

Forum: UNESCO

Issue: The Question of Improving the School System in Order to Guarantee Widespread Access to Education Worldwide

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“When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful.”

Malala Yousafzai

“A real leader uses every issue, no matter how serious and sensitive, to ensure that at the end of the debate we should emerge stronger and more united than ever before.”

Unknown

INTRODUCTION

Education around the world is vastly different, from strict schooling systems in China to interactive learning in Finland. This all demonstrates just how divergent school systems are around the world. However, this isn't that much of an issue when you think about it through the eyes of children in developing countries, who might not have the opportunity to attend school and receive an education at all.

The right to education has been recognised as a human right in many international conventions, one of which is the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which recognises the right to free and compulsory primary education for all; an obligation to develop secondary education to be accessible to all, focusing on the progressive introduction of free secondary education; and an obligation to develop equitable access to higher education, again by the progressive introduction of free higher education. This has already been done in certain countries, for example Slovenia.

However, this problem continues to exist in the world and the lack of education greatly impedes the social and economic development of countries, especially developing ones. Additionally, lack of education leads to illiteracy and lower employment rates, as well as higher chances of epidemics and contracting illnesses and diseases, especially sexually transmitted ones such as AIDS or HIV.

Today, education remains an inaccessible right for millions of children around the world. More than 72 million children of primary education age are not in school and 759 million adults are illiterate and do not have the awareness necessary to improve both their living conditions and those of their children.

DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Aggregate – a whole formed by combining several separate elements.

Education – the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university.

Educational poverty – a child in education for less than 4 years.

Extreme educational poverty – a child in education for less than 2 years.

Marginalisation – the treatment of a person, group, or concept as insignificant or peripheral.

School – any institution at which instruction is given in a particular discipline.

School system – the aggregate of the public schools of an area under the administration of an executive officer who represents and is responsible to the board of education for that area.

Widespread – found or distributed over a large area or number of people.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

CAUSES

When speaking about education and lack thereof, we must differentiate causes. The primary causes are **marginalisation**, **poverty** and the **financial deficit of developing countries**. As a result, more than 72 million children around the world remain unschooled.

When speaking of marginalisation, we focus on the problem of persisting inequality that originates in sex, health and cultural identity (including ethnic origin, language or religion). This problem exists in developing and developed countries alike, and leads to children finding themselves on the margins of the education system. Going forward, children cannot benefit from learning, as they do not have access to basic education, which is a vital part of their intellectual and social development.

Poverty is another problem, as many parents are unemployed, ill or illiterate, which leads to many children from disadvantaged backgrounds dropping out of school in order to work and provide support for the family. Worse yet, children from such backgrounds may be forced to abandon their education due to health problems related to malnutrition. All this multiplies the risk of non-schooling and dropping out by two.

Additionally, there is a vast difference in education and schooling depending on finance and financial deficit. Most developing or, better yet, emerging countries do not appropriate the financial resources necessary to create schools, provide schooling materials, nor do they recruit and train teachers. Existing funds pledged by the international community are generally not sufficient to allow countries to establish educational systems for all children. This is why universal primary education is a major issue for many countries. However, even when funds are sizeable enough to ensure the establishment of schools, the lack of resources has an effect on the quality of teaching (including oversized classes and improperly trained teachers). Considering all of this, the overflow leads to the teaching of children of different educational levels together, and prevents each individual child from benefitting, as their education is not adapted to their needs and abilities. Younger children cannot follow the more demanding curriculum and older children do not benefit from already mastered skills. As a result, the drop-out rate and education failure remain high.

MOST AFFECTED REGIONS

The most affected area, in terms of a lack of education is sub-Saharan Africa, with over 32 million children of primary school age remaining uneducated. Moreover, more than half of the children there experience educational poverty, receiving an education for fewer than 4 years. In certain countries, such as Somalia and Burkina Faso, children even experience extreme educational poverty, with more than 50% of children receiving an education for a period shorter than 2 years

Other most affected areas include Central and Eastern Asia, as well as the Pacific, with more than 27 million uneducated children, not to mention their concern regarding educational poverty and extreme educational poverty.

INEQUALITY BETWEEN GIRLS AND BOYS

As mentioned before, persisting inequality is one of the primary causes for lack of education. Perhaps one of the most common inequalities originates in sex. This is due to the role the female sex has played in history. As women were always perceived as the weaker sex due to birthing and social roles developed in regard to that, men worked and women raised the children. In developing countries, this is still present as women or, better yet, girls are prohibited from the right to education. Today, it is girls who have the least access to education and who make up more than 54% of the non-schooled population in the world.

This problem occurs most frequently in the Arab states, central Asia and Southern and Western Asia, where cultures and traditions consist of the privileged treatment of males. This again means girls are destined to work in the family home and boys are entitled to receive an education.

However, this problem is present almost everywhere around the world, for example in sub-Saharan Africa, where 12 million girls are at risk of never receiving an education, or in Yemen, where more than 80% of girls will never have the opportunity to go to school. Worse yet, certain countries such as Afghanistan and Somalia are taking no steps to reduce the gap between schooled girls and boys. And whilst many developing countries congratulate themselves on dramatically reducing inequality between girls and boys in education, a lot of effort still must be put into this issue in order to achieve universal primary education.

STATISTICS

These statistics were gathered by DoSomething.org, and are only an introduction to understanding the scale of the problem. This is why you are further encouraged to look up more statistics and graphs on the issue, which are linked at the end of this chair report.

As of 2012, 31 million primary school pupils worldwide dropped out of school. An additional 32 million repeated a grade.

In the sub-Saharan region, 11.07 million children leave school before completing their primary education. In South and West Asia, that number reaches 13.54 million.

While girls are less likely to begin school, boys are more likely to repeat grades or drop out altogether.

According to UNESCO, 61 million primary school-age children were not enrolled in school in 2010. Of these children, 47% were never expected to enter school, 26% attended school but left, and the remaining 27% are expected to attend school in the future.

Children living in a rural environment are twice as likely to be out of school than urban children. Additionally, children from the wealthiest 20% of the population are 4 times more likely to be in school than the poorest 20%.

In developing, low-income countries, every additional year of education can increase a person's future income by an average of 10%.

Women who are less educated have more children, on average 2.5 over the course of their lifetime, compared to more educated women, on average 1.7 over the course of their lifetime.

Women with a primary school education are 13% more likely to know that condoms can reduce their risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. An education can help decrease the spreading of this virus by promoting safer sexual practices.

53% of the world's out-of-school children are girls and 2/3 of the illiterate population of the world are women.

Education empowers women to make healthy decisions about their lives. For example, women in Mali with a secondary level education or higher have an average of 3 children, while those with no education have an average of 7.

The youth literacy rates in South America and Europe are among the highest, with 90-100% literacy. The African continent, however, has areas with less than 50% literacy among children ages 18 and under.

RELEVANT UN DECLARATIONS AND UNESCO MOVEMENTS

Here are just a few recent declarations and movements that focus on future development of the topic. Please keep in mind that there are many more from the past, however, these are the key ones to understanding how the Incheon declaration came to be and what a vital role this topic plays in the UN. Noting this, you are encouraged to look up all other past treaties and declarations for a broader understanding on what has already been implemented and everything that is being violated.

Sustainable Development Goal 4 is the fourth goal in the UN Sustainable Development topic; the goal is to provide **quality education**.

Education For All (EFA) is a global movement led by UNESCO, which aimed to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015. The continuation of the EFA movement is the **Incheon declaration**, which is a declaration on education adopted at the World Education Forum in Incheon, South Korea on 15 May 2015.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

When speaking of solutions, we must take into account all the different causes for lack of education worldwide, and the cultures behind all of this. By working with different organisations together on a common issue, we can achieve far greater results than when tackling the issue alone.

Ideally, all countries would respect the right to education and work with the UN on Sustainable Development Goal 4, as well as sanction those who do not respect the right to education and past treaties and declarations.

Education for adults should also be tackled; this would generally help with literacy rates and sex education, which would have an immediate effect on economic growth and social development. This is already happening on a smaller scale in refugee camps, where women who have previously not received an education are being taught by volunteers in order to ensure a higher possibility of employment in their host countries. Of course, this is a mere example of a possible solution, as we are tackling the issue of access to education worldwide and not strictly just refugee camps.

Taking everything into account, any solution presented should note that education is of paramount importance and should be applicable to all situations, tackle all causes and guarantee widespread access to education worldwide.

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

Using this chair report as a guide to your further research, I am confident you will all find solutions to this problem, with regard to your delegation. Please note that education is a must for our future and development and is the key to raising generations of critical thinkers.

Imagine a world without education... now realise that for some people, children and adults, this is the reality of their situation. Regardless of the fact that we are in the 21st century, there are still parts of the world where education is not a must, but an if.

I look forward to seeing you all in Cividale!

USEFUL LINKS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

- <https://www.savethechildren.org.nz/the-issues/education/>
- <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-21st-century>

INCHEON DECLARATION

- <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002456/245656E.pdf>

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4

- <https://en.unesco.org/node/265600>
- <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>

EDUCATION STATISTICS

- <http://www.education-inequalities.org/>
- <https://ourworldindata.org/global-rise-of-education>
- <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/education/>
- <https://ourworldindata.org/primary-and-secondary-education>
- https://books.google.si/books?id=rz0rAAAAYAAJ&lpg=PA22&ots=jpG_mG-bq&dq=Widespread%20Access%20to%20Education%20Worldwide&hl=sl&pg=PR1#v=onepage&q&f=false

SOURCES USED FOR WRITTING THIS CHAIR REPORT

- <https://www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-education-around-world>
- <https://www.humanium.org/en/right-to-education/>