attitudes to live in a more sustainable world. In sum, the knowledge and skills under SDG4 encompasses not only cognitive and vocational, but also non-cognitive and behavioural skills.

The constituent elements of "learning outcomes"

From late 2012 up to World Education Forum in Incheon, South Korea, in June 2015, I have analysed the discourse on the Post-EFA agenda from the so-called education community. The actors involved in this discourse were diverse, such as representatives of U.N. member states, EFA convening agencies, CSOs, and technical specialists. In addition to interviews with key informants of these groups, a qualitative and quantitative text analysis was conducted. The text data used were reports, minutes, and statements posted on the web, which added up to 1,720 files.[1] The quantitative approach

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was basically to find patterns in the relationships among frequently-used words, such as clusters of ideas and changing trends of discussion.

During this period, a large part of the discussion converges on the process of consultation, agenda setting, and implementation, while the reference to the contents of education occupied less than a third of the texts analysed for this study. Regardless, there were significant trends in ideas on education which took shape in the discourse on Post-EFA. I have found three clusters of ideas in this regard, based on the analysis of co-occurrence and proximity of words used in the texts. One is the cluster on learning conditions which is composed of words such as teachers, students, health and households. The second cluster is related to examining the effects of teaching and learn-

cess in the education community, the discussion gradually converged on the contents of learning and their evaluation.

The figure below shows the network of words which were frequently used in association with the words constituting the third cluster. The size of the circle indicates the frequency of appearance and the lines connecting circles indicate the distance between words. The closer the distance, the level of dependency between words is higher and they are more likely to co-occur.

The figure demonstrates how broad the concept of learning became. On the upper left side, one can see a block with words on vocational skills, such as employment, work, and labour market. There are also groups such as 21st century skills and global
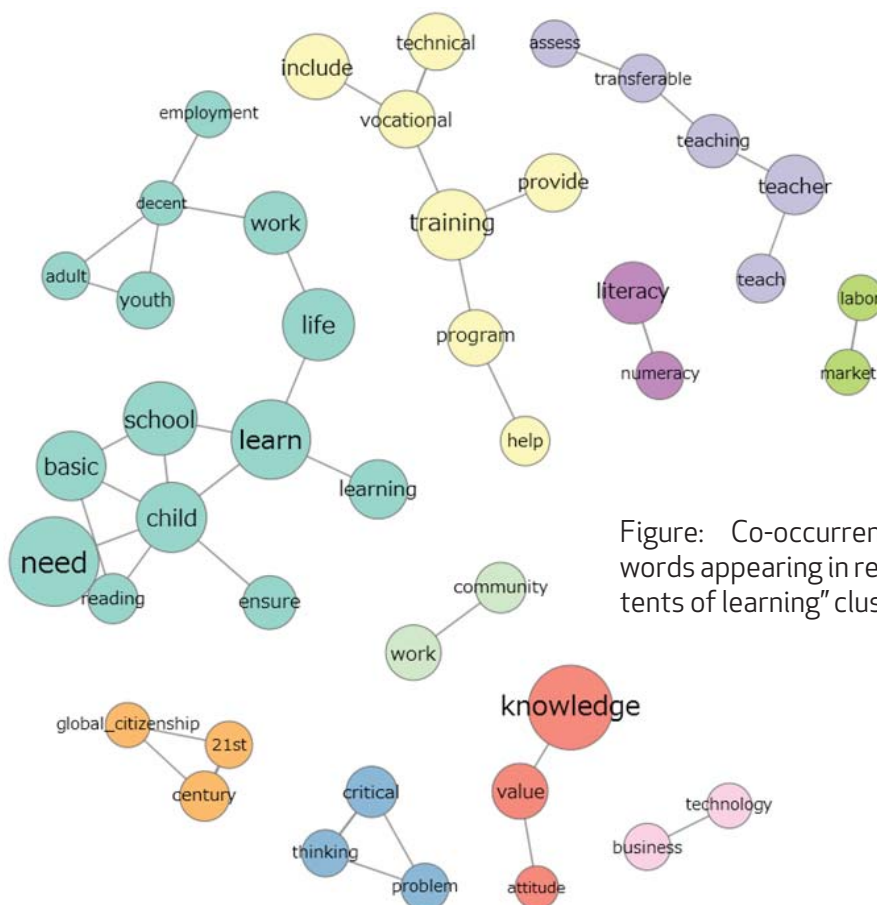
Figure: Co-occurrence network of words appearing in relation to the "contents of learning" cluster

ing, being composed of words such as learning outcomes, assessment, and curriculum. The last cluster was related to the contents of learning, whose constituting words included skills, knowledge, literacy, and numeracy.

The usage of words grouped in the second and third clusters, namely, those on assessment and on the knowledge and skills has increased greatly in 2015, compared to earlier periods I have analysed. It means that, toward the end of consultation pro-

citizenship; critical thinking and problem solving; and knowledge, value, and attitude. Transferable skills, literacy and numeracy, business and technology are also discussed in relation to the contents of knowledge to be covered under SDG4.

SDG4 target 7 aims to develop values and attitude for achieving sustainable development via global citizenship education, democracy education, peace education, and education for sustainable development. The perspective to link skills and

knowledge to the subjective values and attitudes shares the foundation with ideas such as 21st century skills or critical thinking for problem-solving. The tendency to discuss skills being inseparable from value and attitude relates closely to the drive toward assessment of behavioural changes and adaptive skills. It is also a characteristic of the Post-EFA discourse that literacy and numeracy have been discussed along the continuum of skills which are composed of not only cognitive but also non-cognitive and socio-emotional ones. The Learning Metrics Task Force, which was led by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Brookings Institution defined that the learning is composed of seven types of competencies such as numeracy and mathematics, social and emotional learning, learning approaches and cognition, and literacy and communication (LMTF 2013). It was not solely LMTF but several institutions tried to propose indicators and means of assessment to capture the competencies of learners based on similar conceptions of knowledge in the few years before and after the adoption of SDG4.

Is it a paradigm shift?

As my analysis suggests, it is clear that the weight of attention put towards the learners and their adaptive competencies became heavier through the discourse toward SDG4. Although more than half of the seven targets are still on service provision, the shift of gravity is noticeable if one compares EFA and SDG4. Now, is it a significant enough change to be called a paradigm shift or just a minor modification? According to Kuhn (1962), paradigm is a set of concepts and practices which are shared in a scientific community. A paradigm shift happens when an anomaly becomes accepted as the rule of normal practice in such community. The broad and adaptive conception of knowledge and skills, which initially occupied a small part of the discourse, has become much more popular through the interactions and cross-references among actors involved. Together with the changes in structure and actors, SDG4 would symbolically indicate a major shift in this field. Still, it will be left in the hands of later scholars whether to see this a paradigm shift or not.

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The Engagement of the Corporate Sector with the SDG4 Agenda

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Keywords: corporate sector; foundations; public-private partnerships; corporate social responsibility.

Summary: While the influence of the corporate sector in the process for the definition of the SDG4 agenda constitutes an under-researched area, recent developments in the sector suggest that the debate has encouraged the integration of the education field into the corporate social responsibility dynamics inaugurated by the UN Global Compact more than a decade ago. The growing engagement of the corporate sector in the SDG4 debate has been channeled by the participation of corporate actors in semi-autonomous consortia and consultation mechanisms enjoying remarkable levels of discretion - rather than by its incorporation into democratically-monitored bodies and formalized decision-making structures.

The process for the definition of the SDG agenda has brought about a global debate on what should be the role of the private and corporate sector in the education for development field. The need to establish new development priorities in the post-2015 scenario has provided an opportunity to observe historical tensions on the role of states and markets in the delivery of education and training, but also in public agenda-setting processes. Very much echoing the uneasy public-private alliance that emerged in the tail-end of Education For All (see Srivastava and Baur 2016), the SDG-4 and, therefore, the Education 2030 agenda have been surrounded by a growing emphasis on the potential of corporate actors in the education for development field. The emerging participation of the private sector, together with more conventional civil society and state actors, has entailed a certain compromise between polarized positions, largely built on a combination of ambiguity and non-definition of roles. Among other implications, this has resulted in a sort of wide collage agenda that accommodates very different views and priorities,

and has generated a high level of uncertainty on how this ambitious agenda should be implemented and monitored.

The corporate sector participation in the SDG4 agenda has generated concerns of a different nature, one of them consisting of whether such participation will strengthen education privatization processes globally. Given the usual alignment of corporate actors with market-oriented reforms, the testing industry and programmes allowing a greater participation of the private sector in the delivery of educational services, several education stakeholders consider that the opening up of global policy spaces to the corporate sector could eventually allow for a greater advancement of the privatization agenda – even when, in stricto sensu, the SDG4 is not much of a game-changer on this issue. More than the SDG4, SDG 17.17 encourages the establishment of public-private partnerships as a cross-cutting target to the other goals and/or policy fields that are involved in the achievement of the goals. However, PPPs are a policy approach that is highly contested and whose meaning is very much disputed even within the educational field.

The growing influence of the corporate sector in education policy-making processes is a well-documented phenomenon in many countries, especially in the US, although its manifestations and evolution in connection to the post-2015 debate still constitute an empirically under-researched area. The rapidly changing landscape of corporate-initiated or 'corporate-friendly' initiatives more or less integrated into the UN system marks in any case a clear departure from the state-centered dynamics that have long characterized the global education field. As documented by Bull and McNeill (2007), multilateral organizations (and particularly UN agencies) with an education mandate do not have an established tradition of collaboration with the private sector. Such an engagement has been, at most, irregular, especially if we compare it to developments in other global policy sectors, most notably health. However, the surge of partnership

activity triggered by the post-2015 debate would have boosted the assimilation of the education field into the corporate social responsibility dynamics inaugurated by the UN system more than a decade ago and epitomized by the creation of the UN Global Compact in the year 2000. This, in fact, was an initiative expected to support the Millennium Development Goals.

For the most part, such a shift has been brought about by the growing engagement of corporate actors in new, semi-autonomous entities and consortia – rather than by its incorporation into accountable and/or democratically-monitored decision-making structures. While the presence of the private sector in the Global Partnership for Education Board and the Education for All Steering Committee was a significant shift in itself, the authority wielded by private organizations has proven in fact to be rather moderate, particularly in a context of limited representation and in the absence of a unitary agenda among private actors (cf. Menashy, 2016). However, the policy input from the corporate sector is more likely to be channeled through less bureaucratic-like organizations, fora and consultation mechanisms – which typically enjoy greater levels of discretion, and are much more difficult to track empirically than more formal governance bodies. This is for instance the case of the Global Business Coalition for Education, a network of companies engaged in partnership arrangements at different levels, and that has been particularly active both in the organization of high-level events and in the participation in decision-making venues connected to the post-2015 process. Similarly, a plethora of closely connected initiatives to the dawn of this process has also contributed to give a prominent voice to the corporate or philanthropic sector under the auspices of the UN system – including the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity or the Learning Metrics Taskforce, launched by UNESCO and Brookings and co-chaired by Pearson, one of the largest education companies in the world.

While the quantitative and qualitative impact of these initiatives is still uncertain, their self-ruling and relatively exclusive nature raises important issues concerning accountability and transparency, as well as involving the risk of alienating relevant education stakeholders. The push for the inclusion of the corporate sector in the SDG4 debate contributes to the constitution of an unscrutinized policy space, lacking in necessary mechanisms to hold engaged organizations answerable, and in which the fundamental policy principles and pref-

erences remain unspecified. Against a background of uncertainty and unpredictability, research has a key role to play in order to get a better understanding of the different motivations, operating principles and modalities of engagement behind such a potentially substantial shift in the global governance of education.

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THE NEW (SDG) EDUCATION AGENDA: THE UN, THE OECD, AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The Opportunities of the Sustainable Development Goal for Education are Just Too Big to Fail

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Summary: The education SDG provides a unique opportunity to provide good education to all children and adults on the planet. This is a chance too big to accept failure. But we need to measure progress in order to guide its implementation. And sustaining the political will to succeed will be critical.

In September 2015 the world's leaders gathered in New York to set ambitious goals for the future of the global community. Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seeks to ensure "inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". More specific targets and indicators spell out what countries need to deliver by 2030. SDG4 provides a formidable opportunity to make a historical step in advancing the cause of providing good education to all of the globe's children and adults.

Two aspects of Goal 4 distinguish it from the preceding Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on education which were in place between 2000 and 2015. Firstly, Goal 4 is truly global. The SDGs establish a universal agenda; they do not differentiate between rich and poor countries. Every single country is challenged to achieve the SDGs, including the relatively rich countries gathered in the OECD.

Secondly, Goal 4 puts the quality of education and learning outcomes front and centre. Access, participation and enrolment, which were the main focus of the MDG agenda, are still important. The world is still far from providing equitable access to high-quality education for all. An estimated 57 million children still don't have access to primary education and too many children continue to be excluded from the benefits of education because of poverty, gender, ethnicity, where they live, and armed conflicts. But participation in education is not an end in itself. What matters for people and for our economies are the skills acquired through education. It is the competences and character qualities that are developed through schooling, rather than the qualifications and credentials gained, that make people successful and resilient in their professional and private lives. They are also key in determining individual well-being and the prosperity of societies.

One year later – and one year closer to the 2030 deadline – it is clear what the main challenges are. Sure, success is conditioned by the available resources that can be mobilised and the capacity of implementation and reform necessary in each country. But behind that are two more serious challenges. The first one is developing a sound measurement agenda. International experience in education, but also in other agendas such as climate change, has taught us that large-scale policy processes rely on a trustworthy and ambitious measurement agenda. On many of the targets in SDG4 we simply lack reliable data, especially when it comes to measuring learning outcomes and skills. The education SDG thus also provides a challenging agenda for measuring what counts in education. The international research community in education cannot leave this agenda aside. The OECD is very much engaged in this process and willing to offer all of its expertise to turn this agenda into a success.

The second challenge is probably even more critical. The SDG4 and its targets demand a huge amount of political will and enthusiasm. The fact that the world has agreed on these goals is already a huge success and testimony to the shared understanding, across the political spectrum, of the importance of education and skills for the future of mankind living on this planet. Even with recent and still more coming drastic shifts in the political and ideological hegemony in many parts of the world, I don't think this belief in the power of education will fade away. Why not? Simply because the stakes are too high. If we cannot get the education agenda right and make all possible efforts to implement it with success, prospects for a better world – however you wish to define it – look grim. The chances provided by the education SDG are just too big to accept failure.

SDG4-Education 2030 – What Progress One Year On?

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Summary: The article provides a short overview of the general approach and key actions undertaken by UNESCO, in its mandated role to lead and coordinate SDG4-Education 2030, to provide guidance and support countries in preparing for and initiating the implementation of the SG4-Education 2030 agenda in close collaboration with its partners, as well as in monitoring progress through the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report during the first year after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

In September 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by Member States at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in New York. Recognizing the important role of education for the realization of the 2030 Agenda, the agenda includes a stand-alone goal on education (SDG 4) with seven targets and three means of implementation. Based on the principle of education as a human right and a public good, it is a global commitment to ensuring equitable opportunities to education for all, leaving no one behind.

The Education Goal of the 2030 Agenda was informed by the Incheon Declaration which was adopted at World Education Forum 2015 in May 2015. Calling for bold and urgent action to transform lives through a new vision for education, the Declaration entrusted UNESCO to continue its mandated role to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 agenda.

In November 2015, 184 UNESCO Member States and the international education community adopted the Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA) which was developed in a highly consultative process led and facilitated by UNESCO. The FFA provides guidance to Member States and partners on how to translate global commitments into action at country level.

What have been UNESCO's approach to and actions in implementing the 2030 Education agenda? As spelled out in the FFA (paragraph 92) 'UNESCO, as the specialized UN agency for education, will continue in its mandated role to lead and coordinate the SDG4-Education 2030 agenda, in particular by: undertaking advocacy to sustain political commitment; undertaking capacity development; facilitating policy dialogue, knowledge-sharing and standard-setting and providing policy advice; promoting South-South and triangular cooperation; monitoring progress towards the education targets, in particular through the work of the UIS and the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report; convening global, regional and national stakeholders to guide implementation of the SDG4-Education 2030 agenda; functioning as a focal point for education within the overall 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development coordination structure.' All of UNESCO, including its field offices, institutes, networks and relevant platforms are working towards the implementation of SDG4-Education 2030 and the Programme of UNESCO's Education Sector is aligned with SDG4-Education 2030.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Incheon Declaration and the Education 2030 Framework for Action clearly spell out that the heart of SDG4-Education 2030 lies at the country level and that governments have the primary responsibility for successful implementation, follow-up and review, to be supported by effective multi-stakeholder partnerships and financing. Governments are asked to set 'their own national targets guided by the global level of ambition but

taking into account national circumstances' (UN 2015, p. 13). This implies that countries should mainstream/integrate SDG4-Education 2030 targets into national education planning and programmes as appropriate and based on context-specific priorities and capacities. 2016 constituted a crucial year for laying the foundations for the implementation at country level. Preparatory activities start by building a shared understanding of the SDG4-Education 2030 among all stakeholders, followed by assessing country readiness in terms of the policy, planning, monitoring, and management contexts of national education systems. This includes identifying convergences and gaps between existing policies and plans with SDG4 commitments and ambitions, as well as actions required to strengthen, adjust and/or adapt policy and planning frameworks and processes to reflect SDG4-Education 2030 targets and commitments.

In order to initiate implementation, UNESCO together with Member States, the co-convening agencies and regional partners started a cycle of regional consultation meetings to build a common understanding of SDG4-Education 2030 and to prepare for implementation at the national and regional level. At the national level, supported by UNESCO and its partners, a number of countries undertook participatory consultations for an agreed understanding of the vision, goal and targets of SDG4-Education 2030 and their implications in national education contexts and to assess country preparedness for implementation (see Naidoo). Moreover, with the assistance of UNESCO and other partners, a number of countries undertook or are in the process of undertaking education policy reviews, are updating existing education plans, and/or are developing strategic plans for the mainstreaming/integration of SDG 4.

Inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships are crucial to support the education priorities and to mobilize the requisite resources. Therefore, another key activity was the convening of global, regional and national stakeholders to guide implementation of SDG4-Education 2030 and build strong partnerships to support efficient delivery. In this perspective, at the global level, the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee was set up, which is a global and inclusive high-level multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism and is convened by UNESCO. Its main objective is to support countries and partners to achieve SDG 4 and the other education-related targets of the 2030 Agenda through strategic guidance, monitoring, partnerships, advocacy and the harmonization of

partner activities. At the regional level, regional and sub-regional partner groups/coordination mechanisms for SDG4-Education 2030 were set up in all regions (Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Arab States, Latin America and the Caribbean).

As regards monitoring progress towards SDG4-Education 2030, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics plays a central role. It remains the official source of cross-nationally comparable data on education. In addition to collecting data, the UIS works with partners to develop new indicators, statistical approaches and monitoring tools to better assess progress across the targets related to UNESCO's mandate, working in coordination with the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee.

As regards indicator development, within a process steered by the United Nations Statistical Commission, the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) proposed 11 global SDG 4 indicators, which represent the minimum set proposed to countries for the global monitoring of SDG 4 targets. A broader set of 43 internationally-comparable thematic indicators was also developed by the Technical Advisory Group on Education Indicators, which was led by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). The thematic indicator framework includes the global indicators as a subset. Following the completion of the work of the TAG, UIS convened the Technical Cooperation Group on the Indicators for SDG4 - Education 2030 (TCG SDG4-ED2030). The TCG builds consensus on the SDG 4 measurement agenda and provides the opportunity for Member States, multilateral agencies and civil society groups to make recommendations to the UIS, which is responsible for coordinating the technical work needed to define and implement the global and thematic indicators. The first phase of the work on the SDG 4 indicators has been completed. A list of 29 indicators (11 global and 18 thematic) was agreed in October 2016 by the TCG for reporting in 2017. The remaining 14 thematic indicators require further methodological development before they can be reported on. This work will be taken forward by the TCG in 2017. Also during 2017, the IAEG-SDGs will consider proposals for a number of additional global indicators for targets not fully covered by the existing global indicators with a view to their endorsement by the UN Statistical Commission in 2018.

The Incheon Declaration called for the continuation of the former EFA Global Monitoring Report as the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report.

The 2016 GEM Report is the first report in a newly mandated fifteen-year series. The first edition focuses on two issues. First, it explores the complex relationship between education and the other SDGs. It shows what the world stands to lose if the education goal is not achieved but also how education needs to adjust in order to help accelerate the achievement of the other SDGs. Second, it discusses the challenges of monitoring progress on the new global education goal and targets.

The above provides a snapshot of the general approach and key activities undertaken during the first year of implementation of the new education agenda. An important beginning has been made, but much remains to be done. The broadened and ambitious SDG4-Education 2030 agenda will require sustained and increased commitment and action by governments and all partners if the global promise to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all is to be kept.

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From SDG Goal and Targets to Programming in Asia-Pacific: Reflections from the Regional Meeting on Education 2030

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Keywords: Asia-Pacific Meeting of Education 2030 (APMED); Unfinished business; Inclusive Education; Target 4.7; Regional Network of National SDG4 Coordinators.

Summary: The countries in the Asia-Pacific region are still facing various challenges in localizing SDG4-Education 2030 after a year of the SDG's adoption. In order to ensure that SDG4-Education 2030 does not stay as a set of mere statements but is translated into concrete strategies and actions for change, it would be critical for the countries in the region to fully transform their mindsets from "EFA" to "SDG4". A stronger link between national and regional level coordination may help ensure that SDG4 becomes everyone's business and brings increased coherence to the overall regional efforts in achieving the Education 2030 agenda.

The second regional meeting on SDG4-Education 2030 (APMED2030 II), which took place from 16 to 18 November 2016, in Bangkok, was an important opportunity to review and reflect on the progress made in and challenges faced by countries in the region in localizing SDG4-Education 2030 during the first year of Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. It was the largest regional meeting on SDG4-Education 2030 of this year, with over 200 participants representing 35 countries, four sub-regional organizations, 21 civil society organizations and the six UN co-convening agencies including UNESCO.

As anticipated to some extent, APMED2030 II concluded with more questions rather than answers on SDG4-Education. Many countries in the region were clearly struggling to "unpack" the SDG4-Education in their respective national contexts and to align the 7 targets and the 3 means of implementation with their existing national policies and plans. This short commentary revisits some of the key outcomes of APMED2030 II given its timeliness and reflects on what needs to be done

in the Asia-Pacific countries in the immediate term to ensure that SDG4-Education 2030 agenda does not stay as a set of mere statements but will be translated into concrete strategies and actions for change. The following three critical issues are discussed as region-wide concerns identified through the pre-meeting survey and the discussions during APMED2030 II.

Firstly, the critical differences between Education for All (EFA) and SDG4-Education 2030 were not necessarily understood by all countries in the same manner in the region. Perhaps one of the reasons for this situation is the frequent reference made to the "unfinished business of EFA" in the context of SDG4-Education 2030. Some countries still seem to perceive that SDG4 -Education 2030 is simply an extension of EFA. Interestingly, one way in which such perception has been demonstrated in some countries has been through the re-nomination of the former national coordinator for EFA as the new national coordinator for SDG4.

This misperception may carry two potential risks for the region in effectively localizing SDG4-Education 2030, which will need to be addressed without delay: first, countries might once again neglect certain targets that go beyond the original EFA scope and/or the current priorities of national education sector; and second, as such, the stakeholders of SDG4-Education 2030 could be restricted once again to those in education and may lose sight of the critical linkages between SDG4 and the other SDGs.

Secondly, a slightly unexpected outcome of the latest meeting was to learn that many countries were still not clear about some of the fundamental principles of SDG4-Education 2030, in particular, the principles of "inclusion" and "lifelong learning". These two core principles are at the heart of SDG4-Education 2030 and critical to its implementation, but they are certainly not new concepts introduced for the sake of SDGs in 2015.

In fact, the Asia-Pacific region has frequently been noted for its leading role since the EFA period in defining and promoting the concepts of inclusion and lifelong learning and translating them into action with support of UNESCO. It is no exaggeration that the principles of inclusion and lifelong learning guided the implementation of EFA for the last 15 years. Therefore, the many concerns raised by countries during APMED2030-II to define inclusion and lifelong learning certainly call for a serious reflection on the part of UNESCO. It would need to critically review its strategies and support modalities to Member States in clarifying and operationalizing these core principles of SDG4-Education 2030.

Thirdly, the meeting confirmed that Target 4.7 on education for global citizenship, sustainable development, gender equality, and sustainable consumption, etc., was the most challenging target for any country in the region. The global value of Target 4.7 is well recognized in the Asia-Pacific region, but the strategic relevance of the target to national contexts is still being questioned and debated. Indeed, there are simply too many sub-themes and sub-agendas packaged under 4.7's one long statement. Moreover, the thematic indicators proposed do not fully cover the scope of the long-statement target, which seems to be confusing the countries as well. An urgent call was therefore made at APMED2030-II to further review and hold consultations with all stakeholders to fully unpack Target 4.7. This would then identify the technical capacity and financial resource needs for integrating, implementing and monitoring progress with the proposed indicators and ultimately achieving the target. It was further proposed that the next regional meeting on SDG4-Eucation 2030 would focus on the sub-themes of Target 4.7.

Despite these fundamental issues still to be addressed, the collective commitment of the region's governments to achieve SDG4-Education 2030 seems to be stronger than the time of EFA. The Asia-Pacific region has long enjoyed a strong regional coordination mechanism since EFA era, and this has provided a platform for sustained partnerships, collaborations and support to Member States. This regional mechanism has been renewed with some new partners on board. The effective operation of this renewed regional mechanism will be critical to the success of the overall regional efforts for SDG4-Education 2030.

In contrast, the national ownership of SDG4-Education 2030 in some of the countries in the region seems less obvious still. The main reason for this is yet to be fully understood but seems to be partly due to the more complex arrangements being proposed for the national coordination of SDGs as a whole that goes beyond but embraces SDG4. As a way to support fostering national ownership, a regional network of national coordinators of SDG4-Education 2030 was launched at APMED2030-II. This network is expected to become a regional level platform for national coordinators to collaborate, exchange and share experiences and knowledge on implementing SDG4 and initiate joint actions where relevant. As the real work has only begun in most countries in localizing and integrating SDG4-Education 2030 into national contexts, this may also be an opportune time to share experiences and knowledge across countries. The next immediate step would then be to establish regular and stronger links between the national and the regional level coordination mechanisms, to ensure coherence of the overall regional efforts in achieving SDG4-Education 2030.

Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 – Global Citizenship Education One Year after SDG4's Adoption

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Keywords: GCED; PVE-E; Teacher's Guide on PVE-E; curriculum & teacher education; GCED Network.

Summary: It has been a year since the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted at the United Nations (UN) in September 2015. Specifically focusing, among others, on Global Citizenship Education (GCED) in the Sustainable Development Goal 4.7, I intend to look into some progress and developments made at the levels of the UN and UNESCO in popularizing GCED.

UN

Not long after GCED was incorporated in the SDG 4.7, the *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism* was launched by the UN Secretary-General to address violent extremism that has been on the rise at an alarming rate. The question at hand is how to overcome violent extremism through global citizenship. What is meaningful is that the 66th UN/Department of Public Information/ NGO Conference was held in Gyeongju, Republic of Korea from 30 May to 1 June 2016 whose theme was none other than GCED. It is quite remarkable that a UN conference dedicated solely to GCED was organized in less than a year since the adoption of the SDGs. Also worth mentioning is that there has been significant progress in coming up with global indicators for measuring the SDG 4.7; these include national education policies, curricula, teacher education and student assessment.

UNESCO

Following the launch of the UN's *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*, UNESCO has been spearheading educational efforts in response to violent extremism. And there is a broad consensus at UNESCO that the Prevention of Violent Extremism through Education (PVE-E) should be handled within the framework of GCED. UNESCO's efforts resulted in the publication of *A Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism* and a policy guide on the prevention of violent extremism is expected to be released soon. Furthermore, UNESCO organized the *International Conference on the Prevention of Violent Extremism through Education: Taking Action in New Delhi*, India in September 2016.

APCEIU

Mandated with promoting Education for International Understanding (EIU), APCEIU, a UNESCO Category 2 Centre, has been at the forefront of advancing GCED since holding the *Technical Consultation on Global Citizenship Education* in September 2013. Subsequently, APCEIU co-organized the 1st UNESCO *Forum on Global Citizenship Education* in December 2013 and launched the UNESCO *Clearinghouse on Global Citizenship Education* at the 2nd UNESCO *Forum on Global Citizenship Education* in January 2015. Above all things, APCEIU's greatest moment by far came at the *World Education Forum* in May 2015 when GCED was featured in the Incheon Declaration as one of the educational targets to be achieved in the next 15 years. This confirmed its inclusion in the final SDG4 text a few months later.

In order to disseminate GCED throughout the world, APCEIU has been zeroing in on curricula and teacher education. Firstly, the 3-year project on GCED Curriculum Development and Integration was launched in April 2016 primarily targeted at 4 countries, Cambodia, Colombia, Mongolia and Uganda. Secondly, APCEIU has expanded its reach beyond the Asia-Pacific to Africa, the Arab region and Latin America to heighten the effect on teacher education. This culminated in the *International Conference on Global Citizenship Education* in October 2016 during which 300 educators around the world shared their good practices and pedagogical approaches. Also, the GCED *Network Meeting* was held in Seoul, in November 2016 to strengthen partnerships with like-minded organizations and make concerted efforts to implement

GCED at regional and national levels in the medium and long term.

2017 will see endeavours to promote GCED continue in all regions of the world. For instance, the UNESCO *Week for Peace and Sustainable Development: The Role of Education* is due to take place in Ottawa, Canada on 6-10 March 2017, while the ADEA 2017 *Triennale* is held in Marrakesh, Morocco on 15-17 March 2017, one of whose sub-themes is 'Building peace and global citizenship through education'. So GCED is definitely on the move!

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND AGENDA 2030: WHAT PROGRESS ONE YEAR ON?

43

Absorbing SDGs into International Cooperation in Education

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Summary: The new Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 has a holistic dimension that applies to both the developed and developing world. It covers a wide range of areas and policies ranging from pre-school to higher education in which the EU is already heavily involved and will further its support.

The European Union (EU) is determined to fully implement the 2030 Agenda and related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in all developed and developing countries. The universal goals provide an opportunity to have more coherent internal and external policies, aligning policies and actions to the objectives of the Agenda, recognising the interdependence of our world and the shared challenges we face with other regions of the world. Like the other SDGs, SDG4 (and its 10 targets) "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" has a holistic dimension encompassing economic and social sustainability, as well democratic values. It is fully in line with the EU's action in the field of education, which focuses on inclusion, access and quality at all levels of education.

At EU level a well-developed and recently updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) already exists. The new ET 2020 priority areas reflect many of the SDG 4 – Education 2030 targets (inclusion, quality of education, links to labour market, importance of Early Childhood Education and Care). Work on the ET 2020 priority areas will therefore make a concrete contribution to the implementation of SDG 4. ET 2020 provides a solid set of existing working methods, tools, and benchmarks that support EU Member States in their education and training policies. For the time being, priority is on making the best possible use of these methods and tools but the synergies between the Sustainable Agenda and the priority areas of the ET 2020 Framework will need to be linked and reinforced, including the challenging task of monitoring the implementation of SDGs through both existing and new tools for building evidence and data collection.

When it comes to cooperation with partner countries outside Europe, education has consistently featured prominently in the EU's priorities for the new development agenda, the main focus being on ensuring access to and completion of quality education to all boys and girls.[1] The EU promotes an overall sector approach to education in its partner countries, reaching from early childhood education through primary and secondary education, higher education and leading to lifelong learning strategies.

While it is critically important that all children complete their education, it is vital that they receive quality teaching and learn to the fullest extent possible. The EU will, in that perspective, continue to promote teacher development, curricula that encourage students to develop critical thinking, and the definition of learning outcomes that enable teachers to promote better learning.

The Commission will also increasingly focus on the most marginalised children, to ensure their

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1 The EU is a major **global player in education and training**, allocating **EUR 5.3 billion** to education and training at all levels (2014-2020), including via EU Trust Funds. **This includes EUR 3.356 billion in bilateral programming in 44 partner countries**, of which EUR 540 million is invested to date in vocational education and training (VET) in 25 countries. This also includes regional actions like **Erasmus+** and global initiatives such as the **Global Partnership for Education (GPE)**, where the EU is the biggest donor. About **61% of total funds** are allocated to the 21 of the 43 countries considered **fragile and/or conflict-affected. 1450 M euro are allocated to Erasmus+** to increase higher education cooperation with the developing world. The EU is also supporting the new initiative, the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) Fund, launched in May 2016.

right to education and will give growing attention to children living in poverty, and children with disabilities. Actions to tackle inequalities will identify options to address school-related, gender-based violence, while ensuring stronger links between education and basic health and nutrition. As a response to the new Development Agenda, the EU also recognises the importance of education in crises and conflict situations (representing more than half of the EU support in education), and the need for a development approach that addresses the needs of children and young people affected by protracted crises.

Supporting higher education, which is crucial for the development of a country and for building a strong human capital base, is now clearly recognised in the new agenda for development and the SDGs. The Erasmus+ programme, opened for the first time in 2014 to the whole world, is strengthening higher education to play its part in poverty reduction and inclusive growth, modernisation of higher education, including stronger links to the world of work. Erasmus+ is well known for the mobility scholarships it offers to students and staff, and the recognition of study periods spent abroad. But the programme also offers capacity building actions, funds projects that modernise curricula, teaching and learning practices, improve quality, make governance more transparent, stimulate university-enterprise cooperation, and open universities to non-traditional learners. As we live in an inter-connected world, in particular in academia, solutions that have been successfully tested in Europe can be shared, with the necessary adaptations, with other parts of the world.

Monitoring and collecting data globally on the implementation of the SDGs will be a challenging task - in particular for those indicators that have never been measured globally - on which a technical expert group has started to work.

Further Reading

ET 2020 – Education and Training 2020

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework_en

The New (SDG) Education Agenda:
UNICEF and SDGs in China and the Global SDG Conundrum

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Summary: China is serious about Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 as evidenced by aligning it with its national 13th Five Year 2016-2020 plan and launching in 2016 a national SDG implementation plan; it also works with UNICEF to support SDG4 equity focused interventions to inform regional and national replication. The national SDG implementation plan highlights the SDG4 indicator conundrum: how can we measure SDG progress globally if the 11 global indicators are not all measurable in every country?

"While striving to eliminate poverty and improve people's livelihood, it is important for us to uphold equity and social justice and ensure that everyone has access to opportunities and benefits of development."

Remarks by H.E. Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, UN Headquarters, New York, 26 September 2015

'What are the SDGs?' 'What is your favourite SDG?' Two questions I posed last week at a global issues 'hope for humanity' day to a group of middle and high school students from 12 schools in Beijing. The first question elicited teenage shrugs, downcast eyes, and zero knowledge. I posed the second question after presenting the excellent world's largest lesson videos to explain the SDGs (http://www.globalgoals.org/resource-centre/worlds-largest-lesson/). Believe it or not, Education emerged the winner as most students' favourite SDG. I promise I showed no bias to influence their answers!

The global issues day organiser and I explored more over lunch during which a discussion ensued about the influence of SDG4 on UNICEF China Education programmes. I explained that upon joining UNICEF China in July 2014, my team and I were keen to ensure that our new country programme 2016-2020 was fully aligned with the forthcoming SDG4, in particular UNICEF's global education foci on equity, early childhood development (ECD), learning, and adolescence. I didn't know then the extent to which China would be committed to SDG4 and engaged with UNICEF and UNESCO around SDG4, therefore, making alignment a natural and easy process.

UNICEF in China uses a 'muddy boots' approach to our work – working with the Ministry of Education (MoE) we pilot interventions, all of which are SDG focused, in disadvantaged areas of China. Our interventions seek to address equity, which underpins SDG4 in China, through developing tried and tested models to inform national education policy. For example, to address challenges faced by the 31 million ethnic minority children we have developed and are piloting a culturally appropriate pedagogy with MoE, to inform policy. For other interventions, see our website - http://www.unicef.cn/en.

UNICEF, UNESCO and MoE work together through national, regional and global mechanisms, to support SDG4 in China, and also regionally and globally through South-South Cooperation. For example, UNICEF China supported the education elements of China's 13th Five Year Plan 2016-2020, bilaterally, and through an international SDG4 meeting in Beijing in December 2015. China's 13th Five Year Plan demonstrates the extent to which SDG4 is part of core business in China. UNICEF China also engages at regional and global SDG4 meetings with MoE, and in November 2016 in Bangkok we participated in the second annual regional Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 (APMED) SDG4, which is focusing on the 'indicator conundrum'.

To return to my Beijing students, and a third question I posed – 'How can we make SDG4 a winner by 2030?' I shared some statistics with the students to highlight the scale of this endeavour for China

and the equity focus, and to guide our reflections and discussion on making SDG4 a winner in China. China is the largest developing country in the world with 279 million children, 70 million of whom live in designated poverty counties, 5 million of whom are disabled, 106 million of whom are affected by migration, 1 in 7 ECD-aged children globally live in China, and other mind blowing statistics (http://www.unicef.cn/en/atlas). The word 'winner' focused my own reflections. Winning involves measurement – how do I/we measure up against another or in the case of SDGs, against targets? Herein lies what I term the SDG4 conundrum – how can we make SDG4 a global winner by 2030 if we are unable to measure some of the 11 global indicators and haven't yet reached agreement on the 43 Thematic indicators?

The September 2016 release in China of the national SDG implementation plan, which followed the April position paper, (http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/t1357701.shtml) raises, particularly, I suggest, the SDG4 conundrum. The plan is presented in tabular format with broad action guidelines that will enable each SDG4 target to be realised; however, the global indicators are only included for some targets and as part of the action narrative. Other indicators are added, which seem to me to be proxy indicators for the 11 global indicators, such as 95% retention rate for 9 years compulsory education for indicator 4.1, gross enrolment rate for three years of pre-school with 85% target by 2020 for 4.2, and for 4.3, an indicator on gross enrolment rate of 90% for senior secondary school and 50% for college education by 2020. The main reason for this is, I suggest, data availability which all countries are challenged with in using the 11 global indicators, the SDG4 conundrum. It highlights the urgency of addressing the SDG4 conundrum. We must all support dealing with this challenge.

SDG4 and SDG8: TVET and Skills in a New Light?

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Summary: Whilst the choice of indicators related to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and skills development under SDG 4 and SDG8 may not seem like a natural extension of the targets themselves, it is hoped that they will trigger discussions on the quality and relevance of training and its place in the broader agenda of school-to-work transition for young people.

Despite resounding claims that the SDG agenda represents a new pinnacle for international recognition of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and skills development, it remains to be seen what actual impact might result from the new attention to goals and targets as they are currently framed.

In relation to the work of the ILO on TVET and skills development, the strongest alignment of SDG4 exists with Targets 4.3 and 4.4 which aim collectively to ensure equal access to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education and to substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

Whilst measurement challenges and indicator choices will skew prioritisation at the country level, there remains considerable potential for skills issues to receive greater attention through the planned SDG reporting mechanisms. Even though the question of what constitutes 'relevant skills' might be considered central to discussion surrounding Target 4.4, the choice of indicators includes the percentage of youth/adults with digital literacy and ICT skills as well as attainment rates by age, economic status and program. Whether attainment rates say anything about relevance is a moot point, but limiting a discussion about 'relevant skills' to digital literacy and ICT skills also clearly has limited relevance to the wider debates that are required about what skills are needed in our dynamic economies. Regardless of these concerns, there is an expectation that Target 4.4 might result in increased interest in the systems and methodologies in use to better understand the current and future demand for skills, as this is central to any understanding of whether or not current offerings are relevant. It may also trigger closer scrutiny of the mechanisms in place to engage with industry (represented by employers and workers) and to gather their inputs into the process of deciding what skills are relevant in any particular sector.

Similarly for Target 4.3, it is hoped that the goal of equal access to affordable and quality programs will trigger wider discussions in the TVET and skills sector about what constitutes quality and what models and systems can be applied to address the poor quality of TVET and skills programmes and institutions in many countries. Quality assurance is often neglected in development projects focused on strengthening TVET and skills systems, overtaken as it is by managerialist concerns of increased participation rates and employment/self-employment outcomes.

Under SDG8, Target 8.6 aims to substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET). Combined with Target 8.b (on global youth employment), the link between youth employment and education and training, and the measurement of NEET rates takes on greater significance. As in this case the choice of indicator and target are perhaps more aligned than most SDG4 and SDG8 targets, we can expect the issue of school-to-work transition to receive renewed and ongoing attention, potentially including greater emphasis on apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning.

It remains to be seen, however, whether additional resources will be generated and directed to these potentially peripheral aspects of the SDG agenda or whether the rather narrow selection of indicators will skew the development priorities of national governments and development partners alike.

SDGS AND NATIONAL POLICIES IN EDUCATION

Are Developing Countries Prepared to Deal with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4)

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Summary: The achievement of sustainable development requires fundamental changes in the process and objectives of education. Schools must shift from content-based instruction to learning how to learn; from emphasis on learning what is known to the creation of new knowledge. Sustainable development is a process rather than an end point.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 demands that each country should organise so that "all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes". This challenge is hard and even for developed countries success is not assured. For example, between 1970 and 2005, the United States employed more teachers and the average class size fell from 22 in 1970 to 15 by 2005. Actual student outcomes, however, as measured by the national assessment program, stayed almost the same for students aged 9-17. Chile extended the school year from some 600 class-hours in 1996 to nearly 1000 in 2016, but the increment in student's achievement was small. In order to improve their education systems, it is said that most OECD countries doubled and even tripled their spending on education in real terms between 1970 and 1994, but student outcomes in a large number of systems either stagnated or regressed.

The challenge is of course harder for developing countries that would like to reach at least the 480 score that was considered a "good performance" in PISA 2000. Furthermore, developing countries with a similar spend per student have widely ranging levels of performance. Among countries that spend USD 1001–2000 per student (PPP) Chile obtained 442 and Armenia 478. Among countries that spend USD 2001–3000 per student (PPP) Iran obtained 441 and Croatia 498. These gaps in the effective use of resources suggest that many countries need to improve several related elements of their education systems at the same time. Therefore, priorities in the use of time, financial and human resources should be carefully assigned for improving learning outcomes, even though some of the key improvements may have a small impact on costs (for example, when each principal allocates to first grade the best teacher for teaching to read).

The SDG4 currently includes eleven indicators for evaluating each dimension of the set of education goals, but it does not provide hints on their validity and reliability for setting up priorities. For example, each country should provide universal access; have a high proportion of teachers trained to teach; and timely promotion rates up to the end of lower secondary education (low repetition rates). Though Chile meets these three key requirements, the International Adult Literacy Survey detected that only 20 per cent of its adults have the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, at work and in the community.

Chile may have some progress in the next 15 years, but probably will fail to meet the Sustainable Development Goal of achieving universal free, equitable and quality education. The SDG4 report does not provide evidence on the strategic changes that a country like Chile should make in order to improve its education system.

Countries need help to design improvements through a complex mix of strategies: Better teacher training institutions; extended school year; higher teacher salaries; reliable textbooks; tracking students; or improving the allocation of teachers in each school. For example, developing countries that have to increase and upgrade education facilities to provide universal access would have to decide when to enrol children who are developmentally on track in learning (at the average cost per student) and when to enrol children with special

needs and learning disabilities (with a much higher spend per student).

Entrance screening and tracking after some years of school provide alternative types of education according to ability and previous knowledge (students are assigned to different levels of the same course or to a course with a different curriculum that is either more or less rigorous). Introduction of tracking in the education system may generate unexpected effects in other elements of the system. Countries should also be aware of the effects associated with the moment when kids start their separate paths (after four years in Germany and six in UK) to university, vocational training or schools for slower learners.

A longer school year will increase the direct teaching cost (for example, to extend the school year in Chile required a 50% increment in the student unit cost). But in order to increase achievement it may also require to provide in-service training to switch from boring frontal (whole class) teaching to a student-cantered learning in order to reduce taking notes and memorizing information. An alternative strategy may be to improve teacher training institutions (for example to double the proportion of trainers with doctoral studies) and then extend the school year. Other strategies (related with extending the annual instruction time) could be to raise salaries to attract and keep better teachers; provide better pedagogical training (pre-service or in-service) and materials required for teaching at the relevant level; and offer transportation or food to increase students' attendance.

In summary, the SDG4 report should be complemented by an analysis of how countries can move toward the common goal depending on the initial state of each education system. No one analysis will suffice. First, unique conditions across countries mean variations in what can be "relevant and effective learning outcomes". Different initial states will require different initial strategies. Over time variations in internal, and external, conditions will require changes in strategies. At any point there will be more than one possible approach, and at every junction more choices to be made. As a process of learning, the improvement of education implies trial and occasional errors, accompanied always by reflection about the consequences of one's actions.

SDG? What is That?

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Keywords: SDGs; Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável; UN; national bureaucracy

Summary: It is suggested that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including in their Portuguese translation, are very little known in Brazil. Possible reasons for this are given.

The purpose of this note is to comment on how the SDG framework resonates in Brazil. I could state that it does not resonate at all and stop there. But in order to make my opinion more credible let me expand on my answer.

Some impressions were gathered along the way, in my comings and goings around the world, under the auspices of the ILO, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Small and vulnerable countries pay attention to much of what comes out of the UN family. Big countries do not.

The United States got out of UNESCO, to return later. Americans hardly took notice of either movement. In this case, the country is too big and powerful to care. Brazil is big but not powerful. However, it suffers from an acute case of isolationism.

Ask any middle ranking bureaucrat in Brasilia about the UN agencies. Chances are that they see them as organizations that fund projects that Brazilian authorities want to execute. Given the impossibly bureaucratic rules in Brazil, they resort to them, in order to bypass their country's baroque rituals and restrictions. From all we know, Brazilian consultants seriously execute these projects. Most of the time, their names are suggested by the interested Ministries. This bypass trick is a most useful role for the government, given the absurd intricacies of the local bureaucracy.

As to the messages of the different UN agencies, yes, we listen to them, when their representatives are asked to speak in public occasions. But since these lofty ideas come without a budget, they are soon forgotten.

SDG is another of those messages. Who pays attention to it? From all I know, very few people.

Everyday I read an electronic clipping of news about education. It may be instructive to note that I never read a single entry on the topic.

Next test is to ask Mr. Google what he thinks. When typing "Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável" (the official translation into Portuguese) a grand total of 356 thousand entries were indicated. To have some kind of comparison I typed my own name. Surprise, I have about the same number of entries. Am I famous or is SDG an idea that never took root in Brazil? Since the first alternative is clearly false, we have to accept the other.

Veja is the leading Brazilian weekly news magazine, with a circulation of over one million copies. Being a center-right publication, it reflects what interests the average Brazilian. A search for the Portuguese translation of SDG identified four entries in 2016 and five in 2015. By contrast, Google found 362 million entries under the name of the magazine. This is a vague estimate as it includes a cleaning product with the same name as well as references to the magazine in other media. However, it gives some idea of the popularity of SDG in the country.

I am not sure whether this is evidence of my ignorance on major international issues or evidence of how marginal SDGs are in my milieu, but I had to search Google to find out what these three letters stood for.

'Free, Equitable and Quality Primary and Secondary Education' in Jamaica – Reality or a Pipe Dream?

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Keywords: Jamaica; education; social-class; colonial

Summary: Despite huge investment in education, postcolonial legacies and inadequate resources have, inter alia, posed difficulties for the achievement of goals of free education, equity and quality in Jamaican schools. The SDG4 target of 'free, equitable and quality' education is a mirage.

Key goals of education in post-independence Jamaica include free education at the primary and secondary levels, access, equity and improvement in the quality of education. Despite its huge debt and weak economy presently assisted by the IMF, Jamaica has invested heavily in education to achieve these goals. Between 2005-2010, for example, investment in education as a percentage of GDP increased from 5.3 to 6.1 percent which exceeds the average (5.2%) for developed countries (CAPRI, 2012) and in 2010/2011, 13.4% of the national budget was spent on education (Miller and Munroe 2014). But is education really free and are goals of equity and quality being achieved?

Manley (1974: 160) envisioned Jamaica as a 'a classless society in which upward and downward mobility are determined exclusively by individual merit' but despite the efforts of his democratic socialist government of the 1970s and beyond, this has remained an elusive dream, not least because "the roots of inequalities in access, equity, quality… lie deeply buried in (our) colonial past' (King, 1998: 46). At that time, King explains, secondary and elementary education were administered by separate bodies and this had the effect of driving a wedge between the middle and upper class on the one hand and the lower social class on the other. Education was not designed to provide equitable education but rather as a tool for social stratification. Jamaica is a prime example of what Hickling–Hudson (2011: 459) has described as 'the hegemony of social class-divided and unequally gendered model of education'.

Equity

The effect of social privilege is evident from the early years. Children who attend privately owned preparatory schools come from the middle/upper social class. They outperform their largely lower social class peers in the public primary schools by as much as 30 percentage points in the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) (CAPRI, 2012) and the boys in these schools do much better than their primary peers. Success at the GSAT and to a large extent social class upbringing determine entry to the prestigious 'British grammar school type'– the traditional high schools (THS) which are characterized by a middle/upper class culture. Children who failed the GSAT are largely from the lower social class and they enter Upgraded High Schools (UHS) which pursue a more technical and vocational oriented curriculum. The curriculum of the THS prepares the students to sit the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC). Despite the fact that the majority of passes at CSEC (over 70%) are in the vocationally oriented subjects most of the students in the UHS who pursue a vocational curriculum, are deprived of the opportunity to take these exams (Craig, 1998).

Free education

The situation is further exacerbated by the periodic political mantra 'free education' which is used as a carrot by politicians to win over voters. But free education is an illusion. Public schools are given a subvention fund which covers staff and related costs and a tuition fund which is expected to cover essentials including class materials, maintenance and utilities. These fees are sufficient to cover neither such costs nor other costs such as securing school property and supplementing school feeding programmers. Schools therefore charge an auxiliary fee which at the secondary level can range from US$50-US$80 per student. This is way beyond the pockets of lower social class parents who also cannot afford the huge sums of money for extra lessons after school hours for which the more well-to-do parents pay teachers in order to

increase their children's chances to succeed at the GSAT and CSEC (Stewart 2015).

Quality

Children from the lower social class are also at a disadvantage with regard to quality of educational provision. While quality in learning as a 'process' evident in learner-centred pedagogy, independent and creative thinking, problem-solving and the integration of technology in teaching and learning has been difficult to achieve in any school type because of the persistence of teacher-centeredness Marshall 2007), the development of problem-solving and creative thinking skills comes at a price as the smaller classes which enable these are found in 'extra lessons'. Despite the fact that the THS are better provided with technology than the UHS, inadequate outlets in classrooms, limited availability of the Internet, loss of trained teachers due to migration are amongst reasons given for technology use falling short of its mark. The inequity of the social class divide is also evident when quality is seen as 'outcome', measured in terms of success at examinations. The GSAT is a high stakes competition for access to quality, and each year about 30% of the age 11 cohort either fail or do not reach the standard required for taking the examination. Pass rates of 69% in English Language and 40% in Mathematics at CSEC in 2011, with girls being the most successful, are considered "positive, indicating improving quality within the context of expanding entries' (Miller and Munroe, 2014: 245), but these figures obscure the fact that they represent only about 57% and 48% respectively of the grade 11 cohort that was eligible to take the examination. The excluded languish in the UHS. Furthermore, the THS are so determined to retain their places at the top of the league tables that CSEC results generate that they cream off their students and only enter for the exams those they know will pass.

Conclusion

The challenges that Jamaica faces in achieving 'free, equitable and quality' education, as in the SDG4, are rooted not only in its colonial legacy, but the inability of the Ministry of Education to enforce policy. The Reform of Secondary Education (ROSE), for example was an intervention designed in part to narrow the social divide and to improve quality by instituting a common curriculum in the lower secondary grades. The UHS embraced it but the THS closed its doors to it. The elite did not like its 'levelling' nature. Exacerbating the challenges are the international donor agencies such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank which have given loans to support interventions in education to improve quality and equity at the primary and secondary levels, but while these interventions have fallen short of achieving their goals, the loans still add to the country's persistent indebtedness.

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Global Goals Versus Local Contexts: A Particular Challenge for Small Island Developing States

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Summary: The article demonstrates the significance of local context sensitivity for the successful engagement of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) with global educational agendas and the new SDGs. In doing so, it is argued that there is much that the wider international development community can learn from this distinctive experience.

Small island developing states (SIDS) have distinctive educational challenges, needs and priorities. This has been clearly documented by researchers across many fields and disciplines since an international literature on education in small states emerged in the early 1980s. Much of this work has been stimulated and supported by the Commonwealth, whose constituency currently comprises 30 small states out of the total of 52 members. Of these, many can also be classified as SIDS and share some of the most significant development challenges that underpin the core rationale for the new Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Education Agenda. Climate change, sea level rise and environmental uncertainty are, for example, identified as the dominant concerns currently faced by SIDS, and those that have some of the most pressing implications for education and training in such contexts (Crossley, Bray and Packer, 2011). Recognising these distinctive needs UNESCO has also focused increased attention on education in SIDS, and in September 2014 the UN generated global attention in the form of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States that was held in Samoa.

In the light of this, the nature of the SDG education agenda, and progress with implementation, are of direct importance for SIDS worldwide. Will, for example, a new era of international development support the ongoing efforts of SIDS to prioritise education for sustainable development (ESD) in ways that will meet their own local needs, improve the quality of teaching and learning in all sectors, and strengthen social justice? Will the new international agendas, goals and targets align more closely with the aspirations and priorities held by SIDS than has been the case in the past? Critical reflections on the EFA movement, and the MDGs, are less than reassuring given their emphasis (in practice) largely focussed upon access to primary schooling – and this failed to resonate with the educational priorities of small states that were some of the first systems to highlight quality and call for increased support for post-basic education and training. Work in SIDS has also long pioneered innovative advances in ESD and the application of indigenous knowledge, as publications by researchers from The University of the South Pacific (USP) demonstrate (Koya, Nabobo-Baba and Teadero, 2010).

This experience calls for greater efforts to be made by international agencies, organisations and agendas to work closely with, and learn from, SIDS, if global goals are to be engaged with in ways that are sensitive to the distinctive needs and priorities articulated in small state contexts. So, how is the new international educational development architecture, and the SDG process, engaging with this form of locally grounded challenge? Has the 'extensive consultation' generated by the UN led to the renewal of international agendas that are now more compatible with the contemporary priorities held by SIDS? Are the prior experiences and current needs of SIDS appropriately reflected in the spirit and detail of the SDGs? On the positive side of the coin, SDG 4 and Education 2030 do cover all sectors of education while highlighting the significance of quality, equity and sustainability - and from the SIDS perspective this connects more closely to many local and regional priorities.

From a more critical perspective, if the challenges of climate change and environmental uncertainty are to be engaged with in any depth, this will require serious action and commitment to the SDGs beyond SIDS and throughout the global North. This

is the source of the economic and consumption models that are known to be intensifying the sea level rise and related social problems that are now being faced by the most vulnerable SIDS located at the 'Sharp End' (see www.smallstates.net). Is implementation to date revealing the emergence of a genuine universal SDG agenda, albeit one that will require local interpretation and flexibility? Or are OECD countries being driven more by competitive economic motives and related educational goals and targets generated by narrower but increasingly powerful international surveys of student achievement such as those characterised by the influential Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) studies and related league tables? Indeed, in times when the rise of international competition, big data and an accountability culture is increasingly prominent in all walks of life (Crossley, 2014), could highly prominent concerns to identify indicators for the measurement of SDG progress generate costly unintended effects - effects that run counter to core aspirations for the forms of quality education that promote diverse human and cultural values, critical awareness, social justice, and skills for peaceful sustainable development? There is certainly much that the international development community can learn from the distinctive experience of SIDS, as collective efforts are made to make the most of the SDGs in all contexts worldwide.

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Pakistan's Educational Planning and Alignment with the Education SDG

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Keywords: local planning; global targets; implementation issues; donor challenges

Summary: If SDG-4 does not want to end up with the same fate as EFA or MDGs in Pakistan, it has to privilege local planning and leadership for implementation. This article shares insights from a local education planning document that is being undermined by the new exigencies of SDG-4 targets.

The Sindh province of Pakistan prepared a Sindh Education Sector Plan (SESP) after detailed consultations and involvement of all stakeholders in the province. The process started in 2012 and concluded in 2014 with the final publication of SESP 2014-18. This was the time when the Education for All (EFA) was approaching its end in 2015 and the shaping of new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was in full swing. It is important to note that the development of SESP was itself triggered by a pre-condition of Global Partnership of Education (GPE), which required Sindh province to have an education sector plan ready in order to access the $66 million GPE grant. Although the government education department was leading the plan, the process of developing the SESP was delicately orchestrated by several development partners – prominently the World Bank, the European Union, UNICEF and UNESCO itself – through its being a leading member of what is called the Local Education Group (LEG) which also has representation from local NGOs, academia and the private sector. Thus, SESP supposedly represented the aspirations, priorities and observations of all the stakeholders that have been involved in education development in Sindh. The provincial government of Sindh also showed ownership of the sector plan and so did the participating stakeholders.

In order to roll out SESP, a small implementation group was formed and the overall work resulted in the development of the district level plans, which took another full year until the end of 2015. Just as the government seemed set and focused to implement SESP, a new requisition is being imposed upon it, that is the alignment of SESP with SDG-4. With the formal adoption of the SDGs, the prominent UN agencies working in Pakistan are urging the alignment of SDG-4 with national and provincial plans. In February 2016, a high level two-day provincial consultation took place in Sindh province jointly organised by UNICEF, UNESCO, the Federal Education Ministry and the Provincial Education Ministry to understand, assess and align the SESP with the SDG-4 targets. Thereafter, UNESCO-assigned consultants worked with the provincial Education Department to develop a strategy to align targets of SDG-4 with the SESP.

The alignment process of SESP with SDG-4 looked simple on the surface and the guidelines from UNESCO were also clear that the targets of SESP be juxtaposed with the targets of SDG-4 and gaps should be identified where the two do not match. The ensuing exercise included various members from Sindh gathering together to fill out detailed tables identifying such gaps and suggesting what needs to be done to align. However, a key question that kept coming back was: which document supersedes in case of misalignment? Is the Sindh government at liberty to discard any targets set by SDG-4 which are already signed by the federal government at the global forum? The deliberations clearly demonstrated that the SESP was measured against the targets of SDG-4 and wherever it was short or targets were absent, the SDG-4 targets were inserted. The result was a document prepared by UNESCO Pakistan office, which claims to be a 'living document', and will be updated regularly in consultation with stakeholders. The document clearly identifies gaps in the SESP and requires it to introduce, enhance or alter its targets where they do not match the SDG-4.

It is painful to see plans after plans prepared at the national level in meticulous detail. However, when it comes to implementation the partners get exhausted after long planning and many times the bureaucratic commitments get shifted to somewhere else. Here is a classic case, more than two

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND AGENDA 2030: WHAT PROGRESS ONE YEAR ON?

57

years spent in developing a plan – SESP; but just when it is being rolled out at the district level, the SDG-4 comes in to identify yet more gaps. Yes, the gaps will continue to exist but, if local priorities and plans are undermined by these global targets, what kind of local ownership of these global targets can we expect? Will it be surprising then, if SDG-4 also fails? The life of the public sector educational planners and implementers in developing countries like Pakistan has been made very challenging by the donor community, who continue to come with their own priority areas and always pull the Ministry of Education in one direction or another with money attached to these priorities. This allows very little space or energy in these bureaucrats to pursue an independent plan determined by their own policies. Almost always the donor-designated consultants work with (or for) the government to plans which are meticulously prepared but the actual bureaucrats who have to ensure delivery are either not involved or remain aloof, only participating tokenistically. There is something fundamentally wrong in this approach to planning and implementation.

It is important for global agencies like UNESCO to not only rely on the rhetoric of local ownership of these global targets such as SDG-4; but also provide space for local plans to take precedence. What good would a meticulous document be in outlining the plan to achieve SDG-4 in Pakistan in next 15 years, if it has no local commitment and ownership? We have seen numerous such documents under EFA and MDG regimes. We should not fall into the same trap again.

School District Reform for 'Free, Equitable and Quality' Public Education in Urban China: Achievements and Challenges

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Summary: This article aims at introducing a school district reform in compulsory education (grades 1-9) in Beijing to show how the Chinese local government has been making efforts to construct free, equitable and quality public education for all. It concludes by highlighting further systematic reform for adjusting mismatch between the reform, the current school system, and social norms.

The global community has made 'free, equitable and quality' public education for all the 1st target of the Education Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4) within the 2030 Agenda. According to the national plan for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development launched in September 2016, the Chinese government has developed detailed action plans for ensuring free, equitable public education with balance and quality for all by 2030. This article unveils how the central government integrated the global commitment to the national plan and how the local government took action to fulfill the 1st target of SDG4 by school district reform in Beijing.

China has made remarkable progress in achieving the Education for All (EFA) goals and education related targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the past decades. Nevertheless, China's public education sector is currently facing unbalanced development among public schools. In the context of urban China, with the influence of the past 'key school' system, public schools with good performance received more education resources and priorities for school development than those with not. Consequently, it created a development gap amongst public schools and caused social exclusion and a degree of social reproduction of inequality inside public education. However, in the 21st century, on the one hand, the government has already been integrating global discourses on balance and quality of public educa-tion into the national education and social development policies by emphasizing standardization of school building, assignment of teachers and students, and distribution of equipment and other educational resources in a balanced manner. On the other hand, the central government has encouraged local governments, as the main players in policy implementation, to take initiatives to rebuild public education with balance and quality for all.

School District Reform for Resource Sharing

A review of local policies of Beijing uncovers the fact that this municipality has been promoting school district reform for constructing a balanced free, equitable and quality public education since 2000. The current reform aims at making school district not only a basic unit for implementing the "nearby enrollment policy" in China's compulsory education but also a platform for public schools to share school resources to provide quality education for all.

The construction of a school resource-sharing mechanism includes both hard and soft aspects. Regarding the hard dimension, the district educational administration divides public schools of the district into several school districts. Each school district has both good schools and those that are not. Then, member schools make a school district commission by involving all principals from the same school district to be responsible for the daily management of the school district. Meanwhile, they also establish an internet-based information exchange system to share information on the availability of education facilities and courses among member schools. Member schools and teachers can make a reservation to use the facilities or to make a class observation. In contrast, the soft aspect of the reform gives more focus on human resource exchange. The district educational administration establishes a school alliance including one well-performing school and one not well-performing school to share school leadership for school management, teacher assignment

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND AGENDA 2030: WHAT PROGRESS ONE YEAR ON?

59

and student admission for teaching and learning, teacher training for teacher development and other exchange. This partnership is considered a platform to enable the not well-performing schools to strengthen their capacities through collaboration with the well-performing ones. As a result, the reform has been creating benefits for the stakeholders involved. It enlarges the service dimension of quality education resources and provides students of not so well-performing schools with a better access to enjoy quality school facility and quality teaching and learning environments. Also, it promotes communication and exchange between teachers in different schools. And it strengthens their mutual understanding of teaching students from different background and in diverse learning and growth progress. Moreover, it enables teachers of not well-performing schools to access new teaching methods, skills, and relevant training.

Challenges

No doubt, the on-going reform is not perfect and it leaves stakeholders' concerns and questions for further consideration and action. Building a more balanced development of public education may meet resistance from those who benefited from the unbalanced development. It will be a challenge for stakeholders to promote a sharing spirit regarding the limited quality education resource among public schools. Also, there are concerns on how to keep the independence of not well-performing schools and their cultural uniqueness after establishing school alliance? How to change teachers' affiliation from a teacher of the specific school to the teacher of a specific district to further promote teacher reallocation for balancing teacher qualities among public schools? How to further strengthen the role of the school district commission in constructing quality public education for all? How to change traditional bias on quality difference between the well-performing schools and those are not? And how to promote a shift in social norms from emphasizing exam-driven education and competition to taking care of full perspectives of quality development and inclusiveness? Possibly, China's case may provide other countries with a reference on how to fully utilize school resource-sharing mechanisms in the short run to fill the gap amongst public schools and to provide quality public education for all. Meanwhile, it also reminds us that there is a need to promote systematic change both locally and centrally, in the long run, to accommodate the reform for 'free, equitable and quality' public education for all.

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What has the SDG4 Brought to India's Education and Training Transformation?

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Summary: The government in India is in a process of preparing a 15 year Perspective Plan which includes a 7 year strategy and a 3 year Action Plan. This is India's replacement for the Five Year Plans, the 12th of which ends in 2016-17. The terminal year of 2030 for the Perspective Plan was chosen because India wishes to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Here we focus on where India stands in respect of the various targets included in SDG 4 (education).

Target 4.1 would like to ensure that by 2030 all girls and boys complete quality primary and secondary education, along with relevant learning outcomes. India achieved 97% net enrolment rate at the primary level in 2007. Currently the gross enrolment ratio at upper primary level for 11 to 14 year old children is at about 95%. In addition there has been a rapid expansion of lower secondary education (defined in India as grades 9 and 10). The gross enrolment rate in these grades has increased from 62% in 2010 to 79% in 2015, a very sharp increase within a matter of five years. Universalization of lower secondary and higher secondary education is assured at this pace of enrolment growth well before 2030.

Target 4.2 states that all girls and boys should have access to quality early childhood development (ECD). After 2006 ECD access expanded very rapidly in India. In 2006 only one quarter of 3 to 6 year olds were in preschools. However, universal access was provided within a matter of five years after a Supreme Court judgment instructed the government; as a result the number of Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) centres in the country grew from 600,000 to 1.2 million by 2012. The quality of ICDS centres of course needs much improvement.

Target 4.3 calls upon countries to ensure access to quality vocational and tertiary education including university. The access to vocational education expanded rapidly in India after 2013 when the National Skills Qualification Framework was adopted (a policy document the author had a key role in drafting). This requires that vocational education was made available, for the first time in India's history, from grade 9 onwards rather than from grade 11 onwards. In addition the Government of India has expanded the private providers of vocational training both through private industrial training institutes as well as through the National Skill Development Corporation-funded private vocational training providers. The only problem is that while access is expanding very rapidly issues around quality are growing simultaneously.

Target 4.4 exhorts countries to increase the number of youth and adults that have relevant skills for employment and entrepreneurship. The number of young people joining the labour force in India every year is presently roughly 7 million, but expected to increase sharply to 12 million per annum by the year 2030. Therefore the number to be skilled has to increase accordingly. The situation is complicated by the fact that half the workforce of 490 million is either illiterate or has primary or less education. Another 16% of the workforce has only 8 years of education, which means the number of adults that need vocational, cognitive and non-cognitive skills has to expand, if these youth are to become employable in the non-agricultural workforce. The only way forward for this to happen rapidly is through the recognition of prior learning (RPL) on a vast scale. Some efforts in this direction have been made but quality of RPL efforts will need to improve. The adults who are imparted literacy and numeracy will need to increase sharply over the next decade.

Target 4.5 exhorts countries to eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure quality vocational training for youth. The good news is that India has rapidly universalised access to education up to grade 8 especially for girls. As a result there

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND AGENDA 2030: WHAT PROGRESS ONE YEAR ON?

61

is gender parity at grade 8 which is a remarkable achievement for any developing country especially at India's level of income. However even more remarkable is the fact that the sharp growth in secondary enrolment has happened because girls enrolment has increased. Gender parity exists even in secondary enrolment in India, very unusual again for a country at India's level of development. However access for girls to vocational training has remained a problem area for decades and much needs to be done in this respect.

Target 4.6 calls upon all youth and substantial proportion of adults to achieve literacy and numeracy. This has been a long standing weakness of educational strategy in India. The 2011 Census told us that there were still 311 million illiterate adults in the country which is an outcome of the slow expansion of school education during the 20th century. However the number of illiterates has indeed been falling, but the programs to achieve adult literacy must be strengthened both in terms of access as well as quality.

The SDG4 also focuses on higher education. Access and enrolment to the higher education system as a whole expanded extremely sharply after 2006-7. This is only as one might expect given how rapidly secondary education was expanding. Tertiary enrolment grew from 11% of the relevant age cohort in 2006 to a remarkable 22% by 2012. Clearly since then it would have continued to increase. However, again as with school education, rapid massification of tertiary education has resulted in a serious shortage of teachers especially in the STEM subjects, but generally right across university education.

In sum, there are many challenges before India as we begin the march towards 2030.

The Economic Crisis in Mozambique: A Stumbling Block to Achieving SDGs

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Summary: The government of Mozambique is facing a risk of not achieving the sustainable development goals due to the fact that the strong flows of foreign capital that have sustained the economy for over a decade have now declined. Donors have suspended aid and the economy is now operating below its potential.

The government of Mozambique has been strengthening its efforts regarding compliance with global goals through the National Development Framework reflected in the Government's Five Year Programme (PQG) for 2015 to 2019; the Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty (PARPA) for 2006 to 2009 and in the long-term vision for the country, the Agenda 2025. The 5-Year Programme highlights key development areas, including Consolidating National Unity, Peace and Sovereignty; Development of Human Capital; Promoting Employment, Productivity and Competitiveness; Develop Economic and Social Infrastructure and to Ensure Sustainable Management and Transparent Natural Resources and Environment.

To guarantee for example the development of human capital, the Government's 5-Year Programme established the following key objective: To promote an inclusive, effective and efficient educational system that ensures the acquisition of skills required in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and management that respond to human development needs. Various priority actions were developed in order to achieve this objective, namely; ensuring a quality and relevant technical and vocational education based on competence standards that respond to the needs and specifications of the labour market; to develop vocational training courses with an emphasis on civil construction (bricklayers, painters, plumbers, electricians, carpenters, joiners and others) aimed at training human capital, according to market needs.

It can be argued that the Government's 5-Year Programme, designed to ensure the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is well laid out. There is great awareness of the SDGs in Mozambique and efforts are being made to localize the SDGs, filtering the 169 SDG targets in order to decide those that will be focused on. The question, however, is how this translates into implementation.

All this effort has hit a snag in Mozambique due to the economic crisis the country is experiencing at the moment (the debt crisis), which has resulted in the suspension of donor funding. A significant deterioration of the flows of foreign capital that have buoyed the economy in recent years will have negative consequences on the achievement of SDGs. In response to this crisis the government has recently re-defined 4 priority areas namely infrastructure, energy, agriculture and tourism. They believe that if they succeed in those areas, they can produce enough for their sustainability. In order to succeed in those areas, the government will need to invest in human capital development through education and training that will respond to the needs of infrastructural development, renewable energy and agriculture. Surprisingly, education is not one of the four priority areas defined by government and this will have negative implications on the country's capacity to achieve SDG 4. Not only that, it is even questionable how the government will be able to achieve in those four areas without education and training to spearhead human capital development.

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND AGENDA 2030: WHAT PROGRESS ONE YEAR ON?

63

Oman Reacts to the Ambitions of SDG4

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Keywords: Muscat Agreement; alignment with national plan; role of UNESCO National Commission.

Summary: Oman contributed to the SDG4 development process through the Muscat Agreement. It continues to provide support to SDG4 implementation and alignment through participation in key committees and through the Oman National Commission for UNESCO.

All education stakeholders in the Sultanate of Oman are charged to work towards achieving the national vision of education in the following phrase: "Building of human resources with essential work and life skills enabling them to live productively in the world of knowledge, qualified to adapt contemporary changes, preserve the national identity and authentic values, and able to contribute in the development of human civilization". It is a comprehensive vision but one that is clearly aligned with SDG4: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all".

The Sultanate of Oman made a contribution to forming the global framework of education of Agenda 2030. This began with the Muscat Agreement which arose from consultations during the Global Education for All Meeting, held in Oman in May 2014. Elements of this were confirmed in the World Education Forum, Incheon, 2015. Also, Oman participated when the Incheon Framework for Action was formally adopted in the high-level meeting, held at the headquarters of UNESCO in November 2015. It is also a member of the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee representing the Arab countries along with two other States. In addition, The Sultanate effectively contributes in the evaluation of indicators for SDG4 through its participation in the Technical Cooperation Group related to indicators

The Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science currently holds responsibility for the national coordination process for implementation of SDG4 with all education stakeholders in the Sultanate. It has formed a national team from various institutions, working to ensure the implementation of the ten targets of education that were set out in the education agenda 2030. This national team prepared a work plan for 2016, according to all international documents that related to the agenda of Education 2030. The team also set up proposed national indicators for monitoring SDG4, which were approved by everyone. 2016 has been designated as the first year for the team to ensure alignment of Oman's 9th Five-Year National Plan and national strategy for the education sector with the Global Framework Goal and Targets for education.

Among the main points of the plan are to hold briefings for all education stakeholders about the Global Agenda 2030 and the global framework for education and its indicators. This process targets the largest possible number of officials and specialists. Moreover, the plan entails preparing annual brief informative reports about the achievement rate of the Global Framework Goal for education in The Sultanate in light of the indicators. This will start from 2017.

The National Commission will also work in cooperation with the national team during the next phase to hold workshops for the national team and for specialists from education stakeholders about monitoring education through the indicators and other mechanisms, in collaboration with UNESCO. The Commission believes that developing and building the capacity of workers in the various education stakeholder groups are preconditions for the comprehensive implementation of SDG4.

Making SDGs a Reality in India: Top Down and Bottom Up

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Summary: This article looks at the promise of and conditions for the successful use of ICT in vocational skills development (VSD) in enabling large scale access to quality VSD at low cost, building on some practical experiences with blended learning approaches and pedagogies in rural India

It can be argued that one of the key countries needed to make the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) a success will be India. The sheer size of the country makes the issue even more pressing, noting that in the frame of the « Make in India » campaign alone, for instance, India plans to (re-) train and skill more than 400 million people over the coming 6 years.

Vocational Skills Development (VSD) is making a comeback on the international and Indian development agendas. It has specific mentions in 4 of the 10 targets under the education SDG 4, unlike the previous Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) or Education for All (EFA) Goals. The main VSD-related SDG target 4.4 is to: 'By 2030 substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship'. In India, the Government has entrusted a government think tank, NITI Aayog (www.niti.gov.in), with coordinating the 2030 Agenda, and has designated the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) (www.mospi.nic.in) for the role of defining indicators and locating them in the national context. There is also action at the state level, with states being asked to put forward their plans for implementing the SDGs to NITI Aayog. In parallel to the design for the SDGs' implementation in India, NITI Aayog is also leading the formation of a 15-year development plan for India in which skills development is a key dimension.

Undeniably, VSD for youth integration and social inclusion of the poorest populations has become a major development strategy, especially over the last 10-15 years. However, one of the key questions obviously is how to reach out to these populations. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is said to be part of the solution. The major promises of ICT in VSD include enabling large scale access to VSD at low cost, improving the quality of learning, and rethinking and enhancing the relevance of the VSD curriculum. With the projection that 80% of the world's population will be connected via at least one social media platform by 2020 (Intel et al., 2015), ICT is set to provide a major new playing field in VSD and means to achieve the SDG targets. However, there are important challenges and questions, including the lack of access to electricity or internet as well as gender inequalities with respect to access to technology, the qualifications of trainers, the low esteem associated with VSD, the shortage of employment perspectives and a lack of certification and quality assurance mechanisms.

A number of takeaways are emerging from these experiences, which may have a wider relevance for the successful use of ICT in VSD for the poorest populations and the achievement of the SDG targets in a bottom up fashion. These include the need to redesign and create the learning pathways and environment, including by:

- Finding the right blend of technology and traditional teaching to provide high quality VSD training at scale and reach inaccessible populations

- Redefining the role of the teacher to that of a mentor and a facilitator and promote peer-to-peer learning

- Extending technology to include monitoring and evaluation to ensure quality feedback for continuous improvement

- To understand the aspirations of the students/learners and trainers and assist with

setting goals and provide the necessary resources and support in meeting them

• To couple relevant life skills training with vocational training programs allowing to effectively use acquired hard skills

• To ensure active engagement with all the stakeholders in a community in order to ensure social and economic sustainability

• To couple training with the labor market needs, job creation and income generation.

Essentially, for VSD to serve as an effective poverty reduction strategy and contribute in an holistic way to achieving the SDGs, from the bottom up, an environment must be created that facilitates access to training, followed by the transfer of knowledge and skills gained, and by application that stimulates development at the individual, community and national levels of society. The use of ICT in VSD has the potential to help create such an environment. However, ICT can also be problematic as its tools come with a number of pedagogical, operational and political complexities. Further research and contextualized evidence are needed, and NORRAG has recently launched a new collaborative scoping research project with its South African partner, REAL, at Wits University and its Indian partner, AMMACHI Labs, at Amrita University, looking at the interplay between VSD and ICT policies and practice at the international, national and local levels, focusing on the unreached populations in these two countries. Hopefully this bottom up research will put some flesh on the bones of the SDG4.4 target.

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Will Kenya's Educational Reforms Help Achieve SDG4?

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Summary: This article looks into some of the steps that Kenya has made towards the realization of SDG4. It looks into some of the current and on-going transformations, strategies and approaches that the government of Kenya has taken and which could impact on the attainment of the SDG4.

Though government efforts to enhance access to education at all levels has faced challenges, several positive impacts have been realized. The government and education stakeholders have embarked on reforms that could in the end lead to greater benefits to the education sector in Kenya especially with regard to SDG4. After attaining commendable milestones in expanding access, the next steps have focused on quality reforms, strengthening of institutional governance, learning outcomes, enhancing infrastructural capacities in the schools and curriculum reforms amongst others.

The implementation of the new Kenyan constitution in 2010 and the adoption of a devolved governance structure has given more impetus for the growth of different sectors in the country. Though education is still a responsibility of the national government, through the devolved system, regional governments support and contribute significantly to the development of education in their regions such as in building schools, providing bursaries to needy students and other support systems required by schools.

The government commitment to a laptop project for students and to connecting all schools to electricity will have a significant impact on the education sector. Regarding the laptop project, already piloting has been done and tenders awarded to the different to different entities which will supply the laptops to the school system. It incorporates information and communication technology to support and enhance the attainment of curriculum objectives and learning outcomes. Supply of electricity is important for this endeavour and other learning requirements. It is the projection by the government that by 2017, all schools will have got access to electricity. By 2016 over 12,000 new connections to schools had been achieved. If utilized well this could have an important turn-around to the education sector as it accords with several possibilities especially for teaching and learning and also for addressing a number of hurdles that have faced the system. In addition to the plans to link the schools to high speed internet in partnerships with the Communications Commission of Kenya and Kenya Education Network, the future doesn't look so grim for the sector. In addition, it suggests that Kenya should be able to report substantial progress on the global indicator on the percentage of youth and adults with ICT skills.[1]

The Kenyan Ministry of Education in its strategy documents affirms its commitment to the realization of SDG4 that it concedes can only be realized if young people get access to lifelong and quality education. A key issue that the Kenyan government is also addressing indirectly is how to develop young people from the national system who can be globally competent, competitive and competent in a hi-tech world.

Over the past year, Kenya has engaged in a process of curriculum reforms partly aimed at addressing the requirements of SDG4 and other national priorities. If the reform process goes through, then Kenya will replace the 8.4.4 system with a new three tier system with fewer subjects and more practical skills. The government proposes a system that would mean that learners spend two years in nursery school, six years in primary school, another six years in secondary school and three years in university. The new curriculum em-

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1 http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/uis-indicators-for-sdg4-education2030-presentation-june2016.pdf

phasizes the societal, economic and technological needs of the country with additional emphasis on age appropriate content at all levels of education. It also provides different pathways at the end of junior secondary school to limit the high levels of attrition that have been witnessed in the previous system especially due to the very low levels of progression from primary to secondary school.

The quality reforms have begun to bear fruit. The Ministry of Education has put in place accountability requirements throughout the system that institutional systems, practices and management have to adhere to. School heads now have to shoulder new management requirements, teacher unions are still battling the requirements of performance contracting which has however been implemented in the universities in addition to the ISO qualification requirements. The quality demands at the university level have seen numerous campuses, especially of public universities, closed down as their expansion tendencies over the past few years were causing serious quality concerns.

While the SDG4 crucially underlines quality tertiary education, Kenya, like other African countries, still performs dismally in knowledge production through research. Though Kenya is just behind South Africa, Egypt, Morocco and Nigeria in knowledge production, this is still low compared to global standards. Investments in research to respond to national challenges would therefore be crucial. This however still faces the perennial challenges of inadequate funding, poor infrastructure for research and inadequate institutional capacities for research and teaching. The challenge of teacher quality is not isolated at the tertiary level only but could even be more challenging at the secondary and primary school levels not only due to the inadequate numbers of teachers but also the gap between teacher training and the new teaching and learning requirements. The SDG4 challenge of substantially increasing the supply of qualified teachers will not be easy to achieve.

While the Government of Kenya is doing its best to respond to the challenges that could hamper the achievements of the SDG4, several other possibilities could still be pursued to augment the government's efforts. One of the core aspects of the SDGs is global partnerships to respond to challenges that could affect the achievement of these goals. National governments such as that of Kenya should also synergize on the possibilities available through their regional and continental organizations and frameworks such as those with-in the East African Community and the new developments within Africa. Though SDG4 is said to be quite central to the achievement of all the other goals, implementation will require hugely concerted efforts not only from national governments but also from international partners and governments. Important strides are being made but several challenges persist which could still render the achievement of this goal by 2030 a mirage.

Global Goals and Targets versus National and Regional Plans: The Case of Argentina

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Summary: The main global concern related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) centres around how to achieve these goals proposed by the UN. Meanwhile, the differences between countries mean that achieving them is an easier task for some, and a very difficult one for others. In Argentina the SDGs only express an ideal 'want to achieve' situation, acting more like a wish list than real targets. On the other hand, this struggle between global vs. regional vs. national indicators can be seen in higher education (HE) in South America where the priority is on regional cooperation rather than in global competition.

For developing countries, the challenge is in what way to achieve the targets, how to measure them, with which indicators, and how to finance them. These goals are aspirational global goals; so they do not mean the same for every government in the world. But how should they be translated into national and international policies for countries like Argentina?

The UN proclamation that these targets are for 'developed and developing countries alike' (UN, 2015: 3), overlooks the fact that the disparities between countries is colossal, and implies that developing countries will find it hard to achieve them. Argentina is a member of the OECD and part of the G20, but in the eyes of the world it is still a developing economy. Regarding education, it claims to have one of the most developed and equitable systems in Latin America (UNESCO, 2015: 17). But on both economic and educational aspects there is a clash with reality. The economic indicators do not show the progressive economic system we are supposed to have, the growth of the country is slow, and there is an increasing worry about poverty, unemployment, inflation and social insecurity. Regarding education the national goals and targets were already defined in 2006:

• with the Law of Education Nº 26.206, which established that education is a social right for everyone guaranteed by the National State, where access and equality are understood;

• with the Law of Educative Funding Nº 26.075, which specified an increase in the budget for education to 6% of GDP, to ensure the minimum of 10 years of compulsory education, focusing on promoting inclusion and access, improving the conditions for everyone and providing quality education.

Public Education at all levels is free, including bachelor degrees in higher education. But in general terms the vision of having a good education system in Argentina is not translated into reality. The lack of budget and the economic and social tensions affect every aspect of public basic education, and in fact it ends up being not inclusive, not accessible for everyone and of bad quality. The struggle we mentioned earlier between global and national can be seen very clearly and in Argentina it seems to be hard to resolve.

Policies towards improving global indicators are useless for national policies in developing countries. In fact, national decisions, laws, budgets and public policies have been implemented in Argentina for a long time to achieve targets very close to SDG 4 and more; so most of the time the indicators they select for presenting to International Organizations are not new, but are related to on-going policies in the country. In the case of SDG 4 in Argentina there is still no official information or position paper. However, in August 2016, the Ministry of Education decided on a Strategic National Plan 2016-2021 to ensure quality and equal education for everyone (CFE Nº 285/16) and that can be taken as an example of policies towards providing indicators for SDG 4. On the one hand the lack of budget, and on the other the inability to achieve our own national objectives transforms SDG 4 for Argentina into a wish list.

When analysing the collision between international goals and national or regional ones, a similar logic happens with the indicators of higher education. When international comes to mean competition, regional can change its significance into cooperation. South American cooperation in higher education is a clear example on why international goals are impossible to reach for developing countries and the option has been, instead of competing internationally, to cooperate regionally based on similar histories, similar indicators and similar goals, while rejecting the international targets defined (by developed countries) in the World University Rankings. National and regional goals are achievable, while global ones impossible.

For both cases - SDG and in HE world rankings – the indicators are global, which mean that they are the same for everyone. Thus, they are easy to achieve for some, but impossible for others; then why should Argentina try to achieve these indicators when basic conditions nationally and regionally are not even assured? What can be the reason to justify the use of indicators that do not measure developing countries' realities?

There is an evident tension between the global targets and national and regional goals and contexts. The latter have their own characteristics, history, special needs and priorities, policies and governments. The challenge has to do with the fact that for countries like Argentina, and most of those in Latin America, we are asked to achieve indicators of developed countries, when we can hardly deal with the social, political and economic tensions inside our own countries. In HE the priority has been to turn regional, prioritizing cooperation with neighbouring countries with similar interests. We do believe that just as rankings in HE were not invented to explain different realities, so the SDGs were not defined in order to display differences either. So it makes no sense to work on global indicators that have little to do with our very different realities.

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Skills for All as Timor-Leste's initial response to SDG4

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Summary: Timor-Leste has been quick to introduce a new curriculum which brings skills training in food growing and cuisine into the classroom partly as a response to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The RDTL (Republica Democrática Timor-Leste) is a half-island nation situated between Asia and the Pacific with a population of 1.3 million - a large proportion of whom are subsistence farmers. It became independent in 2002 and has the highest birth-rate in the region. For 24 years Timor-Leste had been militarily occupied by its giant neighbour, Indonesia, after the Portuguese indicated their desire to de-colonize in 1975. The education systems of its former ruling powers still have a great deal of influence, but the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have, in some sense, given Timor an impetus to move in a new direction educationally and one in which it may lead the world in skills development in primary education.

As a representative of conflict-affected countries and a founding member of the G7++ of 'fragile' states, Timor-Leste played a role in shaping the new global agenda, particularly in advocating for the inclusion of Goal 16 to 'Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build, effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels'. And Timorese Prime Minister, Dr Rui Araujo, a medical doctor who studied in Indonesia and New Zealand, has enthusiastically embraced all the SDGs. In New York, at their launch, he joined eight other leaders, the Presidents and Prime Ministers of Brazil, Columbia, Germany, Liberia, South Africa, Sweden, Tanzania and Tunisia to form the High-Level Group on SDG Implementation, notably the only country from Asia or the Pacific to do so.

But it is probably on Goal 4, on Education, that Timor-Leste has moved on fastest, with its new primary school curriculum which includes permaculture/agroecology principles taught in school gardens in the early years in every school, followed by cuisine and nutrition beginning at year 4 (Lemos 2016). This was a result of advocacy by a small Timorese NGO that has been teaching such courses at youth camps and advocating for sustainable practices in agriculture since 2002. Prime Minister Rui Araujo, at a university conference in July 2015, had pointed to one of the main deficiencies of the Timorese education system as being the major disconnect between what is taught in school and its application in daily life. At a conference on World Teacher's Day, 12th October 2016, in Dili, he emphasized the importance of the application of knowledge, telling hundreds of teachers that:

> Education is a right that is enshrined in our Constitution and that is unquestionably essential to the development of any country. Education teaches students and trains them to apply their new knowledge, so that they may contribute to the various fields of the development of Timor-Leste.
>
> As such, education must be regarded as more than the transmission of scientific contents. It must be regarded beyond the theoretical knowledge we transmit to our students. This acknowledgement must start with teachers, since it is on your shoulders that rests the rewarding task of educating our students (Araujo 2016).

Vice-Minister Dulce de Jesus Soares had already assembled a formidable team of advisors, both International and Timorese, to re-rewrite the curriculum for the whole of Basic Education (up to Year 9). The previous curriculum, in which basic literacy was in Portuguese, had proved a failure as too many students were being left behind. The new curriculum brings in Tetum (a creole and a major lingua franca) as the medium of instruction in Primary school and for initial literacy, with Portuguese being introduced at Year 4. This means that students do not have to wait until

they have learned Portuguese to begin learning science, art, culture, mathematics etc. And the SDGs provided a large impetus to include environment and climate change in the curriculum. Vice-Minister Soares had hired Eugenio Lemos, one of Timor-Leste's leading singers, to advise her on the Art and Culture component of the curriculum. As also the Founder of PERMATIL, (Permaculture Timor-Leste), Lemos also recommended the introduction of a school garden in each primary school to use as a 'living laboratory' to teach principles of sustainability alongside, biology, mathematics and good work habits, while cultivating fruit and vegetables and learning how to cook a nutritious meal. In late 2015 the Council of Ministers approved a new curriculum which included the construction of food gardens in all Basic schools (up to year 9).

Further up the school, in years 5-9, a participatory science curriculum has been developed which introduces students to principles of physics, chemistry and biology using easily available materials for experimentation (Gabrielson 2016). Although these reforms only go to year 9 at present, they will prepare students with many of the life skills needed to address Timor-Leste's major problems such as soil, water, energy, nutrition, sanitation and health as well as giving them improved language skills and the ability to grow food. These skills will not be forgotten and the idea of using the Education sector to power the achievement of other SDGs should not be difficult for Timor-Leste.

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Is "#FeesMustFall" a threat to the Sustainable Development Goals in South Africa?

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Summary: South Africa has a relatively strong public higher education built on a sophisticated funding formula, which also includes the payment of fees by those who can afford them. Is the "#FeesMustFall" campaign a threat to the further advance of this system? What will be its impact on the Sustainable Development Goals of the country?

The Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) do underline higher education specifically, and higher education is greatly implicated in the achievement of almost all of the SDGs. For example good health and well-being are highly dependent on knowledge and skills acquired in higher education (SDG3); quality education requires teachers who are developed in the higher education system (SDG4); the planning and implementation for water and sanitation requires knowledge and skills developed in higher education (SDG6); higher education graduates do anticipate decent work and are the group who are thought of in contributing to economic growth (SDG8); industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG9) are mainly facilitated with higher education knowledge and skills; sustainable cities and communities (SDG11) are also made possible with the knowledge and skills from higher education; life on land (SDG15) is an area of study that can be achieved through higher education studies; and peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG16) can be built with the knowledge and skills obtained from higher education. Therefore, at the basic minimum, to achieve the SDGs, countries must invest in higher education, and higher education must be available to many of the countries' citizens to extend the pool of individuals who will make it possible to achieve the SDGs.

Sub-Saharan Africa has long recognised the importance of higher education in its development.

Right after independence, country after country concentrated their energies in establishing universities which did not exist before. According to Mbembe (2016) these universities could be defined as 'welfare' in the sense that citizens didn't have any fees to pay. Those who were admitted were very likely to have free accommodation; they had access to food at a cheap, highly subsidised price. The same went on with transport: they paid nothing in terms of transport. In that sense the university was a welfare institution. Now from the mid-70s to the early 80s, most of those countries went into deep economic crisis and their economic policy was basically taken up by international financial institutions, the IMF and the World Bank, which pushed them to slash expenditure, especially social expenditure, to privatise state-owned enterprises, to free exchange and basically push for a market-driven approach. From that moment on, universities went into turmoil, strikes and some years without any degrees being awarded. Those who had money, of course, sent their children abroad. Thus, private universities begin to come in by the early 90s. This movement is driven by entrepreneurs who understand very well that higher education is a market, an educational market that is global.

However, the scene in South Africa has been somewhat different as by the time of 'independence' the public university system was well developed and many institutions were regarded as world-class universities. But the conditions for private higher education to penetrate and thrive were always difficult and the new government regulated this so strictly that today only a few institutions can label themselves as private universities. Still, the South African public universities had to overcome the big hurdle created by the apartheid government – the exclusion of most black South Africans. In the first place, black South Africans could only access the poorly resourced historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs), which also had a limited curriculum to offer. Secondly, many black students came through a poor schooling system and very few met the admission requirements for university. Thirdly,

payment of university fees was always going to be a big hurdle for anyone coming from a previously disadvantaged background where many parents were unemployed and even when employed were historically confined to low-paying jobs because of job reservation policies of apartheid.

There are many components in funding of universities in South Africa: The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), which provides loan and grants to university students; subsidies to universities comprise the largest single component of the university budget; together with infrastructure funding, the amount going to universities comprised approximately 40.1% of the budget. To this must be added the major share of the NSFAS funding of more than R14 billion. In total around 55% of the post-school budget goes to universities. The fees paid by students who do not qualify for the NSFAS is estimated to account for 34% of the actual university cost (Pillay,2016). So, even though South African higher education has not gone the 'welfare' route, the State still subsidises a great deal of the cost for everyone.

The "#FeesMustFall" campaign has raised questions about the constitutional responsibility of the state about access and affordability of higher education in the country. The constitution refers to affordable not free education. Of immediate concern is the issue of the level at which the means test for affordability has been pegged. This campaign exposed the problematic nature of the funding formula of the financial aid scheme which excluded a lot of students who are now termed 'the missing middle' - whose parents earn more than the set benchmark and yet cannot afford to pay for their children's education. Most of these parents work for the public sector as teachers, police, nurses, etc. But the "#FeesMustFall" is not asking for affordability for those who cannot manage, but for free higher education.

The implications of realising a free education may be drastic for South Africa, especially with regard to realising most of the SDGs. Many education economists have expressed the view that more tertiary education spending benefits the higher income groups. In addition, it has been found that South Africa has the highest private returns to tertiary education. With a degree being almost a passport to employment. Still, the benefits of a free higher education are likely to accrue to the rich rather than the poor (Cloete, 2016). This is so because spaces available in higher education are likely to be limited by what the government can

afford and the rich who already have the social capital to succeed in schools and proceed to university, are therefore more likely to occupy these spaces. Moreover, a limited public higher education will not be able to deliver on what the SDGs are calling each country to do. In other words, there will be limited country capability to contribute to the economic development through higher education effects on labour productivity, poverty, trade, technology, health, income distribution and family structure. South Africa needs a strong and broad tertiary education system even to grow its stagnant economy. Higher education is not only a tool for social mobility but serves the wider social and economic development agenda and thus the SDGs. There are huge challenges ahead, however.

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1 #FeesMustFall is a student led protest movement that began in mid October 2015 in response to an increase in fees at South African universities.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION, FOR THEM OR FOR US?

The Role and Impact of Gulf Philanthropy in Relation to SDG4

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Summary: Gulf philanthropic organizations have become increasingly prominent actors in the global education arena. While they are often working to support inclusive and equitable quality education, there is little research examining the overarching activities of these institutions. This piece describes why Gulf philanthropic organizations operating in education deserve greater attention from academics and policymakers.

Philanthropic organizations in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are significant new actors in the global education arena. The Gulf states, in particular the UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, have been increasingly shifting from historically discrete channels of giving to a more formalized, western-style of public philanthropy (such as through establishing foundations named after their patrons). In turn, Gulf philanthropic activities have become increasingly prominent on the international stage, with both state and non-state actors contributing generously to a range of sectors, including education.

In 2013 alone, according to one report, foundations, corporations, and families in the Gulf donated $1.76 billion USD to a variety of causes outside of their country, with 15% of that going to support education (Coutts, 2014). This philanthropic funding has a key role to play in supporting the (SDGs), especially Goal 4, which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, 2016, p. 1). Some particular initiatives Gulf philanthropic organizations are undertaking include donating large sums to educational causes (i.e. giving $20 million to Education in Emergencies), bringing education stakeholders together (i.e. establishing the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE)), and entering global coalitions to directly support the SDGs (i.e. Dubai Cares and Educate a Child partnering with the Global Education First Initiative (GEFI)) (Dubai Cares, 2016a; Partnerships for SDGS, 2016; WISE, 2016).

As the oil rich countries of the GCC increasingly want to be seen as policymakers in the international arena, many philanthropic organizations are focusing on programmes and activities in developing countries. Organizations such as Dubai Cares (part of the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives) in the UAE, Education Above All in Qatar, and the King Faisal Foundation in Saudi Arabia each have initiatives to improve educational access for children in countries such as Afghanistan, India, Kenya, and Mexico. They often do this through infrastructure projects such as building schools and programmatic work such as teacher training and curriculum development (Dubai Cares, 2016b, 2016c; EAA, 2015, 2016; KFF, 2016).

Gulf philanthropic institutions are gaining international credibility in the global education sector even though they have not yet been able to address many of their own local issues. For example, the UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia consistently rank in the lowest quarter of all countries in international examinations, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) (TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Centre, 2011). However, they have managed to establish partnerships with several well-known institutions such as various UN agencies, the Global Partnership for Education, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the World Bank and numerous private sector entities. Despite many international ties to Gulf philanthropic organizations, there is real shortage of public information and research examining the overarching activities of these institutions in the education sector.

Without comprehensive data, there is a high risk of both over- and underserving certain areas of

education. For example, an exploratory study in the UAE found that state-funded foundations were heavily concentrated on programmes for high-achieving students, however, there were far fewer programmes for at-risk students (Ridge & Kippels, 2015). By collaborating around SDG 4 this could be a means by which philanthropic institutions operating in the education sector come together to coordinate activities, track outcomes, and collaborate to serve those most in need, including learners in their own countries.

With its growing international influence on the education sector, philanthropy originating out of Gulf states deserves far greater attention both from academics and policymakers. The generous funds underlying GCC philanthropic organizations mean that there are many opportunities for supporting both access to and quality in education. Gulf philanthropic organizations will continue to want to build stronger bilateral partnerships in the future and to work in countries that are of strategic interest, and, as such, the trend for philanthropic giving from the Gulf seems set to continue to grow. As it does, more work needs to be done to ensure that the areas of education that are most in need are being supported, both domestically and internationally.

The growth of philanthropic organizations in the Gulf region that are focused on education is a relatively new development that has great potential for good in the global education sector. An on-going focus on tracking philanthropic activities originating out of the region as they relate to SDG 4 would help assure that this movement contributes positively both to national and international development agendas.

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China's Dual Role in SDGs

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Summary: Since countries adopted a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs) on September 25th 2015, more than one year has passed. As an emerging actor in global governance and a developing country, China plays a dual role in reacting to the SDGs. This article presents both China's international and national policy related to the SDGs.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Summit held in September 2015 adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Now more than one year has passed. It is worthwhile to review what we have done to achieve the goals. As an emerging actor in global governance and a developing country, China plays a double role in reacting to the SDGs. One the one hand, China has a responsibility to help other developing countries to increase access and improve quality in the education sector. On the other hand, effort is still needed to realize inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning in China itself.

As an emerging actor

China has provided support for more than 120 developing countries while also itself achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). After the SDGs were agreed, the Chinese government issued *Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and China's Position*, which indicated China will continue to help other developing countries to implement 2030 Agenda by focusing on South-South cooperation.

Accordingly, an Assistance Fund for South-South Cooperation has been put into operation now. The preliminary draft of this policy initiative, which will be finalized after discussion, presented details about how to apply for and manage the Fund. For the first round of the Fund, President Xi has promised $2 billion for the SDG agenda in developing countries.

The Institute of South-South Cooperation and Development[1] was established in April 2016 and enrolled the first 49 masters and doctoral students from 27 developing countries, including Ethiopia, Cambodia, Jamaica etc in September 2016.

In fact, before the UN Summit, China has already issued its own development cooperation strategy. In March 2015, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Commerce of China issued the *Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-century Maritime Silk Road* (the Belt and Road Initiative or B&R for short, see Fig.1 for the map of B&R). The Belt and Road Initiative is a way for win-win cooperation that promotes common development and prosperity.

Among several cooperation priorities, promoting extensive cultural and academic exchange, personal exchanges and cooperation, media cooperation, youth and women exchanges and volunteer services are seen as the foundation of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. As far as education cooperation is concerned, the Initiative indicated a desire to send more students to each other's countries, and promote cooperation in jointly running schools. China promised to provide 10,000 government scholarships to the countries along B&R every year.

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1 The Academy of South-South Cooperation and Development mentioned in Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and China's Position has been named as the Institute of South-South Cooperation and based in the National School of Development in Beijing University..

Fig.1. Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-century Maritime Silk Road proposed by China
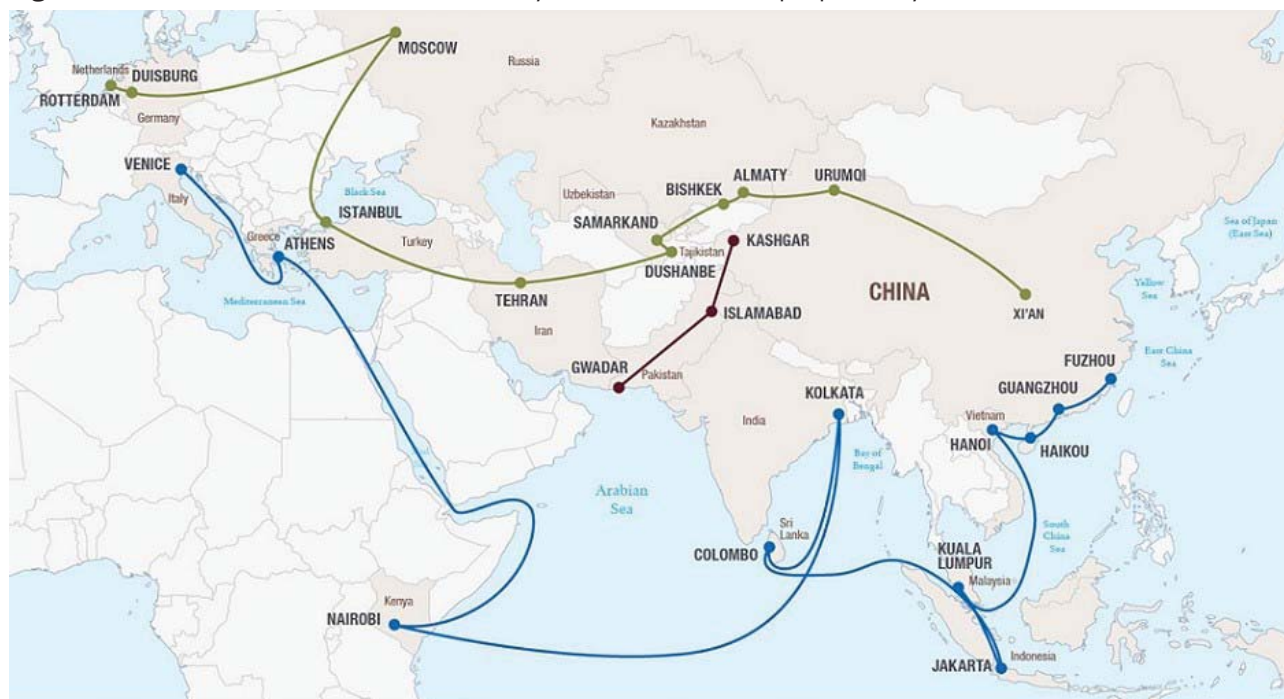
Source: People's Daily Online (2015)

to provide 10,000 government scholarships to the countries along B&R every year.

As a developing country

The 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020) was approved by the Fourth Session of the 12th Chinese National People's Congress in March 2016, and this explicitly linked the 2030 Agenda with national mid-and-long term development strategies. In the education Five-Year Plan, quality of education was the key term. The strategies included emphasizing the core value of education, realization of universal senior secondary education, enhancing balanced development, improving teaching in higher education institutions, establishment of a modern vocational education system, enrolment and teaching reform, and support of private education.

One of the aims in the Plan was universal and compulsory 12-year education. From late 2016, registered poor families have been exempted from tuition fee and other expenses in regular high school, including rural and urban schools. Also secondary vocational school students in 17 provinces have been exempted from tuition fee and other expense. This is a significant progress toward the inclusive and equitable quality education mentioned in SDG4.

Another effort is to establish an individual learning account and credit accumulation system. Such kind of system will build a bridge between enrolment reform and life-long learning. Transformation between academic and vocational education, between youth and adult education will be easier through this system. A qualification framework is expected to gain impressive progress in the following five years. All of this will facilitate 'lifelong learning opportunities for all' and alignment with the Education SDG.

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Japan's SDG-Linked Education Policy and Strategy – Both for Japan and Development Cooperation

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Summary: In 2015 two key policy documents were launched in order to strengthen Japan's education cooperation support for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Education 2030. In 2016, the Japanese government also took important steps towards establishing an overall coordination mechanism for implementation of the SDGs. Although there is high-level commitment for the SDGs, the critical next step is how the two education policy documents can be translated into actions with a clear roadmap and financing. In seeking to achieve our ambition, the JICA Research Institute has assumed the role of building an evidence base that can be used to inform policy and practice.

Japan's New Education Cooperation Policy and Strategy

2015 was a year of setting ambitious goals and commitments not only for the global education community but also for education cooperation in Japan. The prime minister launched the Japanese government's overall education cooperation policy document - the Learning Strategy for Peace and Growth - during the Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015. In October 2015, JICA developed a new education cooperation strategy (JICA, 2015) which decisively reaffirms its commitment to play an important role in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Education 2030 Agenda.

The government's policy highlights three areas of priority: 1) inclusive and equitable quality learning, addressing the issues of gender disparity and marginalized populations; 2) education for human resource development for sustainable socioeconomic growth especially in the area of industry, science, and technology; and 3) international and regional networks for education cooperation (Government of Japan, 2015).

JICA's document sets out a new vision for education cooperation, which we refer to as "learning continuity". The vision aims to provide quality learning opportunities for all through comprehensive support for education from early childhood through to higher education. It also aims to strengthen the linkages between emergency responses in conflict and disaster-affected countries to long-term development support through our various operations. Recognizing that education is an enabler for achieving other SDGs, the vision also emphasizes the need to maximize cross-sector synergies (JICA, 2015).

Progress One Year On

What has happened since the launch of these new policy documents? Over the past year, there has been strong political support for the forging of partnerships and for national coordination for the overall implementation of the SDGs. Prior to the G7 Summit hosted by Japan, the government established the SDGs Promotion Headquarters at the Prime Minister's Office (http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/actions/201605/20article2.html). This new office is tasked with developing an implementation guideline that addresses the priorities and measures to be taken both at the national and international levels. In addition to the inter-ministerial coordination framework, a round table of stakeholders, including ministries, UN agencies, CSOs, the private sector, and academics, was established to ensure an inclusive and participatory consultation process. The guideline refers to the two education policy documents. Additionally, the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology established a committee mandated to promote the SDGs. Along with these initiatives, JICA is currently drafting an SDG position paper that acknowledges education and health as being the foundations of sustainable development (JICA, 2016).

Challenges for Operationalization

The establishment of these high-level initiatives for addressing the SDGs is an obviously positive step towards achieving our ambitions. However, critically the next step for the education sector is how we can best translate the two education policy documents into actions and how to deliver results. One of the biggest concerns is financing. The total Japanese ODA disbursement to the education sector showed a declining trend from 2011 to 2014; this reflects the constant decline in the overall ODA budget (IDCJ, 2016).[1] The two policy documents do not indicate any global or national financing challenges, or any measures to be taken to reverse the trend. In addition, a third party evaluation report on Japan's education cooperation policy between 2010-2015 conducted in March 2016, pointed out the lack of implementation guidelines and action plans containing specific outcomes, targets, and indicators for implementing policies (IDCJ, 2016). A clear and detailed roadmap with stronger monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and improved financing is necessary in order to prevent a gap forming between policy aspirations and implementation.

Building an Evidence Base that Informs Policy and Practice

Since its establishment in 2008, the JICA Research Institute (https://www.jica.go.jp/jica-ri/) has been providing evidence-based policies and practical recommendations to a number of sectors. In the education sector, eighteen working papers and three books have been published. JICA currently has two ongoing education research projects that aim to generate policy discussions and propose strategic suggestions in the areas where JICA needs to make a greater effort towards the achievement of the SDG4 (inclusive and equitable quality education), namely:

• Inclusive and disability education - this project aims to explore the ways in which education policy is translated into implementation at the local school level. It also aims to examine the situation of children with disabilities who are not in school so as to develop policy implications that improve their learning opportunities.

• Second chance education in conflict-affected countries – this project, looking at five countries, will collect the life stories of youths who are considered to be a lost generation.

It will analyze individuals' motives to learn as well as the transformative role of education in society and in peace-building processes.

Given the increasing evidence base within JICA, we expect that we will be able to play a more active role in building the necessary strategies for translating policies into actions for the global education community.

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1 Total disbursement amount: USD 1,288.9 million in 2011, USD 995.8 million in 2012, USD 748.2 million in 2013, USD 572.6 million in 2014.

The SDGs for India and for Indian Aid to Tertiary Education and Training Overseas?

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Summary: India has been contributing to foreign aid from the 1950s - mostly to South Asian countries. In the past decade, India's aid increased in volume and coverage (especially to the African region) and is expected to double in the coming years. Indian aid for education supports technical education, training, tertiary education and IT education.

SDGs and skill training

The sustainable development goals (SDGs) will, no doubt, play an influential role in setting the development agenda of countries across the globe. The centrality of education as a development imperative is recognized not only for achieving education goal (SDG4) but also for achieving other SDGs as well. The SDG4, unlike the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), focuses on both basic and post-basic levels of education.

The emphasis on post-basic education focusing on skill training and life-long learning is crucial in the context of the weakening of world economy, the prevailing high youth unemployment rates and the increasing share of vulnerable employment, especially in the emerging and developing economies. It is expected that while unemployment may improve in North America, it will remain at its historical peak in Europe and will worsen in other regions. The accent on skill training in the SDGs will help improve youth employability and global well-being.

It is estimated that aid needs to increase at least six-fold to fill the $39 billion annual gap to achieve some of the key education SDG targets. Unfortunately, the aid flows to education are slowing down and the share of education in total aid is declining. This implies that the SDGs may also be relying on increased allocations and better utilization of domestic resources. The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity (Education Commission, 2016) recommends progressive universalism as an approach and a financing compact as a means to reach the SDGs. The compact implies four education transformations – strengthening performance, fostering innovation, prioritizing inclusion, and increasing financing.

Indian efforts to meet the SDGs

The SDGs have important implications for framing national development strategies in India. The newly formed National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) (replacing the Planning Commission) is entrusted with the responsibility of facilitating and monitoring the implementation of SDGs. India is moving away from its traditional five-year plan framework to prepare a 15-year vision for 2030 in line with the SDGs, a 7-year development agenda and 3-year action plans.

While India still receives some foreign assistance, it relies increasingly on domestic resources for achieving the SDGs. The continued higher economic growth, expected increase in allocation to 6 per cent of the GDP to education and enhanced tax ratio to GDP are positive indications for sustained reliance on domestic resources for achieving SDGs in India.

Indian aid: institutional arrangements

Although India does not appear on the list of DAC countries, it has been contributing to foreign aid from the 1950s. In the initial years Indian aid was channelled mostly through South-South Development Cooperation (SSDC). In 1964 India established the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme. When foreign aid increased in volume and coverage India established the Development Partnership Administration (DPA) within the Ministry of External Affairs in 2012 to organize and coordinate foreign aid activities. Indian aid is distributed through three modalities - direct grants and loans, lines of credit, and training and scholarship programs.

Beneficiaries of Indian assistance

India's priority region for aid allocation has been South Asia. In 2015-16, 85 per cent of the total of $1.6 billion Indian foreign aid went to South Asia, notably to Bhutan (63%). The Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) offered 3,365 scholarships for foreign students in 2013-14. A majority of these fellowships went to South Asia with 1,000 fellowships earmarked for Afghanistan. The past decade saw the spread of aid to other regions, notably Africa.

The assistance channelled through line of credit reflects the broad base of Indian assistance. Indian aid includes $25 million for Mozambique, $20 million each for Eritrea and Swaziland, and $10 million for Senegal. The total aid and loans of more than a $billion in 2013-14 were channelled to the following amongst many others: Bhutan ($592.5), Afghanistan ($106.2); Nepal ($62.3), Sri Lanka ($82.0), Myanmar ($73.8), Bangladesh ($95.1). At present India offers assistance to around 160 countries.

Indian aid for tertiary education and training

Education and training have been an important feature of India's aid. Indian aid for education focused mostly on technical education, training, tertiary education and IT education rather than on primary and secondary education. India invested more than $1 billion through ITEC programme since 1964. The ITEC budget for the year 2014-15 was around $34 million.

India's education aid to Africa is primarily to establish institutions, develop training programmes and award scholarships for studying in India. In the Second Africa-India Forum Summit of Addis Ababa in 2011, the Indian Prime Minister promised $700 million to establish new institutions and training programmes in Africa. In 2013, India offered 22,000 scholarships (for three years) to African nationals for studying in India. In addition, the ICCR offered 900 scholarships for African students.

India plans to set up 19 training institutes in Africa to offer training in IT, foreign trade, diamond polishing and educational planning; 10 institutes for vocational training and 5 human settlement institutes to train in low-cost housing construction. The India-Africa Institute of Trade offers MBA programs and India-Africa Institute of Educational Planning Institute in Burundi will offer training for educational planners and administrators.

The third India Africa Summit held in New Delhi in 2015 re-emphasised the focus of the development partnership on human resource development and capacity building in Africa. India extended development assistance worth $7.4 billion through lines of credit which helped completion of 137 projects in 41 countries across Africa. India has also pledged to set up nearly 100 India-Africa Training Institutes across the continent.

Indian aid for technology cooperation

Indian also supports technology cooperation. The Ghana-India Kofi Annan Centre for Excellence in ICT is an example of skill training and technology transfer. India has signed technology cooperation agreements with South Africa, Tunisia, Egypt and Mauritius. Nearly 74 joint research projects have been undertaken in areas of biotechnology, information science, astronomy, food science technologies, indigenous knowledge systems and nanotechnology. The Department of Science and Technology has sanctioned research projects worth $ 1.9 million to South Africa and $330 thousand to Tunisia.

The India-Africa cooperation in agriculture is led by the International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI). ICRISAT has established agri-business incubators and value-chain incubators in five African countries, namely, Angola, Cameroon, Ghana, Mali and Uganda.

Indian aid in the future

Indian's foreign assistance was around $1.6 billion in 2015-16 accounting for 0.2 per cent of GDP which is equal to the share of GDP allocated for aid by some of the advanced countries. Indian aid is expected to reach $3.5 billion annually putting the country at par with major donor countries.

No rebranding of foreign aid in terms of SDGs?

It can be seen in a word, that India's foreign aid, including in education, has not yet been explicitly aligned to the SDG Agenda 2030. However, this is the last year of their last (12th) five-year plan; so there may be a shift in the near future.

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Danish Aid to Higher Education: Decolonizing the SDGs?

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Summary: This piece comments on the role of higher education and universities in achieving the goals of Agenda 2030. It also asks if global academic collaboration is a new form of colonization or if researchers from the North can assist in decolonising the academy.

In the UN document of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,* quality education and lifelong learning are high on the agenda. Universities and higher education, however, receive little attention (one and two mentions respectively). Hence, it may seem odd to focus on higher education in relation to Agenda 2030. In contrast, higher and tertiary education as well as universities are frequently mentioned in The African Union's *Agenda 2063: The Africa we want.* Therefore, I would like to comment on the important role of higher education institutions in general and universities for achieving the goals of Agenda 2030. My comment is based on my research on higher education in Africa as well as my practical experiences from taking part in the so-called capacity building programme, *Building Stronger Universities in Developing Countries,* or simply BSU.

In recent years, we have seen a new consciousness about the European roots of higher education systems and a subsequent call for decolonisation of the academy and an Africanisation of curriculum. Africanisation can be understood as a focus on African knowledge, ways of thinking, cultural heritage, and identity. In higher education institutions, the process of Africanisation has not been easy due to the claimed universal character of knowledge. Therefore, so-called capacity building programmes can appear somewhat contradictory – can researchers from the North assist researchers from South in decolonizing the academy? My answer is a reluctant "yes". We need to analyse the power and politics of knowledge and of capacity building programmes. It is necessary to differentiate between dominant knowledge and universal knowledge and through this to decolonise the African academy. Acknowledgement of local knowledge can lead to empowerment of people, but Africanisation of curriculum and knowledge production is needed without essentialising the African.

So how can African universities contribute to realise the aspirations of Agenda 2030? African education will not reach its transformative potential through mindless transfer of knowledge, theories and methods from other parts of the world (primarily from the North), which we sometimes see in capacity building programmes. This will reproduce dependency. Instead empowerment of women, sustainable development, and many other noble SDGs require that more contextualised knowledge is produced. Researchers from the North can work together with researchers from the South to produce contextualised knowledge. One of my Senegalese friends and former fellow PhD-student told me that the critical thinking and academic freedom he met in Denmark helped him to be critical towards the dependency on theories and methods from the North, which he experienced in Senegal. Hence, capacity building projects can assist in decolonising knowledge production.

Universities have two main objectives: to educate students and to produce knowledge. Thus, universities can indeed play an important role in procuring the human and intellectual resources needed for fulfilling the various goals of Agenda 2030 – just as they have to in Agenda 2063.

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EDUCATION, TRAINING AND AGENDA 2030: WHAT PROGRESS ONE YEAR ON?

85

How Achievable are the SDGs?
Lessons from an MDG Case Study

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Summary: The article outlines a recent case study of the Millennium Development Goal policy process, proposing that it contains valuable insights for the Sustainable Development Goals.

A recent case study into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) selection process investigated how and why certain priorities were selected while others were set aside. The study indicates lessons for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) process (Maher 2015). Some of the insights it delivered are hereby shared by the author.

In September 2000 world leaders at the Millennium Summit adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration containing over 75 development priorities, through which member states, undertook "To realize our universal aspirations for peace, cooperation and development" (2000, p. 9). Between 2000 and 2001 these development priorities were reduced to a list of eight MDGs with associated targets and indicators. They were contained in an Annex to the Road Map for MDG implementation (United Nations Secretary General, 2001). The number of discreet development priorities contained in the MDGs at that point was 20. Further changes to the MDG targets and indicators were, however, implemented. Eventually, by 2007, 22 development priorities were finally stated (United Nations, 2012).

MDGs: Identified priorities per policy text

Policy text	Millennium Declaration /RES/55/2	Road Map A/56/326	Road Map Annex A/56/326	Final form of MDGs
Year	2000	2001	2001	2007
# identified priorities	75	61	20	22

The case study (Maher, 2015) explored how and why the refined list of priorities came to be selected from an original list of over 75. It discusses controversial aspects of the policy process. There is, for example, no evidence that the General Assembly ever voted on the refined list of eight MDGs. Rather, a policy elite of about 50 individuals, comprised of development professionals and transnational organisations, determined what they should be. Also a gradual preference was given to priorities promoting more equal opportunities, such as universal primary education. Priorities promoting more equal outcomes, such as the elimination of trade barriers, though, were gradually excluded. In 2007 the MDG monitoring framework was also revised. Excluded at that point were more generous official development assistance, tariff and quota free access for least developed country exports, enhanced programme debt relief for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPCs) and cancellation of official bilateral debt (World Bank, 2014). This potentially hampered the structural capacities that developing countries needed to address poverty.

However, despite these and other controversial aspects of the process, the study also considered the view that the Millennium Declaration was impossibly broad. Five out of ten interviewees, all high-level UN policy actors, said the same. Nine out of ten regarded the selective approach, that is identifying a limited number of understandable, actionable and measurable MDGs, as an effective strategy. They affirmed the value of establishing goals that were firstly understood, secondly actionable, "short and punchy enough to be effective", and thirdly within a framework "that would appeal to people" (Interviewee - high level UN policy actor). The study also highlights the

successes of UN policy processes and UN goal-setting generally (as per Emmerij et al, 2005; Jolly et al, 2009) as well as the successes of the MDGs in particular (as per Annan, 2012; Vandemoortele, 2011).

In contrast to the eight MDGs, there are currently 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and associated targets. At a minimum, the number of discreet development priorities is 169. This is more than double the number of development priorities identified in the Millennium Declaration and more than seven times the number of priorities identified in the MDGs.

SDGs: Number of identified priorities per policy text

Policy text	Open Working Group proposal for Sustainable Development Goals A/68/970	Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development A/70/L.1	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
Year	2014	2015	July 2017
# identified priorities	169	169	

It can be assumed that this means the SDGs are less 'punchy' than the MDGs, that they will be difficult to prioritise and implement fully. It is likely that there will be a narrowing of SDG priorities between here and 2030. How and why certain SDG priorities will remain in, and how and why others will be set aside, needs to be observed carefully and influenced if possible. Up for review at a high level summit in July 2017 are SDGs 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14 and 17.

So whilst the narrow focus of the MDGs has shifted to a broader focus for the SDGs, it is justifiable to propose that they are too broad to achieve. If a narrowing of SDG priorities occurs, the fundamental challenge will be selecting the right priorities and the right combination of priorities. There is, after all, a lot at stake.

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Aligning FOCAC, SDGs and One Belt One Road

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Summary: Just as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)'s 16 year history of long- and short-term training has been in line with the UN's promotion of capacity building, so the One Belt One Road is aligned with the ambition of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including in support of education cooperation.

Entering into the 21st century, with the establishment of the China-Africa comprehensive cooperation mechanism, the China-Africa education cooperation mode has gradually transformed from unilateral assistance to a bilateral cooperation and communication system. The first "Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)", which was held in October 2000, marked the beginning of a period of comprehensive and institutionalized strategic partnership between China and Africa. This new international cooperation is a significant support for the establishment of the new international political and economic order, and the common prosperity and development of the world especially developing countries.

Within the framework of China-Africa Cooperation Forum, there has been continuous innovation in the form and content of China-Africa Educational Cooperation. This has included: building schools, providing scholarships for African students to study in China, jointly establishing Confucius Institutes, sending teachers and volunteers to Africa to carry out education activities, providing support for developing programs in higher education, and sponsoring the multi-form and multi-themed seminars to train professionals for Africa including university presidents, school principals, teachers, and senior administrative staff.

Within the content of Sino-African educational cooperation, special attention is paid to human resources development. In other words, capacity building is the core concept implanted into this cooperation. In addition to provision of scholarships to African countries, the Chinese government provides short-term human resource training in China to cover a number of areas of urgent need for African countries; these include agriculture, vocational skills, education, computers, health, medicinal plants, public policy, energy, and environmental protection. Since the 1990s, the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies, as well as national aid agencies, have frequently referred to "capacity-building" as an integral part of their financial and technical assistance programs to developing countries with a view to improving the performance of aid implementation and efficiency. This is absolutely in line with the concept of cooperation in education between China and Africa. Capacity building also fully embodies a key connotation of sustainable development.

In the process of improving the China-Africa cooperation mechanism, China has also further strengthened its opening to the outside world. It has thus proposed the One Belt One Road initiative to participate in international development cooperation with a more positive attitude and seek to play a constructive role.

The One Belt One Road initiative is aligned with the vision of the Agenda 2030, which is committed to promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth and social development. Policy communication, facility connectivity, trade liberalization, financial intermediation and people-to-people inter-linkages are the five key areas of the inclusive and coordinated development that will help Silk Road countries to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

One Belt One Road initiative not only focuses on the construction of economic zones, but also on the cultural and educational zone. In order to cooperate with the implementation of that initiative, the Chinese government has issued "Opinions on Implementing Education Opening-up in the New

Era" and an "Educational Action Plan on Promoting One Belt One Road". The documents point out that, under the framework of South-South cooperation, the Chinese government will scale up education aid through coordinating the resources to train teachers, scholars and various types of skilled personnel for the Silk Road countries. In one word, One Belt One Road wants to invest to people and create benefits for people.

Therefore, the focus area of One Belt One Road is, in fact, consistent with many of the SDGs. However, the key to achieving the complementary functions lies in how to establish an effective co-ordination mechanism between these two major ambitions.

Can the Global SDG Agenda in Education Influence Germany's National and International Policies in Education?

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Keywords: SDGs; migration; vocational training; international development; employment; integration

Summary: The growing migration to Europe and the challenges this poses for countries like Germany fall within the purview of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Building on long-term expertise and partnerships, Germany will most likely focus international education policies and programming on countries that are among the core countries of origin in order to reduce migration. Domestically, it will further focus on building partnerships with the private sector and civil society to promote vocational education and labour opportunities for refugee and migrant youth in Germany.

In 2015 and 2016 two major events occurred that potentially leave long-term marks on German international education policies – the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 'refugee crisis'. The SDGs represent a renewed commitment to an expanded set of globally conceived development goals whereas the 'refugee crisis' is a short-hand for the sensational expansion of migratory movements of people from conflict-ridden countries like Syria as well as other politically and economically unstable countries in the Middle East, Southern Europe, and Africa toward Central and Northern Europe, and more specifically to Germany. Neither of these events can be reflected on adequately on its own without reflection upon the other, especially since national and international politics increasingly call on international development efforts to articulate a response to migration. German politicians have already stressed the need to enhance the commitment to sustainable development including the improvement of education, health, food security, and general stability for that reason. For instance, during a recent press conference with Barack Obama on November 17, 2016, Chancellor Angela Merkel said: "We will have to do more in development cooper-

ation. It's important that these disparities in the living conditions cannot be allowed in this digital period to be too pronounced. Each and every one must be given an opportunity to participate".

Opportunity and participation are commonly framed in terms of educational imperatives such as education as a human right, lifelong learning, the learning of skills for employment, and global learning. It is in the light of these educational imperatives and the growing migration to Europe where the most ground-breaking novelty of the SDGs compared to the MDGs must be actualized. The SDGs strongly and explicitly acknowledge that development objectives should no longer be seen only as objectives that concern the countries of the Global South. Rather the SDGs highlight the interconnectedness of the world's regions and admit that developmental issues, which hitherto have often been located elsewhere, must also be faced within countries of the Global North. In line with this thinking, the UN Charter for *Transforming our World* directly addresses the need to empower refugees and migrants as they are among the most vulnerable populations (i.e., paragraph 23 of the Declaration). Although none of the 17 goals directly refers to refugee and migrant youth, their needs for education and employment opportunities are implied in the Agenda 2030. For instance, SDG 8.6 states: "By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training" which includes refugee and migrant youth living in Germany. SDG 8.6 should also be read as a call for more substantial education and employment opportunities in refugees' and migrants' home countries. Arguably, given Germany's long-term engagement in international development education, the former might prove more challenging to be accomplished than the latter, which requires the setting of new standards and building of new networks.

Since the 1980s, Germany has been systematically involved in international education programming through bilateral and multilateral agreements backed by a 'thick' network of actors and organi-

zations (e.g., GIZ, DAAD, universities, and religious organizations). The transfer of applicable and context relevant vocational skills and knowledge has been one of the corner stones of German international education policies since the very beginning (Greinert et al., 1997). Especially the 'dual system' for vocational professions (duale Ausbildung), in which young people are employed and working while also attending school, has been transferred to and borrowed many times by developing countries (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2013). Germany has also helped enhancing systems of vocational education through projects like supporting technical colleges in Brazil (i.e., SENAI, Tippelt, 2009) or disseminating information technology know-how in Ghana (i.e., Komasi-Lübeck Model, Coenen and Riehm, 2008). It can be expected that Germany continues and expands these efforts in response to the SDGs but with a particular focus on countries such as Afghanistan, Tunisia, or Syria and others, from which the majority of refugees and migrants come to Europe. Germany hopes that through the promotion of vocational training and employment activities, for instance in rural Afghanistan, to be able to provide young people in these countries with new perspectives (BMZ, 2015; GIZ, 2016). Ultimately, Germany will be able to build on its long-term expertise and international partnerships to expand young people's opportunities in education and employment with the goal to reduce migration.

Perhaps the biggest challenge that Germany currently faces, and which falls within the confines of the SDGs if one is to take the 'one world' claim seriously, is the integration of refugee and migrant youth into the national education system. Recent research has shown that there are many challenges and individual solutions but very few policy regulations. Due to German federal regulations, all school-age children must be in school including refugee and migrant youth. Since language is one of the most pressing issues, schools often concentrate newcomer students in special classrooms (e.g., 'welcome classes') where they focus on learning German first. The teaching in these classrooms as well as transitioning into regular classrooms is poorly regulated. Teachers and school administrators alike have asked for better orientation, the setting of standards, and adequate resources if newcomer students are to receive the same opportunities as their national age mates (cf. Brüggeman and Nikolai, 2016).

Despite these challenges, even a brief search online reveals that numerous initiatives have emerged over the past two years that testify to Germany's public commitment to integration, shared learning, and prosperity. To name but one example, SKEW is a project that promotes learning together to foster communal (rural) development across continents (Engagement Global). Similarly, a government-funded campaign promotes the benefit for German society and individuals of vocational training and employment for refugee and migrant youth (www.deutschland-kann-das.de). Both suggest that the most important impact that the SDGs could have on national education policies is that the government together with civil society actors, corporate enterprises as well as small and medium-sized firms (Mittelstand) promotes the integration of refugees and migrant youth into the educational system and the German labour market.

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Portugal's Process for Incorporating the SDGs in Education

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Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals; Portugal; Education; ODA / Aid

Summary: The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Portugal are being discussed in a wide public consultative process and are perceived as global. Nonetheless, one year after the approval of the SDGs we still remain in a consultative process and no strategy or priority(ies) are in place. The SDGs may help to stop the gradual transformation that was taking place in Portuguese development cooperation in the education sector. This was a consequence of the narrower agenda promoted by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Portugal are being discussed in a public consultative process with the participation of various publics (individual citizens, NGOs, local and central government agencies, municipalities, companies, among others). In this way there is an effort to make this national process inclusive, similar to the global process.

There was a consultative process before the approval of the SDGs and another post-approval. From a preliminary analysis of this Portuguese consultative process the SDGs are perceived as global and not only targeted at the South. However, the majority of the promoters of these consultative processes are from the development sector (i.e. the development agency; Portuguese Non-Governmental Development Organizations Platform).

The education sector

Education, along with health and security in fragile states, is a priority for Portuguese development cooperation and it seems that this aspect will not be changed with the SDGs.

We should take into consideration the following: (i) development cooperation is not spread across the electoral cycles which makes it difficult to guarantee consensus, coherence, relevance and stability at an institutional level; (ii) in 2010 there was a fusion of the Portuguese development agency (IPAD - Portuguese Institute for Development Support) with the Camões Institute (the agency that promotes the Portuguese language and culture in foreign universities and manages the foreign Portuguese teaching) putting again the language promotion as a top priority; (iii) the development cooperation relies heavily on the profile of the Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs and International Development; (iv) in the past ten years, the proportion of tied aid increased (8.7% of total ODA in 2008; 48.3% of total ODA in 2010; and 70% of total ODA in 2013); (v) the net ODA percentage for gross national income was only 0.16% in 2015 and has decreased since 2011 when it was 0.31%; (vi) Lack of human resources and specialized human resources in the development agency; (vii) the former development agency with Camoes only manages 10% of the total aid budget (i.e. 60% is left to the Ministry of Finance and the rest to other ministries with international development programmes).

Howewer, the SDG 4 can:

- Give more legitimacy and strength to the Ministry of Education to implement development projects. This was a role that developed in the past but has decreased in recent years

- Make it easier to justify language promotion as a development objective;

- Stop the gradual transformation that was in place in consequence of the more narrow agenda promoted by the MDGs, since now the SDG 4 covers all of education and the current Portuguese development cooperation top priorities in this sector include post-basic education, tertiary education and technical cooperation.

Nonetheless, one year after the approval of the SDGs we still remain in consultative processes and no strategy or priority(ies) are in place. We will continue to follow this process and see if the SDGs reinforce the status quo and Portugal's vision goes in the direction of short-term national interest or long-term commitment to a public quality education.

NON-STATE ACTORS, FOR-PROFIT AND NON-PROFIT

Showing their Workings: How the Private Sector Can Contribute to the Achievement of the SDGs

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Summary: Achieving the SDGs requires the input of all sectors to better define subjective terms like 'relevant' and 'high quality' education. The price of legitimate involvement could be for contributing firms to invest in research and development to show how they will contribute to long-term advancement; otherwise vague definitions are at risk of exploitation.

The role of the private sector in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is unclear, certainly in education. SDG 4 on education scarcely mentions the private sector at all, merely as stakeholders and as co-operators. Even Goal 17 on partnerships only includes the private sector in the development of public-private partnerships. Thus there is a question of how these Goals engage and incentivise different communities to act.

The question of how various communities respond to the SDG framework depends in part on the extent to which they perceive the SDGs as meeting their real interests. Organisations thinking long term and committed to systemic improvement will likely see that the SDGs have a role in providing de facto justifications for decisions, whether their aim is for business growth, policy development or civil society groups. Where the private sector differs from these organisations is that it has tended to focus on the short-term, partly because of the restrictions imposed by reporting to the financial markets.

The ambiguity within the SDG frameworks is both a risk and an opportunity. For those organisations that see the business equation in terms of impact leading to long term expansion and profit, there is an opportunity to be innovative in how they help to achieve the goals. One of the principal benefits of the SDG structure for these organisations is that it allows them to act according to available evidence of valued outcomes. The SDGs can thus be interpreted as a compendium of best practice, saving businesses the cost of figuring out this for themselves.

For those organisations that operate on a more opportunistic premise, the framework's vagueness offers an opportunity to link business approaches of superficial relevance to the SDGs in a tenuous fashion. The private sector in education has often been controversial, as it's perceived that decision-making for profit is made in a very different way to that of other impact initiatives, creating justified suspicion of private sector motives.

Furthermore, the formative nature of education systems and their influence on values, identity and citizenship are frequently deemed matters of national sovereignty. The exercise of external influence in these areas is therefore highly contested. Global programmes like PISA and other non-jurisdictional influences on learning such as transnational education programmes can be regarded as subversive by those who regard national governments' prerogative as ultimate.

However, the private sector in general terms holds a legitimate position as a group whose interests should be reflected in education policy, alongside other stakeholders from parents to students, and from teachers to university staff. Like others, the private sector needs to be involved to address one of the SDG 4's outstanding challenges – the definition of 'relevance' and '21st century skills'. The voice of employers in general is useful as one amongst many in helping governments to prioritise certain outcomes, processes and their supporting policies because they can report on the attributes needed by those entering the labour force.

Thus the SDGs provide a mechanism to legitimise private sector involvement, by making the case that profits may reasonably accumulate when the objectives are affiliated with the UN compact. However, the deep ambiguity behind the metrics used in SDG 4 leaves them open to abuse.

Superficial determinants of quality – such as test passing – potentially give for-profit organisations a legitimacy for increasing assessment provision (and boasts of evaluation that result) without being clear what it is they mean.

The central challenge is how to use the SDG framework as both a carrot and a stick – if private sector bodies are willing to invest in solutions to education problems, then there is a useful position for them in both providing parts of the solution and in representing their needs to system designers. The caveat could be that, if they want to claim that they are helping to achieve the SDGs via the provision of their products or services, there is a need to 'show their workings'. In their terms, to invest in research and development – encouraging legitimate long-term investment and innovation in the sector can only be a good thing.

Searching for the references to the SDGs on the websites of global education companies brings little joy. There is no obvious mention on the sites of the Apollo group, or Amplify, Rupert Murdoch's education business. GEMS education highlights the work of its foundation, while Pearson has a blog post that extolls the alignment between its strategy and the SDG education goal but shows little in the way of workings. There is therefore an opportunity on both sides to engage more effectively and take clear roles in improving education access and learning.

Do the SDGs Matter? A Teacher's View

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Keywords: SDGs; teachers; Uganda; teacher training.

Summary: While the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) may be important for global policy makers, the real change makers are the teachers in the classroom. Finding new ways to train and motivate these teachers will be key to reaching SDG4 in all developing countries.

One of my most enjoyable tasks since joining the Varkey Foundation earlier this year was to spend a day with the Instructional Leadership training programme for senior teachers and school leaders in Kiyunga- Mukono District, a two hour drive outside Kampala, Uganda. The trainers organised a warm up activity to re-energise everyone after lunch. The seventy seven teachers were asked to line up outside the training room in order of years of experience. The spectrum ranged from 35 to 5 years in the classroom. I calculated that there were more than a thousand years of teaching experience represented in that group!

Yet these experienced teachers were eagerly engaging in a series of intensive training sessions to learn new skills and new ways of supporting active learning. After the one week training course, the Varkey Foundation Uganda team - all experienced Ugandan teachers themselves – carry out follow up visits to the schools over a period of one year to see if the teachers are putting the training into practice in their classrooms. In almost all cases the answer is yes.

The skills being taught are not rocket science – they will be familiar to many teachers reading NORRAG News. How to get children thinking and problem solving together. How to make best use of locally available resources. How to make sure that every child – especially the girls – participate in the class. How to pace your lesson and check for understanding so that learning really takes place. This was a cost effective (no expensive international consultants!) and well thought out training programme designed by teachers for teachers.

I have to confess that I have spent far too much time over the past two decades in 'high level' discussions on the 'alphabet soup' of international development – PRSPs, MDGs, IDTs (anyone remember those?) and now the SDGs. It was a joy to spend a day with practising teachers from some of the poorest communities in Uganda who are still dedicated to the care and learning of the children in their charge.

I am fairly sure that most of those 77 teachers would not have been aware of the details of the 17 SDGs and the 169 associated targets. Nor would they necessarily have been conscious that their work is critical to the achievement of the targets 4.1, 4.2, 4.5 and (possibly) 4.7 in the education SDGs as well as (indirectly) the achievement of many of the other SDGs.

Don't get me wrong. I am not saying that the SDGs are not important. As writers elsewhere in this issue of NN54 have eloquently argued, global goals have a role to play in shaping the agenda of international organisations and (to a lesser extent) influencing national policy decisions. This global voice of reason is more important than ever as a response to the reactionary and ill-informed nationalism evidenced in many countries.

However, I do make an appeal to all of those involved in these international debates to remind themselves from time to time of the reality of the teachers, classrooms and homes in poorest and marginalised communities in every country in the world. The SDGs do matter to these communities. But for the achievement of the education goals at least, #teachersmatter more.

Links:

The Varkey Foundation, http://www.varkeyfoundation.org/ is a not-for-profit organisation committed to 'Changing lives through education' by ensuring that every child has a great teacher and advocating for their increased status across the world including through the Global Teacher Prize, https://www.varkeyfoundation.org/blog/global-teacher-prize-inspires-six-new-national-awards

Starting at Secondary: New Challenges for Data and Policy

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Summary: Much of the evidence base and monitoring systems developed under Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) focused on primary education. There is very limited research and data relating to secondary education. Simply "extending" what we know about primary to secondary is unlikely to work.

After decades of neglect, secondary education has finally come back to the attention of donors. Given the many years of underinvestment in research and development in the subsector, do policy makers have the necessary evidence and data systems in place to make informed policy and monitor progress at the secondary level? Is there a danger, that like an over-confident student starting at secondary school, we discover too late that things are much more complex than what we were used to at primary, and struggle to keep up?

We have come a long way in the development and analysis of education data since the early days of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the international community has developed reasonably sophisticated systems for monitoring how many children are going to school and who is being left behind. The Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children[1] and the World Inequality Database on Education[2] are two examples of how far things have moved on since the first Education for All Global Monitoring Report. But whilst these initiatives include data on secondary education (both lower and upper), the frameworks for analysis have focused on primary education. Education statistics can be more difficult to interpret at secondary level, and assumptions that we make when interpreting primary education statistics do not always hold for secondary. The variation between the actual age range of students and official age is often far greater. National definitions of when secondary school starts are sometimes different from the international standard classification, making data on transition rates confusing.

Understanding the barriers to access to primary school and how to overcome them has been a focus under the MDGs. But the barriers to education can be different at secondary school. In many contexts, entry to secondary school is selective, a feature that is sometimes overlooked by those considering demand-side barriers to access for disadvantaged groups. Adolescents' challenges, pressures and choices are very different to those of primary school aged children. Considerations around gender, and gender equality, need to be much more nuanced. There is a wider variety of courses to follow post-primary, including options that may not fit the definition of "secondary education". Paid employment and marriage become legal options for older adolescents. Out-of-school statistics for secondary age adolescents and youth need to be interpreted in this light.

Regarding quality, there is now a growing body of data on learning outcomes, although it came too late in the day for the Education for All movement to say much about progress up to 2015. For most lower and lower-middle income countries these data are limited to learning at primary school, or just the early grades. In the 2016 Global Education Monitoring Report, only a quarter of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa reported having a nationally representative learning assessment in place for the end of lower secondary. Only three could report data on the percentage of students reaching a minimum proficiency in mathematics, and none could report it for reading. There is very limited research on how learning outcomes can be improved at secondary level in low- and middle-income countries. For example, a recent systematic review (Snilstveit et al., 2016) found substantial evidence of the effectiveness of structured pedagogy as a strategy for improving learning outcomes, but only one of the 21 studies reviewed was post-primary.

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1 http://allinschool.org/
2 http://www.education-inequalities.org/

Simply "extending" what we know about primary education to secondary is a high risk strategy, and could lead to potential policy blind-alleys. Over the last fifteen years we have had to invest heavily in understanding what works to get all children into school and learning at primary school. We now need to consider carefully how to build the evidence base on secondary education.

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SDGs – One Year On and Fourteen to Go

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Summary: The fourth Sustainable Development Goal of inclusive, equitable and lifelong quality education for all may be achieved by 2030 if and only if international agencies, development partners, national governments, private sectors, civil society and think tanks work harmoniously and the potential of digitisation is harnessed to optimise educational delivery, quality and enjoyment.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals, within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including no fewer than 169 targets (UN, 2015), were formally resolved by the 193-member United Nations in September 2015 as the successor to the Millennium Development Goals. It is widely accepted that education is critical to the successful achievement of all seventeen goals.

Quite apart from such instrumental indispensability, education is development. Those who see it predominantly (or totally) as a preparation, or as mere furtherance of wider causes (no matter how noble), do a grave disservice to learners and to teachers.

SDG4 is to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". Its first target is to guarantee that by 2030 'all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes'.

Looking at the titles and specific purposes of several hundred donor-, government- and civil society-funded projects and programmes within the education sector since the mid-1980s, it is impossible to identify any that are not, at least implicitly, aimed at promoting some aspects of "inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all".

The second Millennium Development Goal (MDG2) had just one education target ('ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling'). This was not achieved (and when that happens the tendency is to say that the indicators were unrealistic). Although primary enrolment in the developing countries rose to 91 per cent, a significant gender gap persisted in some areas [of the 57 million out-of-school children worldwide, 33 million are in Sub-Saharan Africa and 55 percent of those are girls. Currently, 103 million youth still lack basic literacy skills, and more than 60 per cent of those are female].

Unlike the MDG2 education target, SDG4 extends to providing free, equitable, quality education, but it also differs from SDG4 differs further from MDG2 in that it is universal, lifelong, embraces work skills, assumes plurality and an interdependent world, focusing on inclusion and gender equality, and is explicitly quality-directed.

The quality of education is reflected in improved learning outcomes which may be achieved by strengthening inputs, processes and evaluation of outcomes and mechanisms to measure progress. To this end, a 'data revolution' is envisaged, enabling governments and policy-makers better to track development progress and equip people with the information they need to demand more from their governments.

It remains astonishing and lamentable that all those efforts being put into reliable monitoring still ignore the key issue of whether the learning and teaching is being enjoyed by the learners and teachers. What is all this sustainable development for if it is not concerned with human happiness?

UNESCO was entrusted, through the Incheon Declaration of May 2015 (UNESCO, 2015), to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 agenda and, with its partners, to provide support through co-ordinated policy advice, technical assistance, capacity development and progress monitoring at

global, regional and national levels. However the main responsibility for SDG achievement rests with the sovereign countries, many of which have recognised the Goals' relevance to their circumstances and aspirations: SDG4 is seen as complementary to their ongoing initiatives.

A recent review of Education for All coordination identified a lack of coherence due to the numerous changes in leadership within the EFA coordination team over the last fifteen years; the different levels of engagement among the other EFA Convening Agencies (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and World Bank) over time; and the development of parallel funding streams for education established outside of UNESCO and supporting only a few specific goals of the broader EFA agenda. These and similar challenges – such as the lack of an agreed strategy and a convincing Theory of Change – may easily derail the journey towards SDG4-Education 2030.

In the wake of the adoption of the SDGs, many think-tanks describe themselves as playing important roles in advancing national-level progress towards the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda (UN, 2015), contributing to customising global development agendas such as the SDGs to national situations, explaining and popularising them, helping integrate them into national development strategies and monitoring progress.

Educational consultancy companies, and the contributions of technical assistants whom they supply to developing countries and regional/international programmes and projects, necessarily reflect the priorities of development partners who provide the support and specify the expert profiles. Over the past year, many TORs provided by UN agencies, WB, EU and bilateral donors have included phrases such as "fully consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals", sometimes within a catalogue of worthy causes such as human and children's rights. Thus, increasingly, the SDGs are having an impact.

While links between interventions and SDGs could be made explicit within Logical Frameworks, only one example of this has, as yet, been located.

Many development partners are fully SDG-aware, involved and committed to aligning their programmes of support with the SDG4 targets. For example, the EU has decided fully to implement the 2030 Agenda across all its internal and external policies aligning its own policies and actions to the SDG Agenda. It and other major donors are also pledged to help developing countries mobilise more domestic resources through better management of their public finances, along with stimulating private sector participation and leveraging increased development funding.

It is estimated that trying to alleviate poverty and achieve all the other SDGs will require about some US$2.5 trillion per annum through to 2030. The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity assesses that some $30 billion in additional funding is needed annually to achieve SDG4. According to that Commission, 1.6 billion children will not get a full education by 2030, with 200 million getting none at all, unless a major transformation occurs (Education Commission, 2016).

With digitisation, education enters an entirely new dimension. Every element (delivery, learning materials, pedagogy, management, curriculum, student and teacher assessment) is profoundly transformed. SDG4 aspirations may be met if and only if digitisation is at the heart of national education plans and international educational cooperation. Until that occurs, optimism regarding absolute SDG4 achievement cannot be wholehearted.

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A Civil Society Lens on SDG4 Implementation

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Keywords: SDG4; civil society; domestication of agenda; financing, inequality; accountability; public education.

Summary: While SDG4 with 10 targets represents a victory, it also inherits old challenges and poses new ones. Civil society's engagement in national, regional and global processes, its ownership and ongoing commitment to the continued agenda are crucial for its success. Urgent issues in moving towards 2030 include policy change for domestication of the agenda; addressing equity and quality issues; leveraging and re-directing financing and demanding accountability; and strengthening public education systems. The ultimate test of the SDG agenda is the impact it has on the ground at the national and subnational levels.

Back in 2012 there were real fears that education would be narrowly framed or even absent in the 2030 framework of global development goals. Nevertheless, when the international community adopted the new 2030 agenda of 17 sustainable development goals, these included a stand-alone, inclusive and ambitious education goal. The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) played a key role in getting inclusive and quality education on the international agenda together with teachers' unions and NGOs across more than 85 countries. Another more indirect achievement of the SDG agenda has been the cracking of civil society issue silos and the creation of broad-based alliances in support of its implementation (e.g. Together 2030)[1]; the education community is part of these processes.

Finishing the unfinished business of the SDG agenda. While civil society was active in in the run up to the finalization of the overall SDG agenda, it remains active in influencing the parts that are still being finalized. These include the development of global indicators,[2] the finalization of the thematic indicators, the roll out of the new Education 2030 agenda regionally through the annual workshops being anchored by UNESCO in several regions (West and Central Africa and Asia Pacific for example),[3] the work taking place around specific targets (International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 for example) and the overarching coordination of the Education 2030 agenda.[4] It is on the agenda of activists engaging with regional and political groupings and civil society's ownership and on-going commitment to the continued agenda is crucial for its success. A new development this year has been the creation of the Education and Academic Stakeholder Group[5] around the SDG processes.

A year has passed and the first global reviews[6] under the High Level Political Forum have been completed. Some broad overviews of civil society engagement in the SDG processes as a whole are also now available (Action for Sustainable Development, 2016). A veritable explosion of SDG-related activity has happened across the world

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1 www.together2030.org

2 For example the recent letter by civil soceity organizations on indicators for the SDGs which can be accessed on http:/www.campaignforeducation.org/en/news/global/view/676-sustainable-development-goal-for-education-214-civil-society-organisations-academics-and-education-professionals-demand-the-completion-of-free-primary-and-secondary-education-to-be-reflected-in-the-global-sdg-indicators

3 UNESCO maintains websites for these events. The West Africa consultation documents may be accessed here: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/west_and_central_africa_regional_coordination_group_making/ and the one for Asia Pacific is here: http://www.unescobkk.org/education/education-2030/2nd-apmed2030/

4 This includes the CCNGO and the Education 2030 Steering Committee (SC) which has taken over the role of the EFA Steering Committee. See summary of the proceedings of the last Education 2030 SC as ASPBAE (2016).

5 More information about this new constituency is available here: http://www.aspbae.org/userfiles/jun16/2_Stakeholder_group.pdf

6 The reports are available on the UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform's dedicated page on the HLPF accessible on https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/inputs#national

anchored by governments, civil society, communities, and schools. The SDG agenda has influenced the terms of debate in terms of laying down new minimum floors that governments must achieve. Some governments are more enthusiastic and active in its implementation than others, but this is only to be expected. The restructuring of the Global Partnership for Education in line with the SDG 4 agenda is also behind the push for governments and civil society to move towards its implementation. It, furthermore, provides a big opportunity for increasing finance to quality education and policy at national level. The journey from negotiating the framework to ensuring its complete implementation at the national and regional levels has begun and civil society is active in the processes of sector planning that contributes to the fulfilment of the agenda. While many of these processes are global or regional, they also bring together national stakeholders, who contribute to the development of the new architecture, learn from the experiences of others and are part of the process of change. Regional networks have contributed to this flow of information and organized regional and national stakeholder consultation events and campaigns, facilitating linkages from global to local, particularly in relation to education financing issues, the SDG 4 and Education 2030 agenda. However, the eventual test of the SDG agenda is the impact it has on the ground at the national and subnational levels. While the SDG4 with 10 targets from early childhood to adult education and including specific means of implementation targets represents a victory, it also inherits old challenges and poses new ones.

Urgent issues in moving towards 2030

The first step in any process of implementation is to build awareness about the framework. Civil society has contributed to the dissemination of the new SDG and 2030 agendas by holding consultations and roundtables on SDG 4 at national and sub national levels and developing simplified materials for national dissemination. But large parts of civil society, especially those that are not linked to a global education network, are not aware of the nuances of the new agenda or the work expected as part of the Framework for Action. For many they are simply another iteration of the MDGs or the EFA agendas, without appreciating the potentially transformative nature of the agenda. This affects their capacity to push for its implementation.

Education civil society has been part of the consultative processes for the finalization of national SDG indicators in such diverse countries as Philippines, Timor Leste, Nepal, Zimbabwe, Italy, Germany, Japan, Norway and the US. This process leads to the modification of the M&E systems and creates the foundations for subsequent civil society monitoring and shadow reporting.

The connection between a new international agreement and the reality of implementation remains indirect. Weak institutional capacities that serve as barriers for the agenda's implementation (Fredriksen, 2016) are not automatically strengthened by governments reaching an international agreement. Accountability, follow up and review mechanisms for the SDG agenda remain weak, limiting the scope of civil society in engaging with the agenda. These are issues that affect all civil society, not just the education sector and largely stem from the fact that SDGs are political agreements, and not legally binding international agreements. Implementation is further put at risk since the ambitious education agenda is not backed by any proportionate increase in financing. All this contributes to disenchantment among those in civil society who had expected some immediate implementation of the agenda. However, a time lag in the implementation of policies is an inevitable fact of work at the national level and this lag is likely to be even greater for a political agreement like the SDGs.

Policy Change for domestication of the agenda: As governments move to start implementing the SDGs, civil society has been active in consultative processes around policy change to bring existing national policies in line with the new Education 2030 agenda. This has included participation in the development of new education strategies and plans, sector planning processes, and overall engagement with Parliamentarians and policy makers in support of the agenda.

The transformative role of education in fighting inequality: The implementation of the sustainable development agenda will be a deeply political process and even more complex than its negotiation was. This calls for civil society to critically examine how structural power relations are challenged and reinforced in the SDGs and in plans for their implementation and resourcing. Education activists also need to focus on the following ways in which education can fight inequality and enable transformation of existing power relations: 1) Education is directly redistributive as it brings virtual capital in the hands of the poor and marginalized; 2) Education builds social mobility; and 3) Education

catalyses political mobilization and active citizenship.

Leveraging and re-directing financing and demanding accountability: The agenda's implementation is finance-dependent and the critical issue of a $39 billion annual resource gap in aid raises concern. The 2016 Education Finance Commission has pushed a parallel, narrower agenda and a separate architecture. Education civil society is advocating for the 6% of GDP and 20% of national budget to quality education favouring equity and linking to tax justice work. Citizen participation, community participation, budget transparency and tax justice are key towards having a strong education system. This year's Global Action Week on Education was dedicated to financing of education and next year the focus will be on 'accountability to deliver full SDG4". This will contribute to the overall push to make the transformational potential of the SDGs real.

Strengthening public education systems and opposing privatization and commercialization of education: Recent years have seen the growth of private actors in education. A particularly disturbing element is the rise of "low fee" private schools. As the recent GCE report (GCE, 2016) has highlighted, there are clear concerns about quality, equity and accountability in their operation. An education system based on fees runs counter to the SDG commitment to 12 years of free education for all, and it especially excludes the poorest families and disproportionately impacts on girls. Private Public Partnerships (PPPs) are a currently favoured 'quick fix' but potentially have negative long term systemic impacts when they do not contribute to the building of sustainable public institutions for the future. The only sustainable alternative to privatisation is to strengthen and transform public education through sustained and adequate financial commitments to free, quality, equitable and accountable public education for all.

A final disclaimer

Despite the global interest in the "new" SDGs, the focus of much of national civil society has been and will always remain on the implementation of their national constitutional provisions, legislations, policies and strategic plans. The international agenda will find its space within this existing discourse and intermesh and combine to shape unique national agendas that are owned domestically. There may not be a single global CSO SDG discourse, but many hundreds that are guided by local realities and priorities, and contribute to the same common mission and vision.

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Implementing SDG 4 in Ethiopia: Lessons from Girls' Education Challenge Project

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Summary: Link Community Development has delivered al Girls' Education Challenge Project in four districts of Ethiopia with improvements in learning, attendance and retention, as measured against Ethiopia's own education indicators. But will a country with limited finance and capacity also be able to measure any success against global SDG 4 indicators, and should they have to?

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Agenda outlines the commitment of all Member States to "work tirelessly" for "full implementation" of the SDGs by 2030. In Ethiopia, the process of contextualising the globally-developed goals has begun. A national workshop was held in April 2016 and the Government of Ethiopia has welcomed the support of the UN Country Team and SDG Task Force in rolling-out the SDGs through national SDG implementation plans and policies. However, the targets and monitoring mechanisms are not yet integrated into the key guiding policy documents of the Government of Ethiopia and the numerous, ambitious and diverse targets in Goal 4 mean that there is a very long and challenging road ahead if they are to be even partially achieved within the next 14 years. Faced with the reality of limited financing and limited capacity, some degree of prioritisation amongst the ten Goal 4 targets is inevitable, such as focusing on the interventions which can have the biggest impact on learner outcomes, which reach the marginalised sub-groups and which offer the best value for money.

The government has confirmed that SDGs in Ethiopia will be implemented under the Growth and Transformation Plan II; however the current version of the plan only makes passing reference to alignment with the SDGs and there is no detail on how an inclusive process for agreeing and monitoring locally-relevant goals at federal, regional and zonal levels will be managed. Similarly, the 5th Education Sector Development Plan (ESDPV) refers to the achievement of the MDGs and to 'future sustainable development goals', but as yet without any clear statement of the partnerships required to adapt, implement and monitor SDG 4. Both of these documents were developed just before the SDG Agenda was agreed and they will no doubt be updated in the coming months to ensure that the SDG goals and targets are integrated into national priorities, actions, plans and budgets. It is important but very demanding that this focus on the SDGs is maintained in the face of competing national priorities and challenges.

Ethiopia has made significant progress in universal primary education (UPE) with a net enrolment of 90% girls and 95% boys for grades one to eight (ESDPV, August 2015). However, gender disparity sits at 0.94% with a performance gap of 2.4%. Learning outcomes for all are poor with only 60% reaching 'below' basic for English and 56% for maths (National Learning Assessment 2014). Quality and equity remain challenges. Ethiopia's Girls' Education Strategy is going someway to address these issues but with limited resources to implement the recommendations, only limited progress can be made.

Link, through its Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) project funded by DFID, is working very closely with the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia to reach several Goal 4 targets. We are directly contributing to ensuring all girls and boys complete a free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education; eliminating gender disparities; achieving literacy and numeracy outcomes; and the building of gender sensitive learning environments. Indirectly our programme will eventually impact all targets as children progress through an improved education system with higher quality teaching and communities aware of the value of education, especially for girls in the four project districts.

Link's GEC project, with its core aims of improving attendance, retention and performance, addresses the challenges of quality and equity in a sus-

tainable and scalable way. The GEC fund manager, stated "Link's holistic approach aligns with government policy in Ethiopia and extends ownership to all levels of the community by working closely with government staff and local institutions. This supports sustainability and improves social accountability" (GEC Thematic Papers, September 2016).

Through our GEC-Transition project we plan to take this learning further to support especially marginalised sub-groups such as girls with disabilities, young mothers and orphans. We would like to ensure that the learning we have developed can be applied more broadly in support of SDG 4 and that we collect and use data sets which are compatible with the monitoring mechanisms to be established for SDG 4. This will require better alignment and communication between district, zone, regional and federal levels and adequate coordination platforms. But the Government of Ethiopia needs to define what methods and tools will be applied to monitor SDG4 and how all development partners can play a role in this task.

The GEC project reaches over 63,000 girls in four neighbouring districts in at a cost of only £15 per girl per year. The success, which is also evidenced in preliminary end line findings, the value for money and the embeddedness within local and regional government, as well as the local communities, should enable Ethiopia to deliver a significantly improved education system for all. However, with SDG 4 targets that reach far beyond UPE and even USE, successful projects such as this, are unlikely to make much dent on the impossible demands that SDG 4 places on countries, especially low-incomes ones. The Ministry of Education has "increasing access, equity and efficiency at both primary and secondary levels" as key targets. With limited capacity and financing in a context of inadequate human and physical resources SDG 4 is too ambitious. But without ambition will change happen? At the least, SDG 4 can be an important guide for education policy-makers and development intervention design, and will hopefully encourage the allocation of increasing levels of donor funds towards the most critical areas of the inclusive and quality education challenge.

Reference

For followup on the various sources mentioned see the site: http://www.lcdinternational.org/country/ethiopia

LITERACY: NO LONGER A PRIORITY FOR BASIC EDUCATION – LEAVING MILLIONS BEHIND?

Fulfilling the Right to Literacy and Numeracy as part of Basic Education for All

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Keywords: SDG 4; Education 2030; adult literacy; adult numeracy; adult basic education

Summary: The article discusses the importance of including all adults in literacy and numeracy programmes and not just a substantial proportion.

Within the lifelong learning perspective of the Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA) of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, literacy and numeracy continue to be viewed as foundation skills which are the core of basic education and indispensable to full participation in society. Already implicit in the right to education of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948), and in line with Education for All (EFA) commitments (WEF 2000) and the basic right of all youth and adults to literacy and numeracy, SDG target 4.6 should strive for all adults to achieve literacy and numeracy by 2030. However, the final formulation of target 4.6, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, which just stipulates a "substantial proportion of adults" (UN, 2015), did not follow the wording suggested by UNESCO in January 2015, which still referred to all adults.

The explanatory text of target 4.6 does say that "by 2030, all young people and adults across the world should have achieved relevant and recognised proficiency levels in functional literacy and numeracy skills that are equivalent to levels achieved at successful completion of basic education" (WEF, 2015). This statement has what it takes: it does not only reflect the spirit of the Education for All (EFA) Goal 4 (WEF, 2000), which linked the improvement in levels of adult literacy with equitable access to basic education for all adults, but also established some kind of minimum literacy and numeracy competency level – basic education – to be achieved by all. So what do we mean by "basic education"?

In December 2007, an expert consultation on the operational definition of basic education con-

vened by UNESCO arrived at the conclusion that "basic education consists of at least 9 years and progressively extends to 12 years" (UNESCO, 2007, p. 2) and it "covers notions such as fundamental, elementary and primary/secondary education" (ibid.). Furthermore, the experts were in agreement that "equivalent basic education is offered for youth and adults who did not have the opportunity or possibility to receive and complete basic education at the appropriate age" (ibid.). In this light, SDG target 4.6 is closely linked to the ambition of SDG target 4.1, which strives for quality (primary and secondary) basic education for all children (UN, 2015).

The expanded vision of literacy is further made explicit in the Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA) explanatory text for target 4.6 by stating that "the principles, strategies and actions for this target are underpinned by a contemporary understanding of literacy not as a simple dichotomy of 'literate' versus 'illiterate', but as a continuum of proficiency levels in a given context" (WEF, 2015, p. 20). This requires a continuity of learning processes by developing literacy and numeracy in a progression of competency levels which range from reading with understanding a simple sentence to performing higher-order tasks around complex texts. Consequently, one of the 11 global monitoring indicators which were endorsed by the Technical Co-operation Group for SDG 4 in Madrid at the beginning of November 2016 is the "Percentage of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex" (UNESCO, 2016, internal document). Monitoring progress with regard to this indicator will require UNESCO Member States to establish a minimum threshold of competency level which each citizen should achieve, as well as the use of direct assessment methods ("testing"), while the conventional approach of estimating "literacy rates" is being phased out.

This level of ambition with regard to the SDG 4.6 literacy target does not yet seem to have reached decision-makers who usually do not care much

about the small print. What seems to count is the formulation of the target and the related global indicator. However, there are disturbing signs with regard to leaving out the part of the target relating to the "substantial proportion of adults" and limiting the focus only to "all youth" in the analysis of those targets – namely targets 4.1, 4.2 and 4.6 (UN, 2015) – which express important commitments to universalise basic education for all by 2030.

Goal 4 of the 'unfinished' EFA agenda has been one of the most neglected EFA goals (WEF, 2000). Business as usual and attempts to limit the literacy commitment to youth (aged 15–24 years) can undermine the essence of the holistic, inclusive and rights-based approach of Education 2030. Taking note of the 3rd Global Report on Adult Learning and Education's (GRALE III, UIL, 2016) finding that 85% of 131 countries which responded to the questionnaire for this report indicated that literacy and basic skills were a top priority for adult learning and education programmes, it remains to be seen whether such prioritisation is backed with the required funding.

Promising signs are emerging in Europe. In June 2016, the European Commission launched a new Skills Agenda for Europe including a 'Skills Guarantee' to help adults acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and progress towards an upper secondary qualification (EC, 2016a). While the 'Skills Guarantee' targets individuals above 25 years without upper secondary education, there is also a 'Youth Guarantee' which targets all young people under 25 years without employment, including those with a need to strengthen basic skills (EC, 2016b). There is of course room for some scepticism in terms of what is feasible. Moreover, budgetary constraints in many countries with major literacy challenges are likely to push towards a limited focus on prioritising formal primary (and secondary) education for children and adolescents, as well as vocational skills training and higher education for young people. With regard to the funding made available for youth and adult literacy and education programmes, in many cases a trend of "vocationalisation" and "uniformisation" can be observed, paired with the imposition of assessment- or outcome-oriented approaches. On the other hand, the Education 2030 FFA has put youth and adults as well as women and vulnerable groups more into focus by emphasising inclusion and equity. There is also some emphasis on the need to strengthen the demand-side of adult literacy by developing literacy-conducive environments. While strategic

partnerships and synergies across the education sector and even cross-sector approaches are encouraged in FFA, we can see that institutional silos of clear-cut mandates, together with the relevant budgetary allocations and accountability for related outcomes, stand in the way of such cooperation. The fulfilment of the right to basic education for all still has a long way to go. **But surely all means for all!**

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TVET AND
THE GLOBAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING AGENDA

The Sustainable Development Goal Index and Quality Skills Development for the 2030 Agenda in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Summary: The sustainable development goal (SDG) index is a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for countries to compare their SDG efforts with other countries in their region and around the world. Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries can avail themselves of this analytical tool for planning, implementing, and evaluating their SDG projects that should have mandatory quality skills development components as well as providing an empirical basis for soliciting international development agencies' support.

The SDG Index and Dashboards are analytical tools designed to help governments and other stakeholders determine country-level status relative to achieving the SDGs and to identifying priorities for early action. Both analytical tools were jointly developed after extensive global consultation by the Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) by drawing extensively on the SDG Indicators proposed by the UN Statistical Commission.

The SDG Index is a monitoring and evaluation mechanism that allows a country to compare its SDG efforts with those of other countries within its region and around the world. The index has its starting point in the year 2015 and it ends in the year 2030. According to its authors, Sachs, Schmidt-Traub, Kroll, Durand-Delacre, and Teksoz, (2016), it will help the world to determine the best and worst performers and also assist every country identify priorities for early action, understand the key implementation challenges and identify the gaps that must be closed in order to achieve the SDGs by 2030. The various index measures on each SDG are such that they immediately indicate a country's position on a 0-to-100 spectrum from the "worst" (score 0) to the "best" (score 100). With the SDG index in place, the world is set for a fierce global developmental contest that is relatively new in human history. By indicating and measuring the progress made by individual countries at the start of 2015, it makes it easier to do an impact assessment of SDG projects. It is conceivable that some development analysts may not agree to the seeming over-quantification of the SDG initiatives which could lead to focusing on projects that favour quantitative views of a country's efforts at the expense of qualitative and people-oriented projects.

These SDG analytical tools are particularly useful for the Sub-Saharan countries that may not possess the expertise to develop such monitoring instruments for their SDG initiatives. With the starting point at 2015, the index is an indirect score card on how these SSA countries fared on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). According to the United Nations (2015) report on the MDGs, the poverty rate in SSA has fallen only by 28 per cent since 1990, and has shown limited progress in hunger reduction in recent years, remaining the world's region with the highest prevalence of undernourishment but has attained a modest rate of youth literacy. These modest achievements in youth literacy, for example, have a direct bearing on quality skills development needed to attain the SDGs. Quality skills development is central to all the goals of the SDG since the quality human capital of any nation facilitates the development of all facets of the economy including the development of strong institutions. Table 1, which the author derived/collated from the SDSN website, shows the aggregate of seven SDG indices that have implications for quality skills development namely poverty, hunger, quality education, decent work, industry, sustainable cities and peace, justice and strong institutions. For effective execution of SDG projects, there should perhaps be a mandatory project component on quality skills development and every nation could undertake skills-mapping of its sectors and develop criteria on the level of quality to be trained for in every sector of the economy. This would of course be a major undertaking.

Table 1: Dashboard Progress/Starting Point (as at 2015) of the Top and Bottom Ranked Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) Countries on Selected SDGs Directly related to Quality Skills Development

	Country	Goal 1 Poverty SSA Score (42.26)	Goal 2 Hunger SSA Score (37.53)	Goal 4 Quality Education SSA Score (41.78)	Goal 8 Decent Work SSA Score (35.50)	Goal 9 Industry SSA Score (12.63)	Goal 11 Sustainable Cities SSA Score (49.53)	Goal 16 Peace, Justice SSA Score (46.67)
	Top in the Region's overall SDG Index	Country-level Score						
1.	Botswana	73.47	35.13	68.93	49.22	29.84	88.10	48.23
2.	Gabon	88.41	51.37	66.68	41.17	9.45	73.71	44.02
3.	South Africa	75.91	60.74	72.65	29.01	42.48	80.76	41.76
4.	Ghana	63.41	52.94	58.94	47.64	21.63	36.47	57.80
5.	Namibia	67.12	24.36	57.97	35.80	25.05	75.03	49.56
	Bottom in the Region's overall SDGs Index Ranking							
18.	Chad	44.09	15.43	24.11	37.09	3.57	28.23	32.08
19.	Niger	26.77	21.40	0.10	35.31	2.69	29.36	67.98
20.	Congo, Dem. Rep.	0.10	23.35	32.38	32.18	1.65	37.11	33.22
21.	Liberia	0.15	34.01	11.72	38.46	10.37	26.51	43.56
22.	Central African Rep.	3.59	23.06	0.00	26.03	7.80	30.01	55.07

Source: Sachs, Schmidt-Traub, Kroll, Durand-Delacre, and Teksoz, (2016)

Table 1 shows very interesting statistics on the state of various SSA countries on Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 2 (No Hunger), Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth), Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure), Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities), and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions). On all the seven goals depicted in table 1, the regional indices are all less than 50.00 on the scale of 100. The least index for the region is goal 9 on Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure (12.63).

It is apparent from the SDG index that the SSA countries need to build and sustain strong institutions (SDG 16) in order to ensure quality skills development. The prevailing high level of their unskilled workforce can be explained in part by low-quality skills in many of the legislative, educational and public sector institutions and the workforce seems too often to yield to the whims and caprices of the leadership at any given time. In addition, the technical-vocational education and training (TVET) institutions should redesign their programs based on some measurable quality assurance scheme. Internationally acceptable skills standards should be the guiding principle so that the SSA graduates of TVET programs would provide the region with the critical mass of professionals that could even make SSA the next outsourcing destination. As much as is practicable, the quality skills development component should cut across all SDG projects.

In conclusion, with the data provided by the SDG index, all the stakeholders are apparently on the same page; hence the development agencies would determine how and where to intervene in consultation with the respective countries. The SDG index indicates that the SSA countries have much ground to cover relative to attaining the SDGs. Therefore the index has provided the forewarning that will enable the countries to be forearmed, including with quality skills initiatives for developing the region.

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Aligning India's Skill Initiatives with Sustainable Development Goal 4

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Summary: India has sought to ensure that its many recent national skills initiatives are aligned with the SDG targets concerned with skills development

Sustained economic growth among other factors hinges on the availability of appropriately and adequately skilled manpower which would also facilitate achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This linking of skill to growth was recognized in India at the beginning of the 11th Five-year plan in 2007. The natural outcome of this awareness was the initiation of the National Skill Development Mission which laid emphasis on skilling in an inclusive manner so that all kinds of divides of gender, rural / urban, organized / unorganized employment, and traditional / contemporary work place are addressed. The SDG 4 emphasises quality education but also lays emphasis on universal access to all levels of education and skill development. Indeed, four of the ten targets in Goal 4 focus on skill development in terms of improving access, equity, relevance for decent jobs and acquisition of knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development. The National Skill Development Mission, in effect, also addresses the targets 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 to ensure that quality and relevant training are available to all irrespective of any social or class divide. In the last 7-8 years several reforms have taken place in the skill ecosystem such as National Skill Qualification Framework, Labour Market Information System, National Career Service Centers, Common norms and National Quality Assurance Framework. All of these should work to facilitate the achievement of SDG 4 Targets.

Many Government programmes such as Startup India and Make in India will go a long way in achieving the SDG objectives of accessibility, equity, entrepreneurship and enhancement in skills. These would have a direct impact on achieving the sustainable development Goal 4 targets. The Federal Government Departments are mapping their existing schemes with the SDG Goals and Targets therein. NITI Aayog, a new Government think tank, has been given the responsibility of monitoring the implementation of the SDG goals and targets for which national indicators have been formulated by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. NITI in the spirit of cooperative federalism is assisting State Governments and organizing workshops on different SDG goals. NITI Aayog has also been tasked to prepare a 15 year National Vision on different sectors to coincide with the SDG time-line of 2030.

A DRAMATICALLY EXPANDED FINANCING FOCUS?

Financing Education and All the Other SDGs: Global Taxation is Needed

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Keywords: EFA; SDGs; finance; taxation; charity

Summary: The failure to achieve Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals is liable to be repeated with the Sustainable Development Goals. At present, we rely on the vagaries of self-interest in the Global North to finance the development gap in the Global South. This charity model must be replaced by enforceable global taxation.

None of the Education for All (EFA) goals nor the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were achieved by 2015.[1] The new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have expanded the EFA and MDG targets and moved the goal-post to 2030. While some argue that we are making progress and that the SDGs represent an enhanced commitment by the international community, I am afraid that the commitment is not there and that we will get to 2030 with none of the goals achieved yet again.

The biggest problem has been and continues to be an unwillingness by the international community to put in the resources required. It is estimated that an additional $39 billion is needed each year to meet just some of the principal SDG education targets. The Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the big multilateral effort to finance the EFA shortfall, has only been able to come up with $0.5 billion a year; so 80 times more resources are needed! Moreover, the education SDG is competing with 16 other SDGs. The additional financial requirement for achieving all the SDGs is estimated at $1.4 trillion annually overall. The most optimistic assessments of the potential for domestic revenue mobilization to contribute still leave a gap of $150 billion each year - and that is likely to be a significant underestimate.

A major reason that this shortfall has continued and is likely to continue is that the world is relying on the charity of the Global North to fill the gap in the Global South. Contributions are completely voluntary. Every three years GPE begs for "pledges" to fill its coffers. Official Development Assistance (ODA) rests on the whims of donor countries. International agreements, like that made at the U.N. in 1970, set a voluntary goal of rich nations contributing 0.7% of GDP for ODA. Despite repeated exhortations and renewed "commitments" to it, only a handful of countries reach this 0.7% target and most fall far short. The U.S. spends about 0.13% of its GDP on ODA, less than one-fifth of what has been promised.[2]

One answer to this challenge is to stop relying on global charity – which too often these days is also the neoliberal response within nations trying to fund domestic social services. What is needed is global taxation, some of which can be implemented within existing national tax structures and some of which need new global structures. Working with ActionAid International and Oxfam International, I helped put together a background paper on this topic for the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, aka the Education Commission. Its principal author, Alex Cobham of the Tax Justice Network, and I examined the potential of corporate taxation, a tax on individual wealth,[3] and a financial transaction tax to not only finance the education deficit but all of the SDGs (Cobham and Klees, 2016).

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1 While some claim that the MDG of cutting extreme poverty in half was met by 2015, this is only true if one continues to use the absurd, outdated, low-ball cutoff of $1.25/day.
2 It is worth noting that in the late 1940s and early 1950s, as a result of the Marshall Plan, the U.S. was spending as much as 3% of its GDP on ODA in order to help war-torn Europe. Such an effort is not on the table today.
3 A tax on individual wealth is made urgent by what I can only call obscene statistics. Oxfam (2016) reports that the richest 1% own more wealth than the rest of the world combined and that 62 billionaires own as much wealth as the bottom half of the world's population, 3.6 billion people.

Our report considers both global reforms to support domestic taxes, and globally-levied taxes. Of the former, reforms can help to address the major losses due to international tax evasion and avoidance. Globally, revenue losses due to multinational corporate tax manipulation are estimated at or above $600 billion annually. Revenue losses on income taxes due to undeclared offshore wealth, meanwhile, are estimated to approach $200 billion. Progress in these two areas – which will depend in large part on global counter-measures – can make a vital contribution to closing the domestic revenue gap.

Of globally-levied taxes, a financial wealth tax, as suggested by Thomas Piketty, has major revenue potential. Levied at 0.01% annually, revenues could cover the estimated requirement for additional public financing of all the SDGs. Levied instead at 1%, revenues might plug the entire incremental financing gap. A global financial transactions tax could potentially contribute revenues in a range of $60 billion to $360 billion. In each case, international measures to ensure greater transparency could alternatively support the levying of such taxes at the national level.

There are technical and economic problems that must be faced in moving ODA from a charity-base to a tax-base but these can be resolved. The biggest barriers are political. For example, OECD has been working on corporate tax reform, but their scope is much less far-reaching than what is needed. Politically, what is needed is shifting that effort to the U.N. and expanding it. An appropriately resourced and fully representative, inter-governmental U.N. – based tax body was a central demand of the G77 group of developing countries, and of many civil society organizations from the Global South and North, at the Addis Financing for Development summit in July 2015. Unfortunately, this effort was blocked in Addis by a number of OECD governments. The establishment of such a body at the U.N. was a key recommendation of our report to the Commission. Unfortunately, the Commissioners chose not to re-visit the Addis debate. Nonetheless, the idea still has broad support and momentum; the new chair of the G77 is very much in favour and has made it a priority.

Charity cannot and should not be relied upon to meet the needs of public policy as manifested in the SDGs, as well as in national goals. Relying on charity, as we have historically, is an abrogation of our collective social responsibilities. If we want to ensure that the SDGs will not be mostly empty promises, the international community must make an enforceable commitment to put its money where its mouth is.

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WILL THE SDG INDICATORS DETERMINE THE CHARACTER AND PATTERN OF IMPLEMENTATION?

SDG 4 and the Child's Right to Education

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Summary: Although the 2030 Agenda is explicitly grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties, the proposed indicators for Sustainable Development Goal 4 do not go far enough in addressing children's rights as ratified through the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The 2030 Agenda is explicitly grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties. Indeed, the integration of human rights language into Agenda 2030 has been welcomed by states and civil society concerned to address concerns about the Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) 'human rights-blindness' and accountability shortcomings. However, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the proposed indicators for SDG4 in particular, do not go far enough in addressing children's rights as ratified through the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (UN, 1989).

Children's voices are a particularly glaring omission from existing plans for implementation, monitoring and accountability across the SDGs. Article 12 of the CRC provides for the children's right to be heard in all matters affecting them (UN, 1989). There is no point stating (as Agenda 2030 does) that 'children and young women and men are critical agents of change and will find in the new Goals a platform to channel their infinite capacities for activism into the creation of a better world' (para 50) if in practice their views are ignored in the key processes related to the SDGs. The highly technocratic process of indicator-setting silences non-"expert" voices; yet indicators will be a key driver of the eventual operationalisation of the SDGs.

Moreover, the draft global indicators fail to capture key elements of the child's right to education. Whilst the overall language of SDG4 is consistent with a rights perspective in so far as it stresses universal access to quality lifelong learning, there are a number of weaknesses in the draft indicators in rights' terms.

First, the targets and global indicators are potentially narrower in defining coverage in terms of population and conceptualisation of what constitutes quality education. Quality education in target 4.1 is reduced to meeting minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics at grade 2/3, end of primary and end of lower secondary. This is problematic in three ways. First, it reduces the implicit scope of commitment of the target by excluding upper secondary education – a key element of education as conceptualised under Article 28(1)(b) of the CRC and Article 13(2)(b) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN, 1966). It limits the breadth of education quality to reading and mathematics, which goes against the accepted understanding of education as contained in international human rights law, which entails that education 'in all its forms and at all levels' should exhibit availability, accessibility acceptability and adaptability (UN, 1999). Understandings of 'inclusive', 'equitable' and 'quality' education (and the indicators for monitoring such) need to be underpinned by these concepts. Second, the indicators imply that a concept of a minimum proficiency threshold will be defined subsequently by experts rather than being a matter for democratic scrutiny. Given that even very low thresholds of this kind are not being met by the vast majority of learners in most developing countries, the risk is considerable that a very low threshold will be set that will have implications for enjoyment of the right to education. Third, whilst the target explicitly uses the adjective "free", none of the indicators address this key element of the right to education. Thus, target 4.1 does not appear fit for the purpose of realising the right to education.

Beyond target 4.1, other targets and indicators also fail to reflect the established approach of assessing education in terms of availability, accessi-

bility, acceptability and adaptability. In particular, there is little sense across indicators 4.1-4.c.1 of notions of acceptability and adaptability. A (limited) exception to this is Target 4a which commits to "Build and upgrade facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all" and indicator 4.a.1 does capture some elements of availability and accessibility. The thematic indicators devised by the education community do reflect more of a rights perspective, but these are of a lower, optional status compared to the core global indicators presented by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG). The IAEG draft indicators focus strongly on outcome indicators to the expense of structural and procedural indicators that could hold states accountable on their obligation to progressively realise the right to education.

Across the draft SDG4 indicators and the envisaged process, there are severe risks that levels of accountability and democratic participation will continue to be undermined, as in the MDG process. In spite of longstanding critiques of indicator-setting processes, the discussion about indicators is a highly-closed and technical one, from which children's rights activists, academics and officials are excluded, let alone children, learners, parents and communities. Rights-based indicators seek to balance quantitative and qualitative elements but the global process is focused narrowly on what can be measured comparatively. Whilst Agenda 2030 promises a new compact between rights and development, there are real weaknesses in indicator development for SDG4 that will impact directly on the potential of SDG4 and its related indicators to advance realisation of the right to education - and indeed children's rights more broadly.

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EDUCATION, TRAINING AND AGENDA 2030: WHAT PROGRESS ONE YEAR ON?

123

Rewriting the Ambition of SDG4: the Risk of Narrow Global Indicators

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Keywords: Indicators; learning; political ambition

Summary: The technical process for defining the global indicators for SDG4, in some instances, risks narrowing the political ambition of the target and undermining the equitable achievement of the goal itself.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outline a promise of radical transformation: to end poverty and create sustainable futures, with no one left behind (UN, 2015). Education, one of the 17 goals, is recognised as a key driver in this process, with significant evidence to show that increased access to quality education improves health outcomes, empowers women, generates economic growth and builds more democratic societies (UNESCO, 2013).

SDG4 pledges to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all" and is broken down into seven general targets and three means of implementation targets. These targets taken together offer an ambitious agenda for education to be achieved by 2030. As with the other SDGs, SDG4 and its targets resulted from a long process of political negotiation by UN member states, with input from UN bodies, civil society and other actors. Why then is the ambition of SDG4 at risk of being undermined through a technical process?

The technical process in question is the development of the global indicators for the SDGs by the Inter-agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs). However, rather than being a merely technical process as portrayed, the final decisions of the IAEG-SDGs on the scope and wording of global indicators will, without doubt, have real political significance and risk jeopardising the ambitious political commitments.

Taking just one target SDG4.1 and its indicator, as an example, illustrates the risk (although there are arguments that could also be made concerning others). SDG4.1 commits that "By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes". However, the proposed global indicator 4.1.1. will only measure the "Proportion of children and young people: (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex" (IAEG-SDGS, 2016). One does not need to be a specialist of any kind to see this is wholly inadequate, failing to capture other key aspects of the target such as completion and free provision.

Furthermore, this indicator is lacking - even within its own narrow parameters -in suggesting disaggregation by sex alone, meaning that differences in learning outcomes between rich and poor (and/or by other forms of marginalisation) will not be measured or reported on. This will hide the inequity of learning outcomes between groups.

Equity, in terms of access and completion, remains a key issue through all levels of education with as many as 30% of children from poor families in low income countries never entering primary school and just 1% of the poorest girls in low income countries completing upper secondary school (UNESCO, 2016). Providing free public education will be enormously influential in allowing more of the poorest children to complete primary and secondary education; yet the IAEG-SDG has made no proposal for this to measured and reported on globally.

How will governments be held accountable to their commitment to provide a full cycle of primary and secondary education free for all children? How will we know if all children, including the poorest girls – those most often left behind - are completing education from primary through to upper secondary, not just enrolling?

While it is understandable that there is a desire to

try and keep the number of global indicators down, narrowing the scope of what needs to be measured and reported on globally brings significant risks. Although other national and thematic education indicators will be available, governments will be highly cognisant of the indicators monitored globally and are likely to prioritise their actions accordingly. An expanded - or second - indicator for target 4.1 might mean reporting at a global level is more complex; it is nevertheless vital to drive action on the whole target and not just part of it.

In an effort to keep the number of global indicators down, the critical aspects of completion and free provision have (at the time of writing – more than year into the IEAG-SDG process) simply been left out. The risk of no global accountability on these key aspects of this target - despite being dismissed by some influential actors - is real and it is important to learn from the past. Lessons from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) era illustrate how global reporting motivates action. The MDG goal of Universal Primary Education (UPE) drove governments to focus on increasing access at primary level, with very positive results in many countries. The flip side of this emphasis on access, however, is accepted as often having come at the expense of quality and led to a "learning crisis" with an estimated 250 million children not learning (UNESCO, 2013). The pendulum now appears to be swinging in the opposite direction, with learning outcomes the one and only global measurement for the first target of SDG4. This risks undermining the target and ultimately the overall goal.

This is not an argument against the measurement of learning; we need to know that education is bringing new knowledge and skills to children, although care needs to be taken on the age appropriateness of assessment, as well as a recognition that while literacy and numeracy are important foundational skills they do not amount to relevant learning outcomes if we are seeking just, peaceful and sustainable futures. However, in measuring only learning outcomes, and missing out completion and free provision, this holistic target is reduced to something much narrower, undermining the political promise for supposedly technical reasons. One might even suggest that those who had originally sought a narrower goal focused on learning will get this through the back door of the technical indicator process, potentially rewriting the ambition of SDG4 itself.

Global accountability on SDG4.1's core provisions

"that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes" is vital if the political promise of the sustainable development goal 4 is to have a chance to become reality by 2030.

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Further Reading

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Only Half the Data are Available to Monitor Progress to SDG 4: But are the Global Indicators Fit for Purpose?

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Keywords: Thematic and global indicators; methodologies; capacity building

Summary: As the official source of education data, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics is working closely with countries to develop the methodologies, standards and tools needed to help them produce and use Sustainable Development Goal 4 indicators while strengthening their national statistical systems.

If Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, and indeed the 2030 Agenda as whole, emerged from what is 'arguably the most inclusive process of consultation in the history of the United Nations' (Kitchen, 2016), according to my UNESCO colleague Jordan Naidoo, why stop there? It seems only fitting that the monitoring of progress towards SDG 4 mirror that inclusive, consultative process.

In the field of education, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) is considered as the leader in developing the agreed indicators and on methods to produce internationally comparable data. This is especially challenging when the information comes from different sources, as in the case of many of the SDG 4 indicators. In response, the UIS is working closely with a wide range of partners – particularly the countries that will take the lead on monitoring – to develop globally-comparable approaches to SDG 4 data collection and analysis.

Just look at everything that needs to be measured, both nationally and globally. Not just primary, but also secondary and tertiary education. Not just how many children are in class, but which children are there, and which children are missing out. Not just class sizes, but what children are learning in those classes. Not just whether they learn to read and write, but whether they leave school ready for the increasingly digital 21st century workplace. And all of this must be measured if we are to be sure that all of the world's children have secured a basic education of good quality.

Right now, we have only half of the data needed to monitor progress towards SDG4. But there can be no half measures – no 'either/or '. It's a case of 'all the above' – monitoring the unfinished business of the MDGs, such as universal completion of primary education (a goal that was missed by a mile) while monitoring progress on every level of the quality and equity of education, from the earliest years to life-long learning for adults.

We need to get this right, and that requires a process of collaboration, consultation and buy-in. It means working in stages, so that the indicators can be checked, re-checked, and adapted where necessary. Put simply, we can't arrive at our 2030 destination without scrutinizing the road-map along the way. A staged and consensual approach to the SDG indicators really is the only way to go, with countries in the driving seat.

Countries agree to start using fit-for-purpose indicators in 2017.

There has been much debate and discussion about these indicators, and the good news is that a list of 29 global and thematic indicators were signed off as being 'fit for purpose' at a recent meeting of the Technical Cooperation Group (TCG) for SDG 4 – Education 2030 Indicators. We now have a core list that countries have agreed to start using in 2017 to monitor progress.

The TCG concluded that the remaining 14 indicators need more methodological work, data collection and possibly revision before they will be fit for purpose. The race is on to bring them up to speed, so that they can take their place alongside the others already in place.

For example, further methodological work is needed on 4.7.4 (the percentage of students who understand global citizenship and sustainability), and 4.a.3 (the number of attacks on students, personnel and institutions). Standard definitions are

needed to ensure that the resulting indicators are comparable across countries.

In other cases, the challenge is to extend the country coverage of the data sources used to produce the indicators. Latin America, for example, is the only region that reports internationally-comparable data for indicator 4.6.3 on the percentage of illiterate adults and youth enrolled in literacy programmes.

The TCG also identified areas that, as well as needing development or revision, may need more indicators. For example, Target 4.3 calls for equal access for women and men to affordable quality technical, vocational and tertiary education. Yet today's list of indicators doesn't reflect concepts of affordability or quality; so we may need more indicators here.

Helping countries to respond to the unprecedented demand for data, UIS, which co-chairs the TCG, has proposed four working groups to tackle such issues in three crucial areas, with each group chaired by TCG Member States – vital to ensure that the end result reflects national realities and priorities. The first would focus on the methodological issues and data availability issues related to the thematic indicators that need further development. The second would focus specifically on indicators related to learning outcomes through the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML).

The third would work on national capacity building, recognizing the unprecedented demand for statistics being placed on countries. It would identify national capacity issues; develop tools and resources to enable countries to 'own' the indicators; establish a stakeholders' network for national support; brief countries on the latest data processes; and develop a mechanism to help countries develop their own National Strategies for the Development of Education Statistics.

The fourth working group would focus on how to strengthen the reporting of SDG4 data. Countries and international agencies would, for example, benefit enormously from a comprehensive guide to help them collect and disseminate SDG4 data.

This is all part of the long-standing role of the UIS to serve as the nexus between national and international education data. It is a role we relish as the international education community moves ahead with the indicators in the pursuit of SDG4.

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Global Alliance to Monitor Learning http://uis.openplus.ca/gaml/

Sustainable Development Goal 4: Lost In Translation?

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Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals; Indicators; Targets; UNESCO

Summary: Now that attention has veered towards the monitoring and reporting of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the implications of their adoption are fast becoming a harsh reality for United Nations' Member States. The paucity of the SMART principle evidenced in many indicators raises questions about the capacity of Member States to report on progress towards the SDGs, and threatens the credibility of the SDGs measurement framework.

The challenges in monitoring Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ["Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"] have been widely acknowledged. More recently, the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report recognises that "the ambition of SDG 4 goes beyond any previous international education agreement. Setting an accompanying monitoring framework has therefore brought up an entirely new set of issues" (World Education Blog, 2016). It notes further that, unlike the case of Health, many of the Education indicators do not have any established methodology and standards (World Education Blog, 2016).

Earlier warnings about the complexity of SDGs, and their concomitant targets, were signalled by the International Council for Science prior to the formal adoption of the SDGs in September 2015. The Council cautioned that "the expanded set of SDGs and targets cover a wide range of topics for which current, detailed, and trustworthy data may not yet exist and for which traditional data collection and integration methods may be technically difficult – or very expensive – to implement (ISCU, ISSU: 2015). The Council also alerted the international community of the need to establish "scientifically consistent and transparent protocols, common ontologies and conceptual frameworks" to measure indicators that reflect best measurement and assessment practices (ISCU, ISSU: 2015).

United Nations' (UN) Member States will be expected to report on a total of 43 indicators for Goal 4: eleven global indicators to be reported to the UN, and a further 32 indicators to be reported to UNESCO. Currently South Africa does not collect regular data on the following indicators:

• Indicator 8: Proportion of children under 5 years of age who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by sex

• Indicator 9: Percentage of children under 5 years of age experiencing positive and stimulating home learning environments

• Indicator 16.1 Percentage of youth/adults who have achieved at least a minimum level of proficiency in digital literacy skills

• Indicator 16.2 Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill

• Indicator 27: Percentage of 15-year-old students showing proficiency in knowledge of environmental science and geoscience

Those familiar with working with indicators would concede, firstly, that some of the indicators are not really SMART[1]; secondly, they would know how expensive it really is to measure, and thirdly, they would advise that it is actually not necessary to measure every one of the above indicators, since a few of these would provide sufficient insight into related targets. For example, is it really necessary to have Indicator 9, when, as a results oriented indicator, Indicator 8 can provide sufficient insights into the related target? Similarly, are both 16.1 and 16.2 indicators necessary?

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1 SMART refers to "Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Related"

The power of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was in their simplicity and clarity. They appealed to the public. Is it too late for the SDGs to do the same?

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EDUCATION, TRAINING AND AGENDA 2030: WHAT PROGRESS ONE YEAR ON?

129

NORRAG'S NEWS - 30 YEARS ON (1986-2016)

Origins of the Research Review and Advisory Group (RRAG) and of NORRAG

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In the early 1970s, education was high on the agenda of international organizations: United Nations entities, bi-lateral aid organizations, foundations, the World Bank, international NGOs.

The influential Faure Report entitled *Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow*, issued in 1972, served as an important guide for these organizations. The Report included among its many observations and recommendations the following with respect to educational research:

> "Research in pedagogy and related sciences is insufficiently developed in many countries" (p. 180)

> "Research … has yet to yield as great a contribution as might have been expected. In education, it has so far received far more limited resources than in many other areas and some authorities believe a massive increase in credits allocated to pedagogic research would suffice to give innovation a powerful shot in the arm." (p. 224)

> "We recommend setting up national education development centres or other similar organizations to produce a continual series of education innovations, leading to a 'perpetual reform' of education." (p. 226).

> "We propose that agencies assisting education, national and international, private and public, review the present state of 'research and development' in education with a view to strengthening the capacities of individual countries to improve their present educational systems and to invent, design, and test new educational experiments appropriate to their cultures and resources." (p. 263)

To meet the Faure challenge, meetings were held in 1972 and 1973 at which individuals from funding agencies and research institutions discussed whether, and how, additional research might be harnessed to provide more and better education for more people in developing nations. One result of these meetings was that the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada agreed to fund the formation and activity of a small group of people from different parts of the world and different disciplines who were well known for their educational research expertise.[1] This group, called the Research Review and Advisory Group, was asked to carry out the "review of the present state of research and development in education" recommended in the Faure Report.

Although some participating organizations wanted RRAG to help them establish global thematic research priorities that would guide their funding efforts, that idea was inconsistent with the RRAG notion that agendas should reflect the many differing education research environments. It was also inconsistent with the observation that, too often, a research agenda is imposed by outside funding organizations. Consequently, RRAG, even while carrying out reviews of the state-of-the-research-and-practice for a number of themes, focused much of its early discussion and activity on the research process and on the relation of educational research to policy and practice.[2] In so doing, it made a significant contribution to development of the field. RRAG also helped to promote the formation of nascent regional educational research networks, some of which exist to the present day. One of these is NORRAG for whose 30th anniversary this brief piece has been written. NORRAG is of course no longer a regional but a global network.

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1 The participants selected were not only researchers but also people who had active experience in the worlds of educational policy and practice. The original participants in the group were: Pablo Latapi (Mexico, Prospectiva Universitaria, A. C.); William Fuller (The Ford Foundation, Dacca, Bangladesh); Wadi Haddad (Lebanon, Ministry of Education and the World Bank); Jaques Hallak (France, International Institute of Educational Planning); E.A. Yoloye (Nigeria, Institute of Education, University of Ibadan); Kenneth King (Scotland, Centre of African Studies and IDRC); Pote Sapianchi (Thailand, Office of the National Commission); Errol Miller (Jamaica, Mico College); John Simmons (The World Bank). Co-ordinator: Robert Myers. Assistant Coordinator: Beatrice Avalos (Chile & Cardiff)
2 See, for instance, R.G. Myers (1981). Connecting Worlds. A survey of developments in educational research. Ottawa: International Development research Centre.

NORRAG: From a Club to an International Network

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Keywords: NORRAG News; NORRAG membership; NORRAG objectives; NORRAG offerings; NORRAG knowledge products

Summary: On the occasion of the 30 years of NORRAG News, this article gives a brief overview of the evolution of NORRAG as a Network. It provides some key features of NORRAG membership today, and comes back to some of the main results from the latest biennial survey we carried out over the summer of 2016 across NORRAG's constituencies.

The release of NORRAG News 54 marks the 30th anniversary of NORRAG's emblematic publication. To rewind back to late 1985, the first meeting of what was then called the Northern Research Review and Advisory Group (NORRAG) took place. Considered as NORRAG's ancestor, it was agreed that the group's main task would be to produce a biennial aid policy bulletin called NORRAG News, with the support of the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA). NORRAG News was thus born, and the first issue was released in November 1986 (http://www.norrag.org/en/publications/norrag-news/full-list-of-norrag-news.html). Since the beginning, the model of NORRAG News was based on the contributions by others members from regional Research Review and Advisory Groups (RRAG)[1], education and training experts from donours agencies and a few members of the academia. Each of them would feed information into the Newsletter. In these early years, NORRAG itself was a sort of 'club' composed of a small grouping of like-minded academics and agency policy people, setting the ground for the development of NORRAG as the Network for International Policies and Cooperation in Education and Training today. [2]

Thirty years later, this 'club' has grown into a network of more than 4,700 members, with a wide service offering, including knowledge production, policy dialogue and capacity developement. While the majority of active members (nearly 45%) are from[3] North America and Western Europe, more than 20% are from sub-Saharan Africa, and another 20% from Asia.

In terms of institutional background, the network is very diverse. The largest group is made up of university academics and researchers, jointly representing about 40% of the membership. But it also comprises members from NGOs and other civil society organisations, government departments, consultants, multilateral and bilateral agencies, private sector and the media. These data reflect the richness of our network, both geographically and institutionnally.

So how do our members and stakeholders see us today? Over the summer, we conducted our biennial online survey. This exercise helps us reflect on our work during the previous two years, with the aim of continuously improving our activities and service offering. Although the number of questionnaires received is not representative of NORRAG's constituencies[4], the feedback is very important since it allows us to identify trends and capture essential qualitative information. Likewise, this tool gives us a better understanding of how our members and stakeholders are interacting with NORRAG and what their expectations are. The next section will present some of the key findings based on the responses we gathered.

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1 The RRAG Network was composed of the original Northern Research Review and Advisory Group, the education Research Network of West and Central Africa (ERNWACA), the REDUC Network of documentation centers in Latin America, the Caribbean RRAG (CERRAG), the Educational Research Network of Eastern and Southern Africa (ERNESA) and the South East Asian RRAG (SEARRAG).
2 To learn more about NORRAG history, see http://www.norrag.org/fileadmin/Other/NORRAG_history.pdf
3 This should be taken as meaning that they are either from or based-in that country or region, as we recognize that many individuals may reside in countries other than their country of origin.
4 We received 304 completed questionnaires over the period June – September 2016. Respondents were free to respond or not to the questions. Hence the percentages referred to in this article are calculated based on the number of responses received for each question, and not on the total of 304.

Table 1: Overview of active members (November 2016)

Active members by region	%	Active members by institutional background	%
North America and Western Europe	44.7 %	University (academic)	28.5%
Sub-Saharan Africa	21.3%	NGO or other civil society organisation	17.4%
South and West Asia	10.3%	University (research student)	13.1%
East Asia	9.9%	Government department	10.1%
Latin America	4.6%	Consultancy	9.4%
Arab States	3.7%	Multilateral organisation	6.4%
Pacific	3.0%	Bilateral aid agency	4.5%
Central and Eastern Europe	1.3%	Commercial organisation (private sector)	2.6%
Central Asia	0.6%	Media	0.5%
Caribbean	0.6%	Other	7.7%

Source: Database of NORRAG members – 21 November 2016
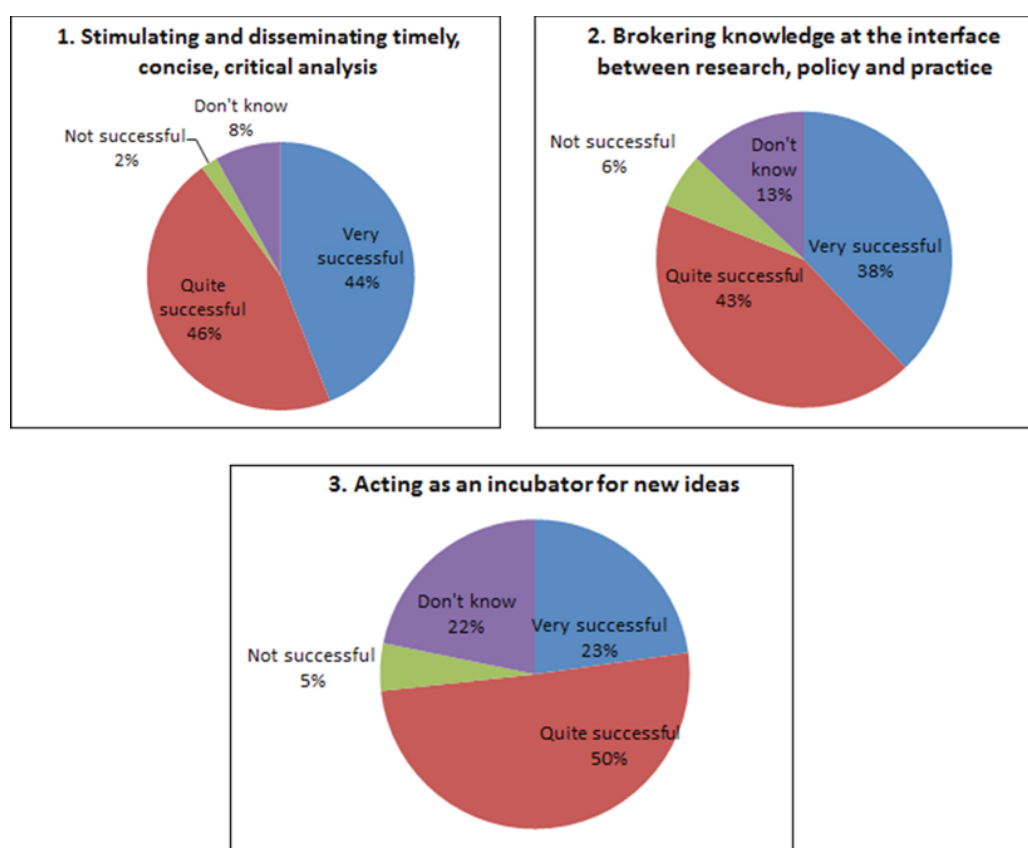
Reaching NORRAG's objectives

In the process of transformation from a small Northern-based organisation into a global Network, NORRAG's Raison d'être evolved into the mission of informing, challenging and influencing international education and training policies and cooperation by revisiting the policy-research nexus. This statement of purpose translates into three objectives:

• To stimulate and disseminate timely, concise, critical analysis

• To broker knowledge at the interface between research, policy and practice

• To act as an incubator for new ideas

Figure 1 below shows that overall, a majority of respondents estimated that NORRAG has successfully met those three objectives. While 90% of them considered that NORRAG has been very or quite succesful in stimulating and disseminating timely, concise, critical analysis, NORRAG's role as an incubator for new ideas and the communication around these should be enhanced.

Figure 1: NORRAG's objectives and respondents' rating

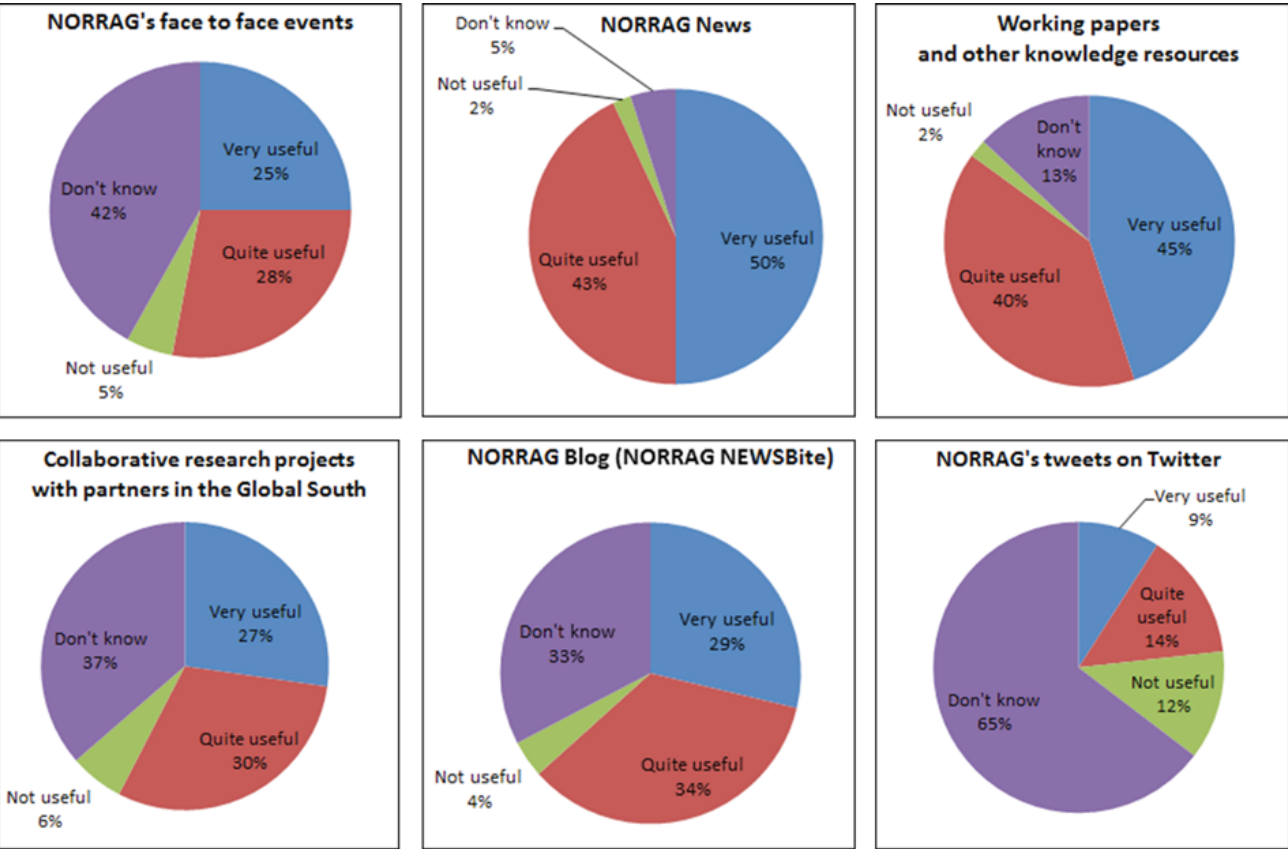Source: Analysis of NORRAG Survey 2014-16 (September 2016)

Further results indicate that NORRAG's success in reaching its objectives has been acknowledged slightly more frequently by the academic constituency (including university faculty, researchers and students) and the consultant constituency than by respondents from policy-making and practitioner background (including government officials, bilateral and multilateral agencies' experts and NGOs and civil society representatives).

NORRAG's service offering

During recent years, we have been focusing on improving our value chain of products, with the aim of strengthening the articulation between policy dia-

logue, networking, knowledge production and dissemination, and capacity development, so as to provide coherent and impactful services to NORRAG's members and stakeholders. Respondents were asked to evaluate how useful our main offerings are to them. Figure 2 shows that NORRAG's publications are well-rated and are considered by the majority of respondents as 'very useful' and 'quite useful.' Likewise, our blog, *NORRAG NEWS*Bite has received positive reviews. While all these resources are freely accessible on our website, the opportunity to attend our events depends on the respondents' location, which is reflected by the percentage of 'do not know' responses received

Figure 2: Perceived usefulness of NORRAG offerings

Source: Analysis of NORRAG Survey 2014-16 (September 2016)

Use of NORRAG's knowledge products

NORRAG has always striven to deliver and disseminate relevant knowledge and information around a variety of topics and issues in the field of international education and training policies. One interesting features of this survey relates to the use of our resources by NORRAG members and stakeholders. Table 2 illustrates how our knowledge products, especially *NORRAG News*, serves the respondents.

Based on the feedback received, we note that individuals use *NORRAG News* mostly as a way to keep up to date with education and training issues, and to help inform their research work. *NORRAG News* is also frequently used to inform projects and policy, in particular among NORRAG's policy and practitioner constituency.

Table 2: How respondents make use of *NORRAG News*

	Very often	Often	Not Often	Never	Not applicable
To keep up to date with education and training issues	24%	45%	24%	4%	4%
To inform research work (consultancy and/or academic)	19%	40%	24%	9%	8%
To share contents with my colleagues	13%	31%	35%	11%	10%
To incorporate into teaching courses	10%	21%	27%	15%	27%
To network with article authors	7%	21%	32%	26%	15%
To inform projects and policy	15%	35%	32%	10%	8%

Source: Analysis of NORRAG Survey 2014-16 (September 2016)

Building on these favourable inputs, but also on insightful suggestions made in the survey, we aim to continue to reinforce our value chain of products and to facilitate the engagement with our constituencies. An important step towards this aim will be the launch of a revamped version of our website. This will improve the access to information on our activities, and especially to our knowlegde products, and will allow for more interactive content.

To conclude this brief overview, we have selected some quotes from the respondents, highlighting what makes NORRAG unique for them. These testimonies are another way to illustrate how our members and stakeholders see us today.

Additional document

For more information about the key findings from our Survey 2014-16, see http://bit.ly/2j0NyRC

What makes NORRAG unique? Some quotes from the survey…

Related to NORRAG's provision of reliable, timely information and critical analysis

'It provides very useful and timely information. I do not see any parallel source of information' (University academic, South Asia)

'It deals with current burning issues in international educational development' (Multilateral organization, Europe).

NORRAG is 'a source of critical positive thinking' (Government official, Europe)

Related to NORRAG's independence and openness to debate and ideas

'I find that NORRAG is a honest knowledge broker in the education for development field (there are many other brokers in the field, but which – in contrast to NORRAG – have a political and ideological agenda)' (University academic, Europe)

'NORRAG provides an alternate perspective to OECD, World Bank, UNESCO & Cedefop' (University research student, East Asia)

Related to NORRAG's brokering power among different actors in research, policy and practice

'Its capacity to put at the same table specialists from different organizations and engage them in a dialogue' (University research student, Europe)

'It links research with policies, with the help of experts around the world' (Government department – Ministry of Education / Labour, Arab States)

It is 'Providing a platform for research, policy and practice, gathering specialists from different origins and perspectives' (NGO, Europe).

CALL FOR SDG CHAPTER PROPOSALS

CALL FOR PROPOSALS
Contributions to a book on SDG 4 / Education 2030

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Background

There were no guarantees that education would be a stand-alone goal when the so-called post-2015 process kicked off in 2012. The MDGs had had varying success and were far from being met; the EFA goals were largely unknown outside the education sector – and they were not met either; there were new challenges such as climate change and financial crises, including declining education and aid budgets, and a shocking figure of 250 million children not having learned despite being in school.

Alongside numerous other sectors, education mobilized to secure an ambitious stand-alone goal. But there was far from agreement within the sector on what was to be captured in that goal; what does quality education mean today, how and by whom should education be provided, and what is the minimum level and scope of education to be ensured for all people in the world?

While one would think that the adoption of the agenda marked the end of these debates, there have since been numerous attempts to reframe the agenda. These efforts to rewrite history include framing Education 2030 as an agenda for learning outcomes in poor countries rather than universal quality education, and de-prioritizing the targets on learning environments and teachers (4.a and 4.c).

It is against this background that we wish to interrogate as well as document what really happened, examine the new agenda from a critical perspective, scrutinise the forces behind it, and formulate a critique as well as strategies for implementation, financing and monitoring.

Aims

The book has the following aims:

1. A critical assessment and documentation of the process leading up to adoption of SDG 4/Education 2030;

2. A critical examination and analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of SDG 4/Education 2030 and its components;

3. Support implementation by providing critical perspectives and food for thought as focus is shifting towards national-level actors and action;

4. Map the actors bringing about the change, their dynamic and strategies for moving forward

Through this book, we hope to bring together a community of critical voices from different spheres and sectors to formulate a sharp, historical analysis but also strategies for moving forward.

This book is firmly rooted in a tradition of human rights and social justice.

The book will be edited by 2-3 people, with Antonia Wulff as the lead editor. The work will be supported by a reference group that will be convened by Hugh McLean. The book is independent of any affiliation.

Themes to explore

We envisage the book being structured along the axes of *History and process to date, The new agenda and*

its features, and *Challenges ahead and missing pieces*. Among the themes and areas that we are hoping to explore are:

1. From Jomtien through Dakar to Paris/New York; Post-EFA vs. post-MDG

2. Education vs. Learning; Skills; Towards a global metric for learning

3. Equity and equality; Quality education; Teachers

4. Education financing; Public vs private; PPPs

5. Indicators; Means of Implementation

6. Global vs national level action; Activism and grassroots for social justice

7. Education in emergencies and fragile states

8. Human Rights – in education and the SDGs

9. Economic growth and sustainable development

10. What is missing in the new agenda?

Submitting proposals and the writing process

We are encouraging authors to team up and submit joint proposals in order to ensure balance and diversity of perspectives. We are particularly interested in contributions from the Global South, and encourage Northern academics to work with colleagues and/or students from the Global South.

Interested authors are asked to submit an abstract outlining i) what area(s) you are intending to explore; ii) from what perspective; and iii) through what materials. What do you want readers to reflect upon and learn when reading your contribution?

The abstract should be maximum 500 words. Please also include a past paper/piece as well as a short biography presenting your background and relationship to the post-2015 process (max 250 words).

Please send your proposal to sdg4book@gmail.com by **15 February 2017**.

The reference group will review the abstracts. Apart from north-south and male-female balance, we are looking for critical reflections and perspectives that will support the rights-based education community in formulating its critique as well as strategies for moving SDG 4 forward.