

**Forum: Action Paper II (AP2)**

**Issue: Quality education for all**

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**Position: Co-Heads**

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## INTRODUCTION

According to an estimate by the Global Education Monitoring Report and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics, around 244 million children and youth between the ages of 6 to 18 did not attend a school-like environment in 2021<sup>1</sup>. That number is equivalent to the population of the fifth largest country in the world by citizens, Pakistan, and is triple that of Germany. This shows that inaccessibility and inequality remain serious problems for our global community, regardless of the many previous attempts to solve them. But for one to understand the severity of marginalization and lack of quality education, one must familiarize themselves with the meaning of education itself.

Education refers to the transmission of societal values, knowledge, and wisdom to an individual by methods of teaching in school or school-like environments. It is comparable to what social scientists call socialization or enculturation. The guideline for quality education is free primary school education, availability of secondary school/technical training for all, and accessibility of higher education.

Furthermore, fundamental education should be offered to those who missed primary schooling. A person's character and views may be developed and shaped significantly via education. It gives people the necessary information and critical thinking, for them to be able to exercise their other human rights easier. People can prosper in the work market by obtaining the knowledge and skills they need through schooling. This raises their earning capacity and lessens their need for government assistance. By giving kids the chance to develop the skills they need to thrive in life, education also contributes to ending the never-ending cycle of poverty.

Additionally, education can enhance health outcomes by supporting healthy lives and habits. Social inequality can be reduced with the use of education. People who pursue education gain exposure to a variety of viewpoints and ideas as well as a larger perspective on the world. This knowledge can assist in removing obstacles and lessen prejudice based on socioeconomic

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<sup>1</sup> "UNESCO Data Estimates Millions of Children across the World Are out of School." *European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education*, [www.european-agency.org/news/unesco-out-of-school-estimates#:~:text=UNESCO%20data%20estimates%20millions%20of%20children%20across%20the%20world%20are%20out%20of%20school](http://www.european-agency.org/news/unesco-out-of-school-estimates#:~:text=UNESCO%20data%20estimates%20millions%20of%20children%20across%20the%20world%20are%20out%20of%20school).

class, gender, race, and religion. People are more inclined to take part in social and political activism as they have more education, which can help decrease social disparity.

Because educated workers are more proficient at occupations requiring literacy and critical thinking, a nation's economy is more productive, as the percentage of educated workers rises. In addition to encouraging entrepreneurship and technological advancements, education frequently increases creativity. These all contribute to increased output and economic growth.

Moreover, education empowers women. It reduces societal prejudices regarding gender and thereby improves the acceptance of women in positions of higher income and power. The growing gap between wealthy and poverty-stricken people, that we now experience as a result of the economic crisis, can be fixed through education.

When looking deeper into almost all issues and problems currently plaguing the world we realize, that they all have roots in the early stages of people's lives and thus can be prevented and solved through quality education for all. Since education is so important in determining a person's moral ideals, beliefs, and behavior, it is closely related to ethics, the theme of this year's conference. Through education, people acquire the skills and understanding needed to resolve ethical challenges and make moral decisions. Education also encourages social responsibility, empathy, and respect, fostering ethical conduct and advancing a just and caring society.

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### Equality

Equality in education means making sure all individuals have equal opportunities, access, and treatment within the system, regardless of their background.<sup>2</sup>

### Marginalization

Marginalization in education refers to the exclusion, disadvantage, or limited participation of certain groups of people within the educational system, leading to unequal opportunities.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Cambridge Dictionary. "EQUALITY | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary." *Cambridge.org*, 16 Oct. 2019, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/equality>

<sup>3</sup> "Marginalization Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com." *Oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com*, 2022, [www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/marginalization?q=marginalization](http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/marginalization?q=marginalization).

## Discrimination

In the context of education, discrimination is the unjust or biased treatment of individuals or groups within the educational system based on attributes like race, gender, socioeconomic status, or disability, which results in unjust opportunities, resources, or treatment.<sup>4</sup>

## Inclusivity

Inclusivity in education refers to fostering a climate in which every person, regardless of their past experiences, skills, or features, is appreciated, respected, and given an equal opportunity and sufficient help to succeed in the educational system.<sup>5</sup>

## Quality education

Quality education is defined as a thorough and effective learning experience that provides individuals with the knowledge, skills, and competences they need to thrive in life. It includes a holistic approach that includes qualified instructors, relevant materials, welcoming learning settings, appropriate curriculum, and chances for critical thinking, creativity, and personal growth.<sup>6</sup>

## Disparity

Education disparity is the term used to describe the unequal distribution or access to educational resources, opportunities, and outcomes among various groups or individuals, frequently leading to educational gaps or imbalances.<sup>7</sup>

## Common school's movement

A historical reform effort in the United States during the 19th century called "common schools" sought to create a system of publicly funded and accessible schools for all children, regardless of their social status. In order to promote social cohesiveness, democracy, and equal opportunity for all citizens, it pushed the idea of offering a common education.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Cambridge Dictionary. "DISCRIMINATION | MEANING in the Cambridge English Dictionary." *Cambridge.org*, 2019, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/discrimination>

<sup>5</sup> "INCLUSIVITY | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary." *Cambridge.org*, 2019, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/inclusivity>

<sup>6</sup> Team Leverage Edu. "What Is Quality Education?" *Leverage Edu*, 18 May 2021, [www.leverageedu.com/blog/quality-education/](http://www.leverageedu.com/blog/quality-education/)

<sup>7</sup> "Disparity." *Dictionary.cambridge.org*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/disparity>

<sup>8</sup> "Education Reform in Antebellum America | AP US History Study Guide from the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History." *www.gilderlehrman.org*, 29 July 2012, <https://ap.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/first-age-reform/essays/education-reform-antebellum-america#:~:text=The%20> Accessed 9 July 2023.

## Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

A list of 17 worldwide objectives known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the United Nations in 2015. They offer a framework for solving the most urgent social, economic, and environmental issues facing the planet. The SDGs include a wide range of topics, with the overriding goal of building a more sustainable and equitable world by 2030, including the eradication of poverty, promotion of high-quality education, gender equality, climate action, sustainable cities, and responsible consumption. <sup>9</sup>

## Student-based education system

An approach that puts the learner at the core of the educational process. It places a strong emphasis on tailoring training and learning experiences to match each student's unique requirements, interests, and talents. Personalized learning, critical thinking, problem-solving, and cooperation are the main teaching focuses of a system of education that is centered on the needs of the students. The intention is to increase students' motivation, engagement, and comprehension of the topic at hand. <sup>10</sup>

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### History of education

#### Prehistoric, Primitive cultures and early civilizations

In prehistoric cultures, learning took place mostly informally through direct observation, imitation, and practical experience. Younger community members observed and participated in daily tasks including hunting, collecting, manufacturing tools, and creating art in order to learn from elder members and survive. Knowledge and cultural traditions were passed down orally from one generation to the next, considering that no written system existed yet. Petroglyphs and prehistoric cave art showed images from everyday life as well as hunting tactics and spiritual beliefs; these ancient artworks may have been used as a form of education. It is significant to remember that prehistoric societies' educational techniques differed according to factors like geography, climate, resource availability, and cultural traditions.

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<sup>9</sup> UNDP. "Sustainable Development Goals." *Sustainable Development Goals*, United Nations, 2022, [www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals](http://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals).

<sup>10</sup> Sudderth, Anna. "What Is Student-Centered Learning and Why Is It Important?" *XQ*, 5 Jan. 2022, <https://xgsuperschool.org/uncategorized/what-is-student-centered-learning/#:~:text=Defining%20Student%2DCentered%20Learning&text=In%20student%2Dcentered%20learning%2C%20students> Accessed 9 July 2023.

Depending on the particular culture and era, education in the early civilizations differed. Mesopotamian education was the primary domain of the aristocracy and included the earliest known form of writing. In ancient Egypt, mostly scribes had access to education, which served to prepare them for administrative positions. In Ancient Greece, education depended on the city-state of origin. In Athens, children focused on writing or music, while Sparta gave their youth a military education. The wealthy and privileged groups in ancient China were educated to reach social mobility. Moral principles, ethics, and social order were the central aspects of this upbringing. In the Maya civilization, youth mostly studied mathematics, astronomy, writing, and religious ceremonies.

### **Middle Ages**

From the fifth to the fifteenth century, the Catholic Church had a significant influence on education. The main educational institutions were monasteries and cathedral schools. Therefore, the focus of education was primarily on preparing students for religious service. Routine learning and repetition were the main tenets of education. Most of the people did not have access to formal education, which was primarily reserved for men. Additionally, the creation of contemporary educational systems was facilitated by changes in educational possibilities and curricula brought about by the growth of universities in the latter half of the Middle Ages.

### **Renaissance**

There was a resurgence of interest in ancient study, art, and literature throughout the Renaissance. The Middle Ages' predominantly religious emphasis on education gave way to a wider emphasis on human knowledge, critical thinking, and individual growth. Sons of nobles and the wealthy were among the elite who had easier access to a Renaissance education. There was little to no access to education for girls. Their education prioritized domestic skills above academic subjects.

Latin grammar schools, usually referred to as humanist schools, first appeared during the Renaissance. A wider spectrum of kids could receive a more formal education from these schools. Through the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, more people had access to affordable books, thus the process of learning became easier. The emphasis on critical thinking, humanistic values, and a comprehensive education during the Renaissance established the groundwork for the contemporary educational system and includes vital components of education today.

## 17th and 18th Centuries

Education in the 17th century varied widely based on one's region and social standing. The prevalent educational models were influenced by the widespread religious and philosophical viewpoints of the time. Boys from the upper and middle classes were mostly students at these schools. During the 17th century, universities played a vital role in education. Students obtained degrees in arts, law, medicine, or theology. Compared to boys, girls had significantly less access to education during the 17th century. Nonetheless, it is highly likely that girls from wealthy households received tutoring at home.

The 18th century saw an increase in the value of education for every class of society. Many nations began constructing public schools that were accessible to kids from all socioeconomic backgrounds. The value of reason and individuality in education were highlighted especially in this time. These theories of individualism, which were developed in the "Enlightenment", inspired educational reform by promoting a more pragmatic and thorough method of instruction.

In order to give poor kids access to education, charity schools were formed. They provided such kids with access to basic education, focusing on moral principles and practical skills. Education for females was still scarce, and the majority of what they learned in school were subjects that were deemed appropriate for their expected duties as mothers and wives. Universities remained significant educational hubs, providing degrees in a range of subject areas. The curriculum was expanded to cover topics including mathematics, modern languages, and natural sciences. Professional education grew more structured, with dedicated schools and specialized courses in professions such as law, medicine, and engineering.

## 19th and 20th Century

Education in the 19th and 20th centuries underwent significant changes and developments until 1990. Traditional educational methods persisted throughout the 19th century, especially in rural areas. Most schools were one-room structures where a single teacher taught students of varied ages and grade levels. During this time, the idea of public education became more popular. In certain nations, governments began constructing public schools and enforcing education laws. All children were to receive a foundational education, regardless of their social background.

Education underwent a substantial transformation as a result of the Industrial Revolution. To satisfy the demands of the workforce, industrialized cultures placed a higher focus on practical skills and vocational training. During the 19th century, various movements for educational reform emerged. In the next century, public education had

significantly expanded. Governments made investments on increasing the number of schools, recruiting qualified instructors, and offering free education to more people. The first public school emerged in Massachusetts, USA in 1820.

Through the “common schools’ movement”, many more followed. Students now had more access to secondary education. In the early 20th century, progressive education witnessed a rise in popularity. This method of education was more child-centered and focused on critical thinking and active learning. Special education programs were created as well to accommodate kids with disabilities. In several countries, various educational reforms were put into place. These changes sought to raise academic standards, modernize the curriculum, and strengthen teaching strategies. Exams and tests with standardized content grew in popularity to measure students' progress. Furthermore, there were initiatives to advance gender equality in education, expand access to higher education, and a rise in understanding of the need for early childhood education. Further, a growing emphasis on multiculturalism and diversity in educational curricula was evident.

### **Evolution of quality education from 1990 until now**

Since the nineties, education and teaching methods have immensely evolved since then, hence enhancing educational quality. To begin with, technology had an important, mostly positive, role in the development of education, because it made learning, studying, and teaching more practical and enjoyable. Because technology replaced schoolbooks and contributed to upgrading the course, it made lessons more interesting and interactive. Nowadays, schools take one’s intellectual development and skills into consideration, usually through creative and innovative subjects such as music, art, science, engineering, and technology. At the same time, more interactive teaching methods including projects and internet research are used, to engage the students and ensure their understanding.

Last but not least, students with intellectual disabilities like dyslexia used to get overlooked and were not given the help that they needed, leading to them struggling to have the same learning pace with other students. In the 21st century, thanks to the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, these students are not facing these problems and discrimination in the school environment anymore. On the contrary, they are receiving the necessary support from their schools to keep up with the others.

It is undeniable that the quality of education has significantly improved in the recent years, mainly because the education system has begun to establish more innovative and interactive approaches to teaching and the needs of students. On top of

that, the educational system has started to assist children in order for them to develop their abilities in various fields by giving them the opportunity to practice on things they are interested in.

### Technology on education

In the last decade, technology has become a major factor in education. More or less, students tend to enjoy class significantly more, considering that they have fast access to plenty of resources. Teachers can also use more creative methods, for example by showing their students videos and online presentations to effectively illustrate the lesson in a clearer manner. In addition, students can increase their collaboration and teamwork skills by communicating after school to work on projects or even to study together without having to meet up.

Furthermore, technology played an essential role during quarantine, when online schooling was the only way to access education. Students had to have an electronic device such as a laptop, computer, tablet, etc. in their possession to participate in the lesson, even far away from their school. Without its help, billions of students would have huge gaps in important knowledge, since they would not have any contact with education for a long period of time.



**Figure 1<sup>11</sup>:** The presence of technology in a modern classroom.

### COVID-19 and quarantine-impact on education

In March 2020, when it was announced worldwide that schools would be closed for safety reasons, no one expected that quarantine would have such a negative impact on education around the world. With the closure of schools, the inequality that already existed in relation to

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<sup>11</sup> Mittha, Chitra. "7 Benefits of Technology in the Classroom." *Blog.adobe.com*, 23 August 2021, <https://blog.adobe.com/en/publish/2021/08/23/7-benefits-of-technology-in-the-classroom>

the socioeconomic situation of each family suddenly intensified. Families with financial comfort were able to provide their children with the best and latest electronic devices in order for them to participate in online school and to not have gaps in any subject, especially in core ones. On the other hand, children of families without sufficient financial means to afford electronic devices at home began to realize, on their return to school, after not being able to participate, the gaps that had been created during the quarantine. Additionally, the students were not the only ones who faced problems because of the quarantine. Teachers were not prepared for such an event and did not know how to cope with the unexpected changes in the educational system. As a result, many of them couldn't continue teaching, as the quality of their lessons decreased.

Further, COVID-19 severely affected the educational life of the majority of children from Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCS) that had the outstanding opportunity to be enrolled in school. The reason behind this is the fact that they had no access to education and were unable to participate in distance learning due to lack of technology. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), child labor rates increased dramatically, since many children were forced to go into child labor in order to support their families financially. Consequently, millions of children were not able to return to school after this crisis, losing the opportunity of a bright future.<sup>12</sup>

### **Discrimination and marginalization in education**

Even though education is highly beneficial for society and provides the potential for change, marginalization, and discrimination remain widespread problems in this sector all across the world. These difficulties limit the potential of education by impeding access, equity, and inclusivity.

#### **Causes**

There are several reasons why people are marginalized and subject to discrimination in the educational system, which results in unfair chances and treatment. Firstly, educational chances are significantly shaped by one's socioeconomic situation. Unfortunately, people from low-income families frequently encounter obstacles such as lack of literature, limited technology, restricted engagement in extracurricular activities, and insufficient access to high-quality education that prevent them from accessing necessary resources. The difficulties experienced by these people are made worse by the fact that low-income regions' schools struggle with a teacher shortage and a lack of financing.

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<sup>12</sup> "UNESCO COVID-19 Education Response: How Many Students Are at Risk of Not Returning to School? Advocacy Paper." *Unesco.org*, 2020, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373992>,

Another troubling problem in the field of education is gender bias. Due to widespread gender inequality, women and girls frequently have limited educational opportunities. This can currently be observed in Afghanistan where women and girls have severely limited chances in education compared to men.

Equal access to education is also severely hampered by racial and ethnic discrimination. Racially or ethnically marginalized students frequently encounter systematic disadvantages in the educational system. These inequities may show up in the uneven allocation of resources, biased disciplinary actions, and a lack of school curricula that are inclusive of other cultures. Similarly, students from ethnic or cultural minority backgrounds experience difficulties due to language and cultural barriers. Because of these difficulties, many kids have trouble integrating into the educational system.

Moreover, barriers to schooling frequently exist for students with disabilities, both physical and intellectual. These obstacles may take the form of physically challenging environments, an absence of suitable adaptations, a lack of proper resources to assist them, or unfavorable attitudes toward them.

### Effects on society

The effects of discrimination and marginalization in education are many and severe. They can result in inequities in education or limited opportunities and access. Going more into depth, the limited access to education of marginalized groups reduces their chances for intellectual and personal development, economic mobility, and social empowerment. For them to develop and realize their full potential, this lack of access presents a barrier. In addition, a lack of educational possibilities may make it more difficult for underprivileged people to get the resources they need and the education they deserve. Their participation in social and political matters is as well limited by this lack of opportunities.

Further, students that are marginalized and discriminated against may perform worse academically, as a result of a lack of support and the appropriate resources. Their teachers and fellow students could have lower expectations for them, which could result in a self-fulfilling narrative of underachievement. It could also have serious effects on their confidence and self-awareness. Resulting in underachieving students showing less productivity in their future workforce and being more prone to developing criminal-like behaviors.

Additionally, the effects of marginalization and discrimination can be detrimental to mental health. The stress, anxiety, and depression symptoms brought on by such events might make it more difficult to succeed in school and in social situations.

Indeed, the inequity resulting from educational marginalization also feeds the poverty cycle. Consequently, future generations will continue to have restricted possibilities and chances as a result, creating a vicious cycle that is difficult to escape.

Lastly, social exclusion and isolation brought on by discrimination in schooling make it difficult for people to engage with one another and assimilate into society. It may deepen societal divides by fostering a sense of alienation from the majority and the creation of minority groups, further intensifying social injustices.

## Human Rights and Education

After the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, the human right to education was declared as “essential for the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance, and peace”<sup>13</sup>. Since then, governments and organizations including the United Nations have been trying their best to defend this right and ensure its implementation.

The main reason behind the much-needed protection of the right to education is the fact that it promotes values, beliefs, and attitudes that encourage all individuals to uphold their own rights and those of others<sup>14</sup>. But in 2009, at the Forum on Human Rights Education with and by Young People, Living, Learning, Acting for Human Rights, the participants of the forum came to a very important conclusion. It stated that there are many discriminations regarding this right, mainly due to gender and ethnicity and therefore it was decided that: “Human rights education must systematically mainstream gender awareness and gender equality perspectives. Additionally, it must include an intercultural learning dimension; [...] we expect the Council of Europe to [...] mainstream minority issues throughout its human rights education programs, including gender, ethnicity, religion or belief, ability, and sexual orientation issues”<sup>13</sup>.

Unfortunately, even though education is a basic human right, millions of children, mostly from LEDCs, have difficulty accessing it due to socioeconomic issues. As a consequence, this right is not the only one getting violated but also the right to work in healthy and stable conditions. The main reason behind this violation is that workers without sufficient educational and financial support are usually forced to undertake jobs with dangerous working conditions. As a result, they have limited access to benefits of cultural freedom and scientific progress.

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<sup>13</sup>Council of Europe. “Introducing Human Rights Education.” *Www.coe.int*, [www.coe.int/en/web/compass/introducing-human-rights-education](http://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/introducing-human-rights-education).

<sup>14</sup> “OHCHR | Human Rights Education and Training.” *OHCHR*, [www.ohchr.org/en/resources/educators/human-rights-education-training](http://www.ohchr.org/en/resources/educators/human-rights-education-training).

## Lack of quality education

### Causes

The causes for lack of quality education are present in all areas of the educational system. Starting off, a major obstacle to the school system's ability to offer high-quality instruction is inadequate funds. Overcrowded classrooms, poor infrastructure, outmoded instructional materials, and restricted access to necessary tools and technology are just a few of the detrimental effects that can result from a lack of financial resources.

Likewise, the poor standard of education and the shortage of teachers are another two major causes for the lack of education. The general quality of education suffers when there aren't enough qualified and experienced teachers. Therefore, inadequate training and limited chances for professional growth can lead to poor curriculum delivery, inadequate teaching methods, and an inability to appropriately fulfill the requirements of the learners.

Then, the unavailability of quality education is significantly influenced by socioeconomic disparities, especially in certain areas. Children from low-income families frequently encounter a number of challenges, including a lack of resources at home, difficulty getting to school, poor nutrition, and a higher chance of dropping out of school early. As a result, they have no access to school at all in some cases. Furthermore, their limited economic resources may lead to education being discouraged by a student's parents, in favor of child labor and thus an additional income.

At the same time, access to high-quality education is frequently restricted in LEDCs by political turmoil and military conflicts. Conflict-affected areas experience severe disruptions to their educational systems, robbing many children of the chance to obtain a high-quality education. These disruptions include resource shortages, infrastructural damage, and population displacement. Examples of this include the conflicts in Sudan and Ukraine. Additionally, it is extremely difficult to provide high-quality education when there are humanitarian problems caused by natural disasters. Such catastrophes have a devastating impact on educational systems, infrastructure, and resources in nations like Malawi and Myanmar, making it challenging to sustain a constant level of education.

The absence of high-quality education is also a result of the lack of inclusivity. The learning prospects of students are limited if children with disabilities, special needs, or those from underrepresented groups are not provided with inclusive education. Their opportunities remain too constrained because of inadequate support systems, inaccessible learning environments, and a lack of skilled specialist.

Moreover, support from parents and the community is essential for achieving quality education. Educational achievements may deteriorate when parents and communities are not actively involved. Better educational standards may be impeded by limited knowledge, disengagement, and low participation in school-related activities.

Finally, education policy at the municipal, state, and federal levels has a big impact on how well kids are educated. Education standards may suffer as a result of policies. The development of students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and future-relevant abilities may be harmed by outdated curriculum and teaching techniques as a result of education systems' failure to adapt to new information and changing demands.

### Effects on society

A lack of quality education plays out negatively in all facets of our society and hinders our development and well-being. For instance, poor quality education can have a negative impact on employment prospects because it may deprive students of the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the workforce. Their career opportunities are limited, and their economic mobility is hampered by this lack of preparation, resulting in an increase of unemployment rates.

Accordingly, the economic effects of inadequate educational options are substantial. High unemployment rates, decreased productivity, and a fall in creative output occur when a sizeable segment of the population is unable to participate effectively in the labor. These elements could hinder economic growth and development, which might have an impact on a country's general welfare. A poor education may also be a factor for higher crime rates. Lack of education can result in limited employment opportunities and social mobility for students, which can make them more likely to turn to crime.

Furthermore, high-quality education is required for promoting social and political stability. It is essential to strengthening social ties, advocating democratic principles, and encouraging civic engagement. People may be more vulnerable to misinformation, disinformation, manipulation, radicalization if they have insufficient access to a high-quality education.

Health outcomes are negatively impacted by a lack of education as well. By giving people the knowledge, they need about hygiene, diet, and medical procedures, education plays a crucial role in fostering wellbeing and good health. Lack of sufficient education may lead to a higher prevalence of illness, malnutrition, and generally poor health outcomes, especially in underprivileged groups.

Last but not least, a society's ability to develop sustainably may be hindered by a lack of high-quality education. People who pursue education are better prepared to address environmental issues, encourage sustainable lifestyles, and aid in the development of their communities. A society may find it difficult to solve environmental issues and accomplish sustainable development objectives without access to high-quality education.

## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

### Afghanistan

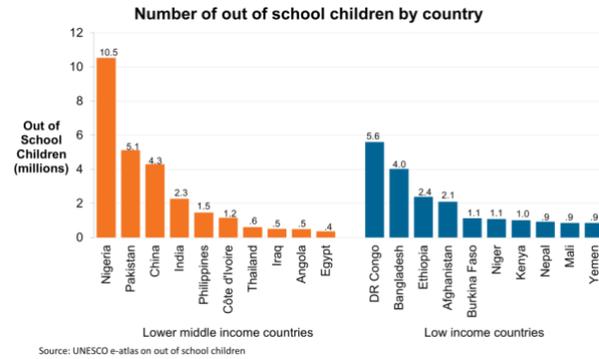
The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had been very successful in increasing the number of girls in schools from 1 million in 2001 to 10 million in 2018.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, this project and many others that have been trying for decades to enroll girls into schools were completely destroyed in August 2021, when the Taliban took over Afghanistan and made it the first country in the world to restrict the contact of all women, regardless of their ages, with education. Unfortunately, the ban on education for girls, after the sixth grade, in combination with the fragile socioeconomic situation, has led to a major increase in forced child marriages and child labor.

Moreover, since Afghanistan is a member state of the United Nations and a state party in treaties and conventions about human rights such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)<sup>16</sup>, is obliged to respect, protect and fulfill the human right to education without any discriminations. Demonstrations by the people there are often held, but unfortunately without any results. Lastly, a major issue is that even if the ban is lifted, the quality of education is still going to be in danger because schools now have improperly trained teachers and poor school equipment, meaning that students will receive education of significantly poorer quality.

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<sup>15</sup> UNESCO. "Protecting Education in Afghanistan." *Unesco.org*, 2 Feb. 2023, [www.unesco.org/en/emergencies/education/afghanistan](http://www.unesco.org/en/emergencies/education/afghanistan).

<sup>16</sup> "Afghanistan: Quality Education Must Be Equally Accessible to All, UN Experts Say." *OHCHR*, 20 Mar. 2023, [www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/afghanistan-quality-education-must-be-equally-accessible-all-un-experts-say](http://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/afghanistan-quality-education-must-be-equally-accessible-all-un-experts-say).



**Figure 2:<sup>17</sup>** This graph shows the number of children (million) that are out of school in lower-middle and low-income countries.

## Honduras

In Honduras, the educational system faces various serious problems in several areas. To begin with, a high percentage of students drop out of school, or have to repeat the class due to low grades and a vast majority of teachers are incapable of teaching<sup>18</sup>. In addition, many children who graduate from primary school are not able to continue their education because of the occupation of school buildings from other classes. The Honduran Ministry of Education has begun efforts to improve the education system and its quality by following programs that could benefit not only the field of education, but the country in general.

## Niger

In Niger, over 50 percent of the children between the ages of 7 to 16, estimated around 2.5 million, lack access to education and do not acquire basic knowledge, like writing and calculating.<sup>19</sup> The quality of education in Niger has deteriorated in the last few years because of the government's incapability to financially support the educational system, while discrimination in the field continues to thrive either due to gender discrimination and the socioeconomic status of families in the region. Moreover, a large battery of children tends to fail to attend school successfully for various reasons. They include high percentages of child marriages, being forced to do child as a means of providing to the family and a lack of school infrastructure in the region, resulting in terribly long distances that must be covered by students in order to attend school. Lastly, the weak educational system of Niger was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, when over 80.000 teachers lost their jobs.<sup>19</sup> Many children, along with their families, have still not recovered from the financial and educational setbacks, hence having to drop out of school.

<sup>17</sup> "Where Are the out of School Children?" *Education Policy Data Center*, 20 Feb. 2013, [www.epdc.org/node/1339.html](http://www.epdc.org/node/1339.html).

<sup>18</sup> "Education." *Www.usaid.gov*, 3 Nov. 2016, [www.usaid.gov/honduras/our-work/education](http://www.usaid.gov/honduras/our-work/education).

<sup>19</sup> UNICEF. "Education." *Unicef.org*, 2012, [www.unicef.org/niger/education](http://www.unicef.org/niger/education).

## Sweden

Sweden has one of the best and most unique educational systems in the world ranked among the world leaders in higher education. The mandatory education there lasts 9 years. After the mandatory years of education, one can choose between twenty different programs for their course of study. This is the main reason why Sweden's education system is called a "student-based education system". It emphasizes a lot on the learning development of students, starting with a focus on playing, community, and even equality at a very young age. Their quality of education is also considered one of the best, because the government places great importance on education. Schools are technologically advanced at all levels so students can have more creative and interactive learning; they don't only focus on grades and homework and instead, encourage and promote innovation and creativity across all kinds of fields. Due to Sweden's open-minded community, the level of gender or socioeconomic-related disparity in education is low.

## United States of America (USA)

The United States of America is known worldwide mainly for its excellent universities with significantly low acceptance rates. Nonetheless, the quality of education is upstanding not only in universities but also in schools. Firstly, the technology in local schools is tremendously advanced. On top of that, students have the freedom to establish their own school program by choosing between a vast majority of subjects and the level they will be in. Last but not least, students, especially in university, have the invaluable opportunity during their education to practice the profession they would like to follow in the future.

## Childhood Education International (CE International)

Since its founding in 1892, Childhood Education International has been working through programs, partnerships, and projects to support access to quality education worldwide, especially for primary school children living in difficult circumstances. Besides, the organization is also offering consultancy services to educational institutions, such as schools, NGOs, school systems, and government ministries<sup>20</sup>. CE International believes that children are the only hope for our future world and therefore, it is vital to provide them with the right education, safety, and assistance to improve their access to a better future. They approach education with innovative ideas. At the same time, they contribute with their work not only to the educational field but also to the proper and healthy upbringing of children.

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<sup>20</sup> "Childhood Education International." *Childhood Education International*, <https://ceinternational1892.org/>

## United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

UNESCO was founded in 1945 after the Second World War and since then, has supported that education is a basic human right and that it is a very powerful 'weapon' in people's lives, turning people's lives for the better. For this reason, one of the main objectives of this organization is to provide global and regional leadership to ensure that every child and adult has access to quality education throughout their lives<sup>21</sup>. To achieve this goal, the UN agency has engaged in several conferences and projects around the world such as, hosting the UNESCO Special Committee Meeting on the Revision of the 1974 Recommendation, helping in the creation of The World Declaration on Education for All, creating the Sustainable Development Goal 4 and much more. Despite the fact that the organizations understand the tremendous difficulties in achieving its goal, UNESCO remains adamant and willing to improve the quality of education, even through small steps.

### TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
Middle Ages (5 <sup>th</sup> to 15 <sup>th</sup> Century)	The Church has a significant influence on education in Europe
1436	The printing press is invented by Johannes Gutenberg, making books for education a lot more affordable and accessible
1830	The "common schools' movement" is formed in an effort to finance schools in every community with government/public funds
1892	Childhood Education International (CE International) was founded
16 November 1945	United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization (UNESCO) constitution was adopted in London

<sup>21</sup>"UNESCO's Action in Education | UNESCO." *Www.unesco.org*, [www.unesco.org/en/education/action](http://www.unesco.org/en/education/action).

10 December 1948	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is adopted by the UN General Assembly
14 December 1960	The Convention against Discrimination in Education is adopted
5-9 March 1990	“The World Declaration on Education for all“ was adopted by the World Conference on Education for all
14-25 June 1993	Declaration of the human rights education as essential in the World Conference on Human Rights
October 2009	The decision to stop discrimination in the field of education at the Forum on Human Rights Education with and by Young People Living, Learning, and Acting for Human Rights
13 December 2006	Adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
9 July 2010	The Resolution on the Right to Education in Emergency Situations is adopted by the UN General Assembly
27 September 2015	The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development is launched by an UN summit
30 May-2 June 2023	Revision and discussion of the 1974 Recommendation in UNESCO headquarters
10-13 July 2023	Finalization of the 1974 Recommendation in UNESCO headquarters
22 November 2023	Discussion of the 1974 Recommendation in the 42 <sup>nd</sup> General Conference

## RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES, AND EVENTS

### The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948<sup>22</sup>

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was the first official document by the UN which mentioned the right to education. According to the 26<sup>th</sup> article<sup>23</sup> of the declaration, everyone possesses this right. It also underlines that education must be free, at least during the primary and secondary levels. Higher education should be equally accessible to everyone based on merit, and technical and professional education should likewise be made generally available. The UDHR has been instrumental in establishing international norms and standards and in bringing attention to the right to education. Its full realization, however, is still a work in progress and calls for continual initiatives to eliminate disparities, enhance educational systems, and adjust to new educational problems.

### Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960<sup>24</sup>

The Convention Against Discrimination in Education aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination in education. It prohibits discrimination in access to education, the content of education, and the quality of education. It also requires that education be directed towards the full development of the human personality and the promotion of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. By creating a framework for addressing discrimination and promoting equal opportunities, the Convention against Discrimination in Education has made a significant difference in education. It has been crucial in spreading awareness of the value of non-discrimination in education around the world and in fostering inclusive educational settings.

### UN General Assembly Resolution on the Right to Education in Emergency Situations 2010 A/RES/64/291<sup>25</sup>

In accordance with the 2010 UN General Assembly Resolution on the Right to Education in Emergency Situations, education is a fundamental human right that shouldn't be interfered with during times of crisis, including natural catastrophes, armed conflicts, and other crises<sup>26</sup>. It

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<sup>22</sup> United Nations. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights - English." *OHCHR*, United Nations, 10 Dec. 1948, [www.ohchr.org/en/human-rights/universal-declaration/translations/english](http://www.ohchr.org/en/human-rights/universal-declaration/translations/english).

<sup>23</sup> "Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." *Humanrights.com*, 2019, [www.humanrights.com/course/lesson/articles-26-30/read-article-26.html](http://www.humanrights.com/course/lesson/articles-26-30/read-article-26.html).

<sup>24</sup> "Convention against Discrimination in Education." *OHCHR*, [www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-against-discrimination-education](http://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-against-discrimination-education).

<sup>25</sup> Refugees, United Nations High Commissioner for. "Refworld | the Right to Education in Emergency Situations: Resolution / Adopted by the General Assembly." *Refworld*, [www.refworld.org/docid/4c6241bb2.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/4c6241bb2.html).

<sup>26</sup> "ODS HOME PAGE." *Documents-Dds-Ny.un.org*, documents-dds <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/479/23/PDF/N0947923.pdf?OpenElement> Accessed 12 July 2023.

demands that all impacted people, especially children and youth, get safe and high-quality education while emergency circumstances are ongoing and protected. The resolution has had a beneficial impact on education since it has raised funding for education in emergency situations and helped to promote awareness of the value of education in such circumstances to guarantee that all kids have access to education during emergencies. Nevertheless, there is still a lot of work to be done.

### **Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2015<sup>27</sup>**

Goal number 4 of the 2015 Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) lists education as one of its defined objectives. All students will receive inclusive, egalitarian, high-quality education, and opportunities for lifelong learning will be encouraged. All girls and boys must receive free, equitable, and high-quality primary and secondary education as well as affordable, high-quality technical, vocational, and university education, according to the SDG 4 targets. Along with eliminating gender inequities in education, the objective is to raise the proportion of kids and adults with the necessary skills for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship. The SDG 4 on Education offers a thorough framework for addressing different aspects of education, encouraging international cooperation, and promoting efforts to achieve inclusive and high-quality education for everyone.

## **PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE**

### **Africa Mission and Beyond**

The Africa Mission and Beyond is an international ministry with the sole goal to spread the ideals of Christianity. By doing so, they have helped millions of unfortunate children mostly in Africa with projects that are in their majority funded by donations, giving them the opportunity to get educated. At the moment they are two projects regarding education, and they are called “Support a School” and “Hope and service scholarship”.

“Support a school” is a project in Pakistan where Africa Mission and Beyond has two Christian mission schools that educate children whose parents were slaves or families stricken by poverty. In that kind of school, there are teachers that work and receive a small wage every month depending on their qualifications and the number of classes that they have taught. Unfortunately, the amount of donations is not enough to pay the salary of all teachers monthly and as a result, a significant amount ends up quitting their jobs. Consequently, this program currently lacks effectiveness.

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<sup>27</sup> United Nations. “Goal 4 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs.” *United Nations*, United Nations, 2022, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>

“Hope and Service scholarship” gives the opportunity to worthy graduates that come from orphan families, to continue educating themselves through technical training or a diploma. This program gives the graduates hope for a better future and outstanding opportunities that they never imagined and at the moment this attempt is really beneficial since it’s helping a lot of brilliant students.

### **The World Declaration on Education for All**

In 1990, the International Literacy Year, in Jomtien, Thailand, around 1.500 delegates coming from 155 different countries and governmental, non-governmental, and intergovernmental organizations met at the World Conference on Education for All to discuss universalizing adequate basic education.<sup>28</sup> There, they adopted the “The World Declaration on Education for All” and a framework for meeting basic Learning Needs. This Declaration states that: “every person, child, youth and adult shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs.”<sup>28</sup> More precisely, the goal of Education for All is to increase programs, activities, and services in all sectors, so everyone has everything necessary for living inside and outside of school. “The World Declaration on Education for All” showed the commitment of countries to try and create a fair for everyone and without discrimination education system that everyone has access. Attention was also given to the quality of education and the results that education has. The program became internationally operational in 1990 with the help of UNESCO, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the World Bank and other organizations and it is used until today.

### **UNESCO Special Committee Meeting on the Revision of the 1974 Recommendation<sup>29</sup>**

From May 30<sup>th</sup> until 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2023, over 200 delegates coming from 90 different countries met at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris to discuss and revise the second draft of the 1974 Recommendation concerning education for International understanding, co-operation and peace, and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms. This document brings together and states education's role in building peace, international understanding, fundamental freedoms and respect human rights and establishes international principles and standards for governing education in this field. In those four days delegates, legal and technical experts analyzed the text to finalize it. This meeting resulted in the adaptation of the title, definitions,

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<sup>28</sup> “United Nations: Key Conference Outcomes in Education.” *Www.un.org*, [www.un.org/en/development/devagenda/education.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/development/devagenda/education.shtml).,

<sup>29</sup> “UNESCO Hosts Special Committee Meeting on the Revision of the 1974 Recommendation.” *Unesco.org*, 2023, [www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-hosts-special-committee-meeting-revision-1974-recommendation](http://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-hosts-special-committee-meeting-revision-1974-recommendation). Accessed 29 June 2023.

aims, scope, guiding principles, and part of the action areas. In the following second meeting, which will take place from the 10<sup>th</sup> of July until the 13<sup>th</sup> of 2023 the text should be finalized by being agreed upon by everyone and elaborate on how exactly education should evolve in the 21st century to drive peace, reaffirm human rights, promote global citizenship and sustainable development in the face of contemporary threats and challenges. After that, in November 2023, at the 42nd session, the text of the Recommendation will be submitted to the General conference to discuss the possibility of its adoption and the outcomes that it will have if it gets implemented.

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

### **Collaboration between governments**

Educational systems vary from country to country, each of them having their own with some of them being qualitative and others not. Arranged collaborations and partnerships among governments will be held every year, where the minister of education from each country will meet to discuss the education system in their country and create international guidelines regarding educational curricula. It will allow them to share knowledge, resources, different and new ways of teaching, and creative ways to improve their education system with the sole goal of establishing effective and high-quality educational systems all over the world.

### **Creation of new organizations to stop discriminations**

A really important issue in many countries all around the globe, especially in the Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) is the lack of educational opportunities that people face due to gender bias and socioeconomic status. By creating new organizations, working under the mandate of the United Nations, which are going to be in charge of financially supporting families in need, with the use of donations and funds, while also holding sponsorship programs. Moreover, their work will also focus on eliminating gender-based and socioeconomic discrimination in educational settings, to give more and more children opportunities to educate themselves and help them have brighter futures, fulfilling their aspirations for a better life and helping them escape the social standards of closed communities and the unending poverty cycle. All of this could get done through projects, campaigns, and funding programs.

### **Providing schools in need with technology**

Nowadays, technology is used everywhere. It constitutes an integral part of our everyday lives and we cannot imagine the world without it, mainly due to the fact that life becomes easier through it. By providing schools that don't have the financial comfort to afford electronic devices like laptops, tablets, and smart boards it would offer the opportunity of learning in a more creative way and not only with books, increasing the productivity of students and therefore improving the quality of education. Thus, teachers will have the chance to use more resources to

make their classes more educational in an interesting and unique way with the lessons becoming more enjoyable for the students.

### **Improving teachers training**

One of the most important sectors in education is teachers. For this reason, in order to enhance the quality of the lesson and education, we must assure that teachers are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively teach students. This could be done through annual mandatory programs that they will participate in order to improve their teaching skills but also to be updated with the newest teaching methodologies.

### **Investing in support of services for low-income, underfunded schools:**

By giving children the tools and assistance, they require to succeed the issue of education for all can be tackled. Hiring additional counselors and special education can assist students with impairments in accessing and utilizing education and support kids with their academic and psychological problems. These assistance programs can enhance the academic and social development of students while fostering a supportive and welcoming learning environment.

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