



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Executive Board

Hundred and ninety-fourth session

194 EX/6

PARIS, 28 February 2014
Original: English

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

EDUCATION BEYOND 2015

SUMMARY

Pursuant to 37 C/Resolution 11, the Director-General has further developed a position paper on education beyond 2015. This position paper serves as a basis for consultations with Member States to develop global targets, indicators and a framework for action for education beyond 2015. This position paper will also be reviewed by the EFA Steering Committee and its recently-established Task Force for the post-2015 education agenda on 6 and 7 March, 2014. The Secretariat will inform the Executive Board on the developments coming from the EFA Steering Committee and its Task Force.

There are no financial implications related to this document.

Action expected of the Executive Board: proposed decision in paragraph 23.

INTRODUCTION

1. Efforts towards achieving education for all (EFA) since the year 2000 have yielded unprecedented progress. However, the EFA and the MDG education agendas will remain unfinished by 2015 and the continued relevance and importance of the EFA agenda is recognized. There is a strong need for a new and forward-looking education agenda which completes unfinished business while going beyond the depth and scope of the current goals.

2. This position paper takes into consideration emerging trends and broader socio-economic development and challenges that affect developed and developing countries alike in a globalized, interconnected world, and their implications for education. Future education development priorities must reflect these significant changes that have occurred and will continue to occur. There is a need to explore how education systems should adapt to successfully tackle contemporary challenges and rethink the kind of knowledge, skills and competencies required for the future as well as the nature of educational and learning processes that might facilitate them and ultimately, what educational policies and reforms are required for such change.

UNESCO'S POSITION ON THE POST-2015 EDUCATION AGENDA

3. The new post-2015 education agenda should be clearly defined, balanced and holistic, and take a lifelong learning approach. It should be of universal relevance and mobilize all stakeholders and countries, regardless of their development status.

4. UNESCO advocates for a single, clearly-defined, global education agenda, which should be an integral part of the broader international development framework. Such a global education agenda should be framed by a comprehensive overarching goal, to be translated into a number of measurable targets and related indicators.

5. In addition to being a stand-alone goal in the post-2015 development agenda, education should also be integrated into other development goals to highlight their mutual interdependence and catalyze more synergistic action across sectors. The future development agenda should recognize the central role of education in enabling wider development progress by including education-related targets and indicators in such areas as health, employment and gender equality.

Vision

6. UNESCO reaffirms a humanistic and holistic vision of education as a fundamental human right and essential to personal and socio-economic development. The objective of such education must be envisaged in a broad lifelong learning perspective that aims at enabling and empowering people to realize their rights to education, fulfil their personal expectations for a decent life and work, and contribute to the achievement of their societies' socio-economic development objectives. In addition to the acquisition of basic knowledge and cognitive skills, the content of learning must promote problem solving and creative thinking; understanding and respect for human rights; inclusion and equity; cultural diversity; and foster a desire and capacity for lifelong learning and learning to live together, all of which are essential to the betterment of the world and the realization of peace, responsible citizenship and sustainable development.

Guiding principles

7. The following principles should be applied to guide the future education agenda:¹

¹ For further details on each of these principles, please refer to the UNESCO Education Sector website.

Reaffirming fundamental principles

- (1) Education is a fundamental human right² and contributes significantly to the realization of other rights.
- (2) Education is a public good. The State is the custodian of education as a public good. At the same time, the role of civil society, communities, parents and other stakeholders is crucial in the provision of quality education.
- (3) Education is a foundation for human fulfilment, peace, sustainable development, economic growth, decent work, gender equality and responsible global citizenship.
- (4) Education is a key contributor to reducing inequalities and reducing poverty by bequeathing the conditions and generating the opportunities for better, sustainable societies.

Imperatives of education for the post-2015 agenda

- (a) Equitable access to quality education for children, youth and adults should be provided for all, from early childhood to higher education.
- (b) Quality education and learning at all levels should be at the core of the post-2015 education agenda.
- (c) A focus on equity is paramount and particular attention should be given to marginalized groups.
- (d) Gender equality requires continued and central attention.
- (e) Opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills for sustainable development, global citizenship and for the world of work must be enhanced.
- (f) Lifelong learning is a central principle for the post-2015 education agenda. Flexible lifelong and life-wide learning opportunities should be provided through formal, non-formal and informal pathways, including by harnessing the potential of ICTs to create a new culture of learning.

Overarching goal

8. The post-2015 development agenda should be rights-based and ensure an equity perspective, while reflecting the expanded vision of access to quality education at all levels, with a focus on learning. UNESCO recommends to its Member States the following goal: “**Ensure equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030**” as a possible overarching education goal, aiming to achieve just, inclusive, peaceful and sustainable societies. This overarching goal is translated into specific global **targets** to which countries would commit and could be held accountable, and for which corresponding **indicators** will be developed.

Targets

9. UNESCO is cognizant that in order to be holistic and aspirational, the agenda will comprise targets in areas that may not (yet) be measurable in a quantitative way. The setting of the global education agenda should start from what the global community wants to aspire to, and should not merely be assembled of elements for which data collection mechanisms and quantitative

² Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education.

measurements currently exist. Policy imperatives should drive measurement, not vice versa. The following targets, organized by priority area, are proposed for further deliberation and debate.

Priority area: Basic education

10. Rationale: Despite major progress made since 2000, 57 million children of primary age-group and 69 million children of lower secondary school age are still out of school of which girls remain the majority.³ In this view, and with reference to the expressed need by countries to expand access to education both before and after primary education, this goal aims at ensuring that equitable and universal access to and completion of quality basic education are achieved for all. Basic education should consist of **at least one year of pre-primary and nine years of free, compulsory and continuous primary and lower secondary education**, and should be provided to all without discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, disability, language or location. To that end, it is expected that by 2030 at least 10 years of basic education will be made compulsory in all countries, and that, upon completion of the full cycle, all children will have acquired the basic learning outcomes, including a set of foundation skills⁴ as defined by and measured against national standards.

Target 1: *All children participate in and complete a full cycle of free, compulsory and continuous quality basic education of at least 10 years, including one year of pre-primary education, leading to relevant and measurable learning outcomes based on national standards.*

Priority area: Post-basic and tertiary education

11. Rationale: Progress in the provision of basic education and the growing need for relevant skills and lifelong learning opportunities have substantially increased the demand for access to different streams and forms of post-basic and tertiary education. Ensuring equitable access to relevant and diversified post-basic and tertiary education is a challenge that all countries must meet. This challenge is particularly acute in the least developed countries, where insufficient opportunities to access higher levels of learning have resulted in a knowledge gap with serious consequences for social and economic development. The attainment of higher levels of education by the world population is key to ensuring a more equitable access to better living conditions, to increasingly specialized and better-paid jobs, and a more sustainable environment as well as sustainable economic and social development. The use of technology for online and distance learning will become a main component in the provision of quality education. National policies and tertiary education systems should seek to put in place appropriate quality assurance systems.

Target 2: *Increase transition to and completion of quality upper secondary education by x %, with all graduates demonstrating relevant learning outcomes based on national standards.*

Target 3: *Tertiary education systems are expanded to allow qualified learners to access and complete studies leading to a certificate, diploma or degree.*

Priority area: Youth and adult literacy

12. Rationale: Youth and adult literacy remains a key global challenge. Worldwide, some 774 million adults (aged 15 and over) are reported to be unable to read and write of which two-thirds are women.⁵ Low literacy skills are also a concern in many high-income countries. The European Commission, for example, notes that in Europe an estimated 20% of adults lack the literacy skills they need to function fully in a modern society.⁶ This goal aims at ensuring that young people and adults across the world acquire relevant and recognized functional literacy and

³ 2014, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/4: Teaching and Learning – Achieving quality for all*

⁴ 2012, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012: Youth and skills: Putting Education to work*

⁵ 2014, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/4: Teaching and Learning – Achieving quality for all* (p. 4)

⁶ 2012, European Commission, “Final Report: EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy 2012”, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, (p. 21)

numeracy skills that allow them to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with diverse contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning enabling individuals to achieve their goals, develop their knowledge and potential, and participate fully in community and wider society.

Target 4: *All youth and adults achieve literacy, numeracy and other basic skills at a proficiency level necessary to fully participate in a given society and for further learning.*

Priority area: Skills for work and life

13. Rationale: In the light of socio-economic and demographic transformations including shifting labour markets, growing youth unemployment, migration trends and technological advancements, transformed and intensified approaches to skills development policies for work and life are required. This goal aims at ensuring that all young people and adults have equitable opportunities to access and complete formal and non-formal technical and vocational education and training relevant to the world of work, as well as lifelong learning opportunities that enable learners to acquire diverse and relevant knowledge and skills over their lifespans. Governments should provide information and counselling and facilitate various pathways to learning depending on learners' choice and potential and in relation with skills required for the world of work, and should ensure identification, recognition and certification of learning outcomes acquired by learners through formal, non-formal and informal learning settings.

Target 5: *Increase by x % the proportion of youth (15-24 years) with relevant and recognized knowledge and skills, including professional, technical and vocational, to access decent work.*

Target 6: *Increase by x % participation in continuing adult education and training programmes, with recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning.*

Priority area: Quality and relevant teaching and learning

14. Rationale: Ensuring quality and relevant teaching and learning in terms of inputs, content, processes, learning environments to support the holistic development of all children, youth and adults deserves a central place in the post-2015 education agenda. Growing evidence of poor quality of education contributing to low learning levels and learning deficits (or inequalities) has led policy-makers and the international community to a renewed focus on improving the provision of quality education. Several key areas contribute to improving quality of education: (a) well-trained and motivated teachers who teach effectively using inclusive, gender-responsive and participatory pedagogical approaches to ensure effective learning outcomes; (b) content that is relevant to all learners and to the context in which they live; (c) learning environments that are safe, gender-responsive, inclusive and conducive to learning and promote mother tongue-based multilingual education; (d) ensuring that learners reach sufficient levels of knowledge and competencies according to national standards at each level; (e) strengthening capacities for learners to be innovative, creative, and assimilate change in their society and the workplace and over their lifespans; and (f) strengthen the ways education contributes to peace, responsible citizenship, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue.

Target 7: *Close the teachers' gap by recruiting adequate numbers of teachers who are well-trained, meet national standards and can effectively deliver relevant content, with emphasis on gender balance.*

Target 8: *All youth (15-24 years) and adults have opportunities to acquire – supported by safe, gender-responsive, inclusive learning environments – relevant knowledge and skills to ensure their personal fulfilment, contribute to peace and an equitable and sustainable world.*

Priority area: Financing of education

15. Rationale: The education agenda beyond 2015 requires innovative, increased and well-targeted financing and improved implementation arrangements. There needs to be a clear, renewed commitment by governments to provide adequate and equitable financing to educational priorities, and by all donors, established and new, to provide additional support. Furthermore, coordination, monitoring and evaluation are required at the global and country level to ensure that all funding, including donor funds, are used efficiently and effectively, and with measurable outcomes and impacts for individuals and societies.

Target 9: *All countries progress towards allocating 6% of their GNP to education and 20% of their government budget to education, prioritizing groups most in need.*

Target 10: *All donors progress towards allocating at least 20% of their ODA or its equivalent to education, prioritizing countries and groups most in need.*

OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE POST-2015 EDUCATION AGENDA

16. The post-2015 education agenda should be of universal relevance and hold all countries accountable. It must enable every country to realize its own ambition for education. As countries have different education priorities, the post-2015 education agenda needs to be flexible enough to cater for this diversity, while also being adaptable to evolving situations within countries. Lessons learned both from EFA and from the MDGs revealed that global targets are only effectively executed when they are locally-owned – embedded in national plans as national targets. This is an important lesson for the new framework.

17. In order to strike a balance between the need for globally comparable and measureable targets and their national adaptability, global targets should be set at a level that can be measured with comparable indicators across nations, while, at the same time, making appropriate provision to allow for specific target-setting and indicator development at national level to take into account diverse national priorities and contexts.

18. One possible approach which requires further discussion could be that some targets may be phrased in terms of ensuring that basic minimum standards are met by all, irrespective of context, while others may be phrased in terms of a global ambition for improvement, with more specific and tailored targets defined at the national level. Each government could choose an appropriate level of ambition for each target, above a minimum level, taking account of its starting point, its capacity and the resources it can expect to command. The indicators that track the targets should be disaggregated in many different ways to ensure no one is left behind.

19. The global education agenda should include a specific and detailed “framework for action” which would guide countries in operationalizing the education agenda at the national level so as to reflect and respond to diverse social, economic and cultural contexts in national target-setting and indicator development, taking into account each country’s national education development plan and strategy. The exact format of this framework for action will be defined in consultation with Member States and other stakeholders in the coming months.

20. Monitoring and accountability mechanisms should be country-driven with UNESCO supporting Member States to develop institutional capacities towards that purpose, and in a way that national and sub-national systems develop and provide comparable information and indicators. Subregional and regional networks of monitoring should be set up, including a mechanism for peer review on progress made among countries. At the same time, regular and independent monitoring to track progress is also fundamental for which present global monitoring mechanisms such as the *EFA Global Monitoring Report* should be maintained, with regular opportunities to discuss results at a high political level.

Next steps

21. UNESCO will continue to support the Member States to develop a global post-2015 education agenda. The Organization will facilitate debate between Member States, provide evidence and clarify concepts. The consultation process, facilitated by UNESCO, will be aligned with the ongoing global debates at United Nations level and will ensure that these are informed by the outcomes of the consultations on the future education agenda. In order to ensure that the future education agenda is fully reflected and aligned with the global post-2015 development agenda, it is necessary to rapidly agree on a preliminary proposal which will contribute to the United Nations-led consultations on the broader development agenda, while leaving room for further adjustments. Such a proposal would facilitate Member States' participation in and contributions to intergovernmental consultations on the global post-2015 development agenda framework, to ensure that it has a strong education component.

22. Further consultations include the 2014 Global EFA Meeting (Oman, May 2014) and a series of regional ministerial conferences planned for the second half of 2014 to review EFA progress, to build a regional position, develop recommendations for the future education agenda and for the related Framework for Action. These documents will be submitted to the World Education Forum 2015 (Republic of Korea, May 2015) which aims at adopting an agreed position on education to be promoted as part of the global development agenda to be finalized in the United Nations Summit in New York in September 2015.

PROPOSED DECISION

23. In the light of the above, the Executive Board may wish to take the following decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Having examined document 194 EX/6,
2. Recalling 37 C/Resolution 11, which stipulated that the post-2015 education agenda should strive to ensure completion of the goals set out in the EFA framework and be relevant to all countries, while providing flexibility to cater to the education priorities of each country with respect to their diversity of situations,
3. Endorses the proposed overarching global education goal "Ensure equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030" which is in line with Member States' commitment to promote an overarching goal on education based on the principles of access, equity and quality in the perspective of lifelong learning, as expressed in 37 C/Resolution 11;
4. Agrees that the proposed priority areas be promoted in the post-2015 education agenda, notably: basic education; post-basic and tertiary education; youth and adult literacy; skills for work and life; quality and relevant teaching and learning; and financing, and encourages the Director-General to continue to consult Member States in refining the proposed targets and identifying corresponding indicators;
5. Requests the Director-General to transmit:
 - (a) this position paper, the decisions of the Executive Board thereon and the comments of the EFA Steering Committee to the 2014 Global EFA Meeting (Oman, May 2014) for its review and decision thereon;
 - (b) this position paper, appropriately reflecting the outcomes of the 2014 Global EFA Meeting through the United Nations Secretary-General to the Open Working

Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations General Assembly for its consideration in the development of the post-2015 agenda;

- (c) the document mentioned in Article 5.b to all Member States for their consideration, support and use as a reference document in their preparations for the global and regional consultations on the post-2015 education agenda, leading up to the World Education Forum 2015 (Republic of Korea) with a view to drawing up and promoting a common position on education as part of the post-2015 development agenda;
6. Invites the Director-General to inform the Executive Board on the progress made at its 195th session.

ANNEX

PROPOSED OVERARCHING GOAL AND LIST OF TARGETS

Overarching goal

Ensure equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030

Target 1: *All children participate in and complete a full cycle of free, compulsory and continuous quality basic education of at least 10 years, including one year of pre-primary education, leading to relevant and measurable learning outcomes based on national standards.*

Target 2: *Increase transition to and completion of quality upper secondary education by x %, with all graduates demonstrating relevant learning outcomes based on national standards.*

Target 3: *Tertiary education systems are expanded to allow qualified learners to access and complete studies leading to a certificate, diploma or degree.*

Target 4: *All youth and adults achieve literacy, numeracy and other basic skills at a proficiency level necessary to fully participate in a given society and for further learning.*

Target 5: *Increase by x % the proportion of youth (15-24 years) with relevant and recognized knowledge and skills, including professional, technical and vocational to access decent work.*

Target 6: *Increase by x % participation in continuing adult education and training programmes, with recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning.*

Target 7: *Close the teachers' gap by recruiting adequate numbers of teachers who are well-trained, meet national standards and can effectively deliver relevant content, with emphasis on gender balance.*

Target 8: *All youth (15-24 years) people and adults have opportunities to acquire – supported by safe, gender-responsive, inclusive learning environments – relevant knowledge and skills to ensure their personal fulfilment, contribute to peace and an equitable and sustainable world.*

Target 9: *All countries progress towards allocating 6% of their GNP to education and 20% of their government budget to education, prioritizing groups most in need.*

Target 10: *All donors progress towards allocating at least 20% of their ODA or its equivalent to education, prioritizing countries and groups most in need.*