



Chapter 5:

UNDERSTANDING THE SDGs

| Quality Education

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Defining the term

According to the UN, Sustainable Development Goal number 4, Quality Education, can be defined as follows:

Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

In the globalized world we know, everything starts with education. Only education can provide people with the tools to have a satisfying and, above all, sustainable life. Quality education also means obtaining new skills and discovering new possibilities for development without compromising the future of the next generations.

Quality education is not only aimed, as one might simplistically think, at the younger generation or only at developing countries. The economies of the most developed countries are experiencing dramatic changes in a relatively short time. These changes are leading to obvious consequences on the labor market: it is increasingly evident that advanced economies need highly specialized workers as, for the same skills, production is easily relocated to countries where labor costs are lower.

Quality education objectives

But what are the learning objectives fixed for Agenda 2030? UNESCO groups these objectives into three areas:

- Cognitive learning objectives include the knowledge and skills needed to better understand the SDGs and the barriers to achieving them.
- Socio-emotional learning objectives: it is about the social skills to be possessed in order to collaborate and promote the SDGs as a tool for common and personal development.
- Behavioral learning objectives which refer to concrete actions to be taken.
- Specifically for the objective of Quality Education SDG, the learning objectives are as follows:

Cognitive learning objectives:

- The learner understands the important role of education and lifelong learning opportunities for all (formal, non-formal and informal learning) as main drivers of sustainable development, for improving people's lives and in achieving the SDGs.
- The learner understands education as a public good, a global common good, a fundamental human right and a basis for guaranteeing the realization of other rights.
- The learner knows about inequality in access to and attainment of education, particularly between girls and boys and in rural areas, and about reasons for a lack of equitable access to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities.
- The learner understands the important role of culture in achieving sustainability.
- The learner understands that education can help create a more sustainable, equitable and peaceful world.



Socio-emotional learning objectives:

- The learner is able to raise awareness of the importance of quality education for all, a humanistic and holistic approach to education, ESD and related approaches.
- The learner is able through participatory methods to motivate and empower others to demand and use educational opportunities.
- The learner is able to recognize the intrinsic value of education and to analyze and identify their own learning needs in their personal development.
- The learner is able to recognize the importance of their own skills for improving their life, in particular for employment and entrepreneurship.
- The learner is able to engage personally with ESD.
- Behavioral learning objectives:
 - The learner is able to contribute to facilitating and implementing quality education for all, ESD and related approaches at different levels.
 - The learner is able to promote gender equality in education.
 - The learner is able to publicly demand and support the development of policies promoting free, equitable and quality education for all, ESD and related approaches as well as aiming at safe, accessible and inclusive educational facilities.
 - The learner is able to promote the empowerment of young people.
 - The learner is able to use all opportunities for their own education throughout their life, and to apply the acquired knowledge in everyday situations to promote sustainable development.

Quality education targets

The plan developed by the UN assumes that by the 2030 we will jointly achieve ten different targets concerning quality education. These targets can serve as guidelines for us as educators, activists, and NGO workers as they give us directions that can help us set up priorities in our organization when it comes to working towards promoting access to quality education. These targets are defined as follows:

1. Free primary and secondary education
Ensuring that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.
2. Equal access to quality pre-primary education
Ensuring that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.
3. Equal access to affordable technical, vocational and higher education
Ensuring equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.
4. Increase the number of people with relevant skills for financial success
Substantially increasing the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.
5. Eliminate all discrimination in education
Eliminating gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.
6. Universal literacy and numeracy
Ensuring that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.
7. Education for sustainable development and global citizenship
Ensuring that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.
8. Build and upgrade inclusive and safe schools
Building and upgrading education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.
9. Expand higher education scholarships for developing countries
Substantially expanding globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programs, in developed countries and other developing countries.
10. Increase the supply of qualified teachers in developing countries
Substantially increasing the supply of qualified teachers, including through international co-operation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states.



Best practices from the world

- **Barefoot College International**
Barefoot College International is a one-of-a-kind example: the work of this NGO targets women and girls from marginalized communities around the world. Their aim is to provide women with the skills and knowledge to improve the quality of life in their communities. Educating women means ensuring that communities have long term climate, economic and social resilience.
- **PlanetRead – Literacy for a billion**
This NGO uses the innovation of Same Language Subtitling (SLS) to provide as many people as possible with the opportunity to learn to read in the native language or any other language of interest. The intention is to combine new video and streaming technologies with the opportunity to learn to read. PlanetRead along with the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad have implemented and published several multi-year TV pilot studies of SLS in eight Indian languages (2002-present).
- **World's Largest Lesson**
World's Largest Lesson is a programme by Project Everyone in partnership with UNICEF. They produce innovative tools for educators and young people to build skills and motivation to take action for SDGs. Their work is available in over 30 languages and it is open source. In 2019 they reached 17.9 million children located in over 160 countries.

Additional materials

OECD ONLINE ASSESSMENT TOOL⁴

Education & Skills Online is an assessment tool designed to provide individual-level results that are linked to the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) measures of literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments. Education & Skills Online has been developed as an assessment relevant to youth and adults of all ages. Institutions, organizations, or local governments can use the online tool to assess the skills of a particular population with the goal of providing training or for research purposes. The potential users of this tool are:

- Organizations providing adult literacy and numeracy training that wish to have information that can help diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of learners and evaluate the results of training against national and international benchmarks
- Educational institutions such as universities, vocational education and training centers that can use Education & Skills Online as a diagnostic tool for incoming students to help determine their need for literacy/numeracy courses
- Researchers who would like to have access to an assessment that is benchmarked to PIAAC results
- Government organisations interested in assessing the learning needs of unemployed adults, at risk groups or economically disadvantaged adults
- Public or private companies that want to use the results to help them identify the training needs related to literacy and numeracy for their workforce.

Task 1: The girl who fought for education

Malala Yousafzai is an activist, a blogger, and a Nobel Peace Prize laureate. At the age of 13 she became famous because, thanks to her blog, started to fight against Taliban regime. She fought and still fights for the right of women and children to study, which was forbidden by the Taliban. She also officially supports the SDG 4. Malala is an inspiration to thousands of students around the world.

- Learn more about the story of Malala Yousafzai and reflect on how you can draw inspiration from it
- Look for similar stories from the world and focus on what is different and what is similar.
- Pay attention to the fact that activism must be sustainable as well and therefore suitable for the society it intends to change
- Quality education is not only about young people: there are many examples of adult education around the world. This approach makes it possible to quickly improve conditions for communities that do not have access to schools or training centers. Can you find any similar practices?
- After using the sources as inspiration, reflect with your colleagues on how your organization can help guarantee the right to education in the countries where it is active.

⁴ <https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/onlineassessment/>

Task 2: Reflections on education and employment

As we have seen, the most developed economies are constantly evolving. Workers also need continuous training and to become highly specialized. So many stories tell of mass layoffs due to the lack of specialization of workers.

Here is a task based on reflection you can do:

- Create a journal (digital or analog, you can use a notebook or a calendar) where you will be writing down your reflections
- Week 1: Collect newspaper articles from your country about layoffs of unskilled workers
- Week 2: Collect newspaper articles from around the world about layoffs of unskilled workers
- Week 3: Focus on the similarities you found in the stories you collected. Reflect on how workers and companies could have acted to avoid crises
- Week 4: reflect on how your NGO can help workers learn new skills to spend in the world of work

Task 3: From Challenge to Solution: Analyzing SDG 4 Education Targets

1. Research and choose one of the specific targets under SDG 4 that you find particularly relevant for your work with adults at risk of exclusion. Some examples could include:
 - Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
 - Substantially increasing the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
 - Eliminating gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations
2. Reflect on the following questions:
 - What are the key challenges that prevent the target from being achieved?
 - What are some possible solutions to these challenges?
 - What role can education play in achieving this target?
3. Write a short essay or create a visual representation (such as a poster or infographic) that summarizes your research and reflections on the specific target you have chosen. Share your work with your colleagues and discuss how your findings can be used for improving the educational projects you offer to adults at risk of exclusion.

Workshop: Understanding quality education

Objectives:

- Recognizing the importance of Quality Education
- Identifying alternative methods of Quality Education
- Developing strategies for promoting Quality Education for all

Materials needed:

- Handouts
- Flipchart
- Papers and markers

Step by step instructions:

1. Introduction (20 min)
 - Present an overview of the SDG on Quality Education, its goals, targets and indicators
 - Discuss why quality education is important and how it can contribute to a better future for individuals and society as a whole
 - Use real-life examples to illustrate the impact of quality education on individuals and communities (see Handout 1)
2. Barriers to Quality Education (30 min)
 - Ask the participants to identify the barriers they have faced in accessing quality education
 - Discuss the common barriers to quality education, such as poverty, gender, disability, conflict, and lack of resources
 - Encourage the participants to share their own experiences and perspectives on the topic
3. Planning the community action (45 min)
 - Divide the participants into small groups and ask them to develop an action plan for improving the quality of education in their communities
 - Provide them with a template or guiding questions to help them structure their plan (see Handout 2)
 - Ask each group to present their plan and facilitate a discussion on the feasibility and effectiveness of their ideas
4. Final reflection (10 min)
 5. Summarize the key points of the workshop and thank the participants for their engagement
 6. Emphasize the importance of taking action to improve the quality of education in their communities

Handout 1: Real-life examples to illustrate the impact of quality education on individuals and communities

Malala Yousafzai

Malala is a Pakistani activist for female education and the youngest Nobel Prize laureate. She began advocating for girls' education at a young age, and her activism gained international attention when she was shot in the head by the Taliban in 2012. Despite the attack, Malala continued to speak out for education and has since founded the Malala Fund, which supports girls' education initiatives around the world.

South Korea

In the 1960s, South Korea was a poor country with low levels of education. However, the government invested heavily in education, including teacher training and curriculum development, and made education free and compulsory for all children. As a result, the literacy rate in South Korea rose from 22% in 1945 to 97% in 2017, and the country became one of the world's leaders in science and technology.

Finland

Finland has consistently been ranked as one of the countries with the best education systems in the world. The Finnish education system is characterized by a strong emphasis on equity and equality, teacher autonomy and professionalism, and a holistic approach to education. Finnish students consistently perform well on international tests, and the country has a high level of social and economic well-being.

Women in Afghanistan

Before the fall of the Taliban in 2001, women in Afghanistan were not allowed to attend school or work outside the home. Since then, there has been significant progress in girls' education, with millions of girls attending school and thousands of female teachers being trained. This has had a positive impact on women's empowerment and economic development in the country.

Handout 2: Guiding questions to help structure the participants' action plan for improving the quality of education in their communities

Identify the problem

- What is the specific issue related to quality education that you want to address in your community?
- Why is it important to address this issue?

Set a goal

- What is your desired outcome or goal for improving the quality of education in your community?
- What do you hope to achieve?

Develop a strategy

- What specific actions can you take to achieve your goal?
- Who will be involved in implementing these actions?
- What resources (e.g. funding, equipment, expertise) will you need?

Define the timeline

- What is the timeline for implementing your strategy?
- What are the key milestones and deadlines?
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Assess the impact

- How will you measure the impact of your actions on improving the quality of education in your community?
- What indicators will you use?

Plan for sustainability

- How will you ensure that your actions have a long-term impact on improving the quality of education in your community?
- How will you engage and involve the community in sustaining your efforts?