

Network for international policies and cooperation in education and training
Réseau sur les politiques et la coopération internationales en éducation et en formation



Global Governance of the Draft SDG Education Goal and its Targets Critical Challenges for both North and South

World Education Forum, NORRAG Side event
20th May 2015, 13.00-14.15

This side-event looks critically at both the global and national governance of the proposed Education Goal and its ten Targets, outlined in the Framework for Action for Education 2030.

The session is organised by NORRAG, in partnership with the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and the Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University (BU-IED).

Moderator: Kenneth King, University of Edinburgh and NORRAG

Panellists:

Rasheda Choudhury, CAMPE, GCE, Dhaka: Monitoring, compliance and governance of the proposed Education SDG and its Targets: National and international civil society perspectives.

Manzoor Ahmed, BRAC University, Dhaka: Education governance - global and national: How can it fit the purpose?

Michel Carton, NORRAG, Geneva: Localizing the targets of the proposed Education SDG: What can we learn from the decentralization policies since the 90s?

Valerie Liechti, Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), Bern: A bilateral agency's perspective on the proposed global Education goal and its Targets, and their monitoring process.

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First, there is a strong desire to ensure that both the overarching Goal and its Targets do not just relate to the South. Over the past 15 years, it has been widely assumed that the six EFA Dakar Goals and the MDGs were primarily relevant 'for the South'. In developing the proposed Education SDG over the last three years, therefore, there has been a strong interest in ensuring that the Goal and its Education Targets are not only seen as relevant to low and lower middle income countries. Hence some of the target text is about universal application e.g.: 'ensure that **all** girls and boys...'

However, other target text is about percentages of adults or young people. For instance, 'increase by **x%** the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills...' It may be assumed that these percentages will need to be set nationally, or perhaps regionally. Importantly, the targets to be set nationally include the very areas that were least achieved in the last 15 years: adult literacy, relevant skills development, provision of sufficient teachers.

Of the ten targets discussed in the Framework for Action, six are explicitly stated to be for universal application, and four are intended to have percentages set nationally. It is important to note in this connection that the Framework for Action has adopted the Targets from the Open Working Group (OWG) and not those set in the Muscat Agreement. These two sets of Targets are far from being identical.

Second, and connected to what has just been mentioned, there is some qualification about the notion of universal application in respect of countries in the South. Rather, it has been claimed that in some situations there should be 'Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)'. Does this imply that there are some dimensions of any Framework Agreement which will be understood differently in North and South? For instance, are the 'international benchmarks' for allocating 4% to 6% of GDP to education and of 15% to 20% of public expenditure to education to be applied differently in developed and developing countries? Equally, are the recommendations about external financing not perceived to be different for the DAC donors, which are urged to reach 0.7% of GNI, and countries involved in South-South Cooperation? In the Framework for Action, only the BRICS countries are mentioned but only as **possible** sources of funding for education.

Third, the Global Governance of the proposed Education Goal and its Targets will require agreement amongst countries in three areas: i) Rules to be respected/goals to be attained to

address common concerns; ii) Mechanisms to track progress; and iii) Measure to stimulate/enforce those who ratify the agreement to meet their obligations. The Framework for Action proposes that a new Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR) will be the 'prime instrument' to help governments monitor their progress towards achieving the SDG targets. The Framework also has high expectations about a 'data revolution' that should strengthen the collection and analysis of data.

However, the mechanisms for ensuring the implementation of the ambitious Education SDG targets are not yet in place. The Framework for Action talks optimistically of the role of governments, regional authorities, the UN, the WEF co-convenors, and of the Global Partnership for Education in developing 'an appropriate global coordination mechanism'. But there is no discussion of how to secure compliance with the targets.

Equally, there is no discussion of the relationship between the many different, current **national** targets for education and the proposed SDG targets. When the latter are framed as universal and are more ambitious than the former, which prevail? Where the latter are framed in percentage terms for national decision-making, may that percentage not become the same as the national targets? Since almost half of the SDG targets are to be set nationally, and include targets that were poorly achieved with the EFA goals, will this not mean that the WEF and the proposed SDG targets will have little impact on such critical areas as adult illiteracy?