



WHAT IS EDUCATION?

Education is “learning to learn, so as to be able to absorb new knowledge all through life; learning to think freely and critically; learning to love the world and make it more human; learning to develop”¹. These are all relatively abstract yet essential objectives, as education determines and affects people’s destiny.

Certainly, “if done right, education has the power like none else to nurture empowered, reflective, engaged and skilled citizens who can

chart the way to a safer, greener and fairer planet for all.”²

In order for the power that education possesses to trigger social transformation, it is paramount that it is **quality education**, with guaranteed **easy access to safe schools** for everyone around the world, with **enough teachers receiving on-going training** and with **adequate means and resources**.

As Aristotle said, **education is one of the primordial tasks of the legislator**³.

¹ *Learning to be*, Faure Report, UNESCO

² BOKOVA I., Foreword *Global Education Monitoring Report (2016)*, UNESCO

³ ARISTOTLE, *Politics V, I*



EDUCATION: AN ENABLING RIGHT

Since the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights included education in Article 26, numerous international instruments and agreements have asserted this human right throughout history, including: Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1960); Article 10 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979); Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); and the Resolution on the Right to Education in Emergency Situations (2010).

This rich international history behind the right to education leaves us the legacy of a series of principles establishing that **education is an enabling, fundamental human right; in other words, it enables the exercising of other human rights**; it is a public good and a shared societal endeavour; and gender equality is inextricably linked to the right to education⁴.

Such an enabling human right requires the creation and application of an inclusive **public policies process that guarantees compulsory and free primary education**, “at least in the elementary and fundamental stages”⁵; public

policies that support generalised technical and professional education; and access to higher education under equal conditions.

The right to education, exercised throughout all stages of life by all, does not just lead to the personal development of individuals; it is also the **path to achieving peace and safety around the world (the reason the United Nations came to being)**, as only education favours tolerance and amicable relationships between the Member States. This was recognised in 1948 in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; all international instruments that include the right to education have reaffirmed it; and now **Agenda 2030 proposes that we truly take the task of achieving inclusive, fair and quality education seriously with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4**, taking the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2, which strived for “universal primary education” a step further.



⁴ *Education for people and planet*, Global Education Monitoring Report (2016), UNESCO

⁵ Article 26, Universal declaration of Human Rights (1948)



FROM MDG 2 TO SDG4: A BID FOR QUALITY

MDG 2 focused on achieving primary schooling for girls and boys all over the world. This goal was not achieved within the envisaged time frame between 2000 and 2015, though advances were made.

Figure 1: Primary school-aged boys and girls around the world that do not go to school. Source MDG Report 2015.



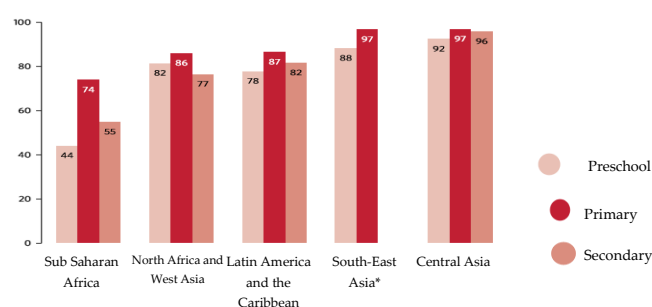
SDG 4 renews this unfinished commitment for universal primary education and reaffirms equal opportunities in access to education. Yet it goes further with a broader scope, engaging all countries to achieve **quality education across all levels of education** - 263 million children, adolescents and youths were out of school in 2014, and over 100 million young people continued to be illiterate in 2015⁶ - that is **effective, and with a focus on lifelong learning**.

The key aspects of a quality education are included within the **Incheon Declaration**, a historical engagement on the part of all the UNESCO member states (United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) to **“transform lives through a new vision for education, with bold and innovative actions”, to achieve a quality education by 2030⁷. A renewed education that leaves no one behind, that is inclusive and equitable.**

Quality education is the most essential element of all the dimensions of sustainable development. **“Education gives us the key tools – economic, social, technological, even ethical – to take on the SDGs and to achieve them”⁸**. However, for SDG 4 to lead us to sustainable development, it depends on how we face threats such as the lack of qualified teachers, particularly in Sub Saharan Africa where less than half of pre-school teachers and three-quarters of secondary teachers are trained and 30% of schools do not have toilets or electricity.

Figure 2: Percentage of qualified teachers by teaching level. 2011: latest available data (percentage). Source SDG Report 2017.



*Note: Data for secondary education in South-East Asia is not available.

⁷ Incheon Declaration. Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. UNESCO, Incheon, Republic of Korea, 2015.

⁸ BOKOVA I., Foreword *Global Education Monitoring Report (2016)*, UNESCO.

⁶ The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017



WHO CAN DO WHAT?

ON AN INTERNATIONAL LEVEL



It is important for the educational community to know the priorities and key actions required to achieve SDG 4. It is precisely with the aim of providing strategic guidance and coordinating the different educational players that the UNESCO has created the SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee, a global governing mechanism for SDG 4.

ON A NATIONAL LEVEL



SDG 4 emphasises the importance of ensuring effective and relevant learning. This requires governments to review existing study plans, teaching and learning contents; and to implement “fairer and more balanced mechanisms for measuring and validating knowledge, skills and competencies”⁹.

ON A LOCAL LEVEL



Entreculturas is a NGO that implements development projects to stand up for and protect the right to quality education in the North and South. Find out how it promotes global citizenship on [FABRE Testimony – SDG4](#).

AND WHAT CAN YOU DO?



“Education does not just enrich culture... It is the first condition for freedom, democracy and sustainable development.” Kofi Annan

For all school ages!

Join the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and participate in activities for the **right to quality education** during the Global Action Week for Education (GAWE).



Discover **teaching units** online to raise awareness among your students about the importance of the Right to Education, with activity suggestions for students from 3 to 18 years.

Spread the word in your educational community, keep up with the latest news on the SAME Navarra Facebook page and if you want more information, contact samenavarra2018@gmail.com.

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⁹ Unpacking SDG 4 – Education 2030, UNESCO Guide 2016