*Education matters

GLOBAL EDUCATION MONITORING REPORT SUMMARY

2017/8

Accountability in education:

MEETING OUR COMMITMENTS

UNESCO
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Sustainable
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Global
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Report

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The Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action specifies that the mandate of the *Global Education Monitoring Report* is to be 'the mechanism for monitoring and reporting on SDG 4 and on education in the other SDGs' with the responsibility to 'report on the implementation of national and international strategies to help hold all relevant partners to account for their commitments as part of the overall SDG follow-up and review.' It is prepared by an independent team hosted by UNESCO.

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Original title in English: Global Education Monitoring Report Summary 2017/8: Accountability in education: Meeting our commitments

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2017/8	*Accountability in education: Meeting our commitments*
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Foreword

There are today 264 million children and youth not going to school – this is a failure that we must tackle together, because education is a shared responsibility and progress can only be sustainable through common efforts. This is essential to meet the ambitions of the Sustainable Development Goal on education (SDG 4), part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Governments, schools and teachers have a frontline role to play here, hand in hand with students themselves and parents.

Moving forward requires having clear lines of responsibility, knowing when and where those lines are broken and what action is required in response – this is the meaning of accountability, the focus of this *Global Education Monitoring Report*. The conclusion is clear – the lack of accountability risks jeopardizing progress, allowing harmful practices to become embedded in education systems. For one, the absence of clearly designed education plans by governments can blur roles and mean that promises will remain empty and policies not funded. When public systems do not provide an education of sufficient quality, and for-profit actors fill the gap but operate without regulation, the marginalized lose out. Governments are the primary duty bearers for the right to education, yet this right is not justiciable in almost half of countries, and the primary course of action for those with a complaint is lost.

Everyone has a role to play in improving education. This starts with citizens, supported by civil society organizations and research institutions, which point out gaps in high-quality, equitable education. In a number of countries, student movements have often swayed policies on equitable and affordable education, highlighting the power that we all share and must exercise to advance SDG 4. International organizations have been in the lead also in shaping new goals and targets in line with the complex challenges of our times.
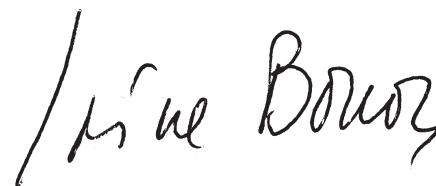
The report shows too that not all accountability methods are currently helping us achieve SDG 4. In some parts of the world, it is becoming more common, for instance, for teachers and schools to be sanctioned for poor test results, in the name of purported attempts to improve quality instruction and learning. The report concludes this must be approached with great caution to avoid having unintended, contrary consequences.

There is extensive evidence showing that high-stakes tests based on narrow performance measures can encourage efforts to 'game the system', negatively impacting on learning and disproportionately punishing the marginalized. It is vital to collect data on learning outcomes, to shed light on factors that drive inequality in education. But drawing precise conclusions requires time, resources and skills that few countries have, and drawing the wrong conclusions can be all too easy.

Accountability means being able to act when something is going wrong, through policy, legislation and advocacy, including through ombudspersons to protect citizens' rights. We need stronger mechanisms across the board to enshrine and enforce the right to education and hold all governments to account for their commitments, including donors.

The word 'accountability' appears throughout the *2030 Education Framework for Action*, demonstrating the importance that UNESCO and the international community give to follow-up and review functions to catalyse and monitor progress. This means also that all countries should produce national education monitoring reports explaining their progress against their commitments – currently only about half do so and most of them not regularly. Accountability is about interpreting evidence, identifying problems and working out how to solve them. This must be the backbone to all our efforts to achieve equitable, high-quality education for all.

Irina Bokova
Director-General of UNESCO

Accountability in education

The 2017/8 GEM Report evaluates the role of accountability in global education systems regarding achievement of the vision of UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: ensuring inclusive, equitable and good-quality education and lifelong learning for all.

Growing populations gaining access to education, along with evidence of underachievement in learning, have brought into sharp focus persistent deficiencies in provision and quality. These, combined with tight education budgets and increased emphasis on value for money worldwide, have countries searching for solutions. Increased accountability often tops the list.

Accountability can be a virtue, describing the quality of being answerable and reliable. In this report, it is defined as a type of mechanism. On legal, political, social or moral grounds, governments and other education actors are obliged to report on the fulfilment of their responsibilities.

Because ambitious education outcomes rely on multiple actors fulfilling often shared responsibilities, accountability cannot easily rest with single actors. As this report demonstrates, reaching SDG 4 and ensuring inclusive, equitable and good-quality education is often a *collective* enterprise in which all actors make a concerted effort to meet their responsibilities (**Figure 1**). For this to happen, political and economic interests need to be aligned. Education policies and actors are not isolated from the world around them.

> " Ensuring inclusive, equitable and good-quality education is often a collective enterprise in which all actors make a concerted effort to meet their responsibilities "

Equally important, no accountability approach can succeed if actors lack an enabling environment or are ill-equipped to meet their responsibilities. Without clear information and sufficient resources and capacity, their efforts will be stymied. Policies to improve existing practices that focus on building over blaming are more likely to produce equitable, inclusive, high-quality education systems.

Meeting broad education goals requires collaboration and communication between actors. Public trust and support depend on processes and goals being seen as legitimate and achievable within resource constraints. Ultimately, lack

of public trust can lead to citizen disengagement and parental disenfranchisement. In systems with little trust, education reform is likely to be slow and superficial. Building trust requires including many stakeholders in the creation of shared aims and recognizing actors' interdependence through mutual accountability.

Various socio-political trends have shifted education policy towards greater emphasis on accountability. The rapid expansion of education in the second half of the 20th century made education systems increasingly difficult to manage. One response of government authorities in high income countries to this challenge, not only in education but also in other sectors, was the shift from managing inputs to managing results. The establishment of metrics and standardized instruments to enable comparisons of local governments and schools accompanied the increased focus on results.

A related development was decentralization to increase local control over education provision, while central government maintained responsibility for financing, monitoring and regulation. Also, in some countries, dissatisfaction with public education contributed to policies diversifying provision and creating an education 'market', where parents could choose schools for their children based on school rankings published with the intent to spur competition and drive up quality. In addition, availability of information encouraged citizens to demand more transparency.

In some high income countries, there has been a move towards accountability policies that use student test scores to measure and evaluate performance. Student performance is increasingly linked to sanctions and

FIGURE 1:
How all actors in education are currently held to account

Source: GEM Report.
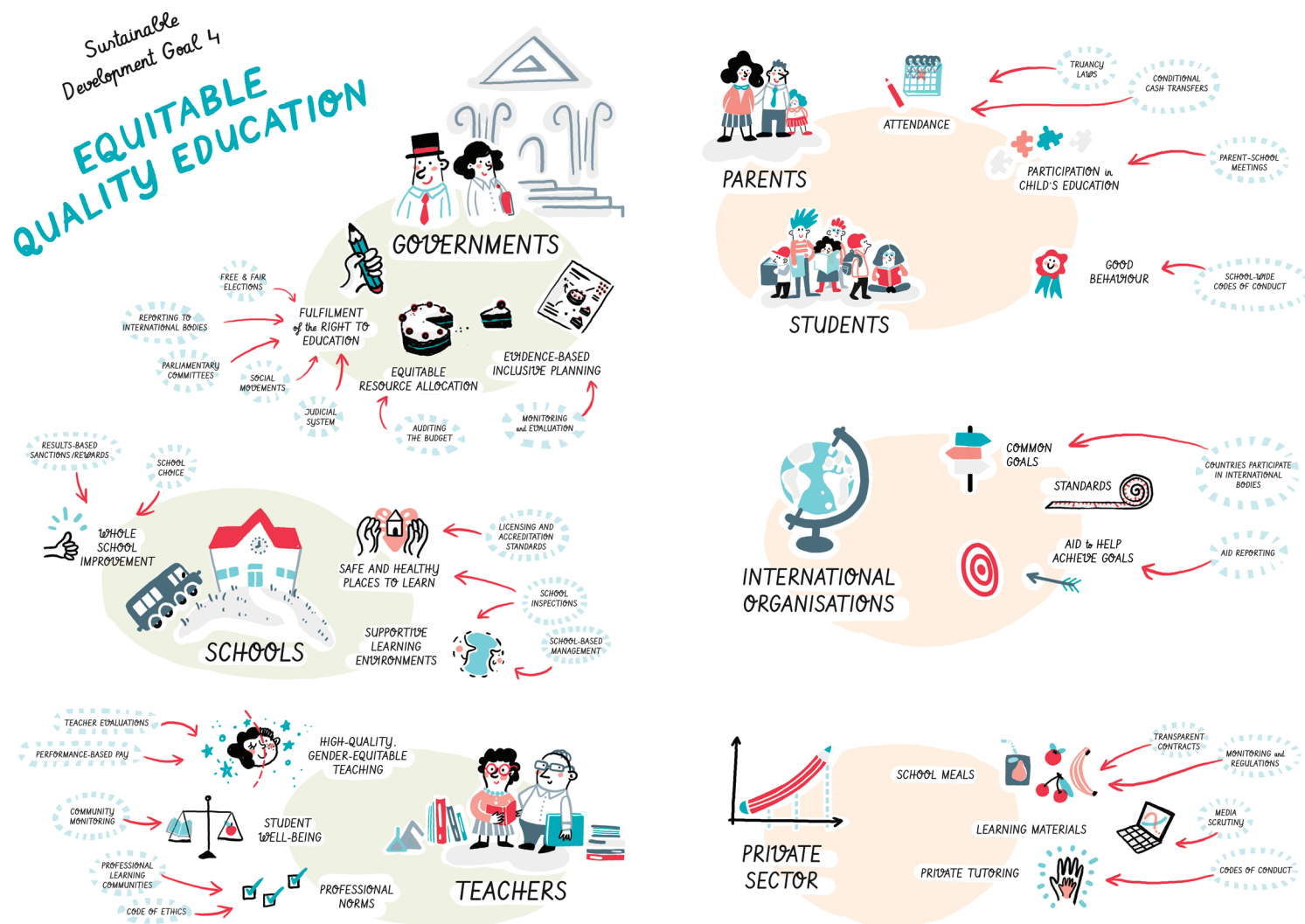
rewards and serves as a basis for evaluating teacher performance and school quality.

But if accountability is to help ensure more inclusive, equitable and high-quality education systems, flexible approaches, which make judicious use of available information, are needed. Accountability mechanisms may be effective in some contexts and for some aspects of education and detrimental in and for others.

Accountability matters enormously for improving education systems, but some assumptions need to be questioned. The drumbeat of accountability for accountability's sake is misdirected. Accountability should be understood as a means to an end – a tool in achieving SDG 4 targets – not a goal of education systems in itself.

The 2017/8 GEM Report reviews global evidence on the often interdependent mechanisms holding key actors in education to account, their effectiveness in meeting SDG 4, and the necessary supportive environments that enable actors to fulfil their individual responsibilities.

> **Accountability should be understood as a means to an end – a tool in achieving SDG 4 targets – not a goal of education systems in itself**

Accountable governments

Governments are ultimately responsible for progress on the global education goals. In poor and wealthy countries alike, governments are held accountable for education commitments, plans, implementation and outcomes.

GOVERNMENTS HAVE LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR EDUCATION

All countries have ratified at least one legally binding international treaty addressing the right to education. Governments have a responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil this right. Currently, 82% of national constitutions contain a provision on the right to education. In just over half of countries, the right is justiciable, giving citizens the legal ability to take government to court for violations (**Figure 2**).

INTERNATIONAL REPORTING PROCESSES HAVE VARYING EFFECTS ON GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Countries that have ratified any of the seven core United Nations human rights treaties pertinent to education must report periodically on measures taken to meet obligations. One of the seven core treaties is the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which calls for the development of an inclusive system at all levels of education. It promotes a rights-based approach to education for people with disabilities, providing a solid basis for government accountability. The CRPD provides for the creation of international and national implementation and monitoring mechanisms. Countries must collect data and report to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

While most of the 86 country submissions to date report that constitutions, laws or policies explicitly refer to the right of people with disabilities to education, few define disability. Lack of a clear international definition can make it harder to develop programmes and comply with international standards. Similarly, 42 countries' constitutions, laws or policies explicitly refer to inclusive education, suggesting a trend away from special schools in favour of inclusive programmes in regular schools. However, policy does not always match practice.

Parallel reporting by non-government organizations (NGOs) can influence the conclusions of United Nations human rights treaty committees. For instance, parallel reporting on underfunded public education and unregulated private schools in the Philippines was reflected in committee recommendations.

FIGURE 2:
Citizens should be able to take their governments to court for violating the right to education

PERCENTAGE OF COUNTRIES

100%

0%

PERCENTAGE OF 196 COUNTRIES THAT HAVE, TO VARIOUS LEVELS, INCORPORATED THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION INTO THEIR LEGAL FRAMEWORKS, AS OF DECEMBER 2016

Source: ActionAid International (2017).

100%

82%

55%

41%

RATIFIED LEGALLY BINDING TREATY

RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN CONSTITUTION

LEGAL ABILITY TO TAKE GOVERNMENT TO COURT

GOVERNMENT TAKEN TO COURT AT LEAST ONCE FOR VIOLATING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Countries also report on progress towards the SDGs, although this reporting is voluntary. To date, 44 countries have submitted progress reviews. The 2019 United Nations global thematic review, 'empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness', will carefully examine SDG 4. The effectiveness of a voluntary, country-led approach to achieving change remains to be seen; lack of external enforcement mechanisms may delay progress.

> "
> In 42 out of 86 countries, constitutions, laws or policies explicitly refer to inclusive education
> "

CITIZENS CAN PRESSURE GOVERNMENT TO KEEP PROMISES THROUGH THE POLITICAL PROCESS

The political process motivates officials to respond to public demands. One mechanism is free and fair elections. Between 1975 and 2011, 469 of 890 elections of national leaders in 169 countries were considered free and fair. The percentage declined from 70% in 1975–1985 to 45% in 2001–2011, partly due to the emergence of elections in young democracies (**Figure 3**).

Public education spending increases with a shift towards democracy and openness. Still, it is difficult for voters to identify and hold accountable those in elected positions for failed or ineffective education policy. Simple campaign promises can divert attention and investment from more important education issues. Governments tend to focus and deliver on visible education infrastructure more than less tangible education inputs, such as professional development.

Some argue electoral competition spurs responsible action, but the evidence is mixed. In Brazil, mayors facing re-election misappropriated 27% fewer resources than term-limited mayors. By contrast, in the Republic of Korea, switching to direct election of superintendents did not significantly alter education expenditure or rates of completion or enrolment.

CITIZENS CAN ALSO PRESSURE GOVERNMENT THROUGH SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Elections are not the only political mechanism holding governments to account. Citizen action can also put pressure on government, as in the case of successful student movements for lower university fees in Chile and South Africa.

FIGURE 3:

It is often not possible to vote out governments if they do not live up to their promises

REGIONAL PERCENTAGE OF FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS FOR NATIONAL LEADERS BETWEEN 1975 AND 2011

■ FAIR ELECTION (%)
■ FREE ELECTION (%)
● TOTAL NUMBER OF SAMPLED ELECTIONS

Notes: A free election had clearly established and consistent rules and an open process for participation leading up to the election. A fair election was without voter intimidation, had open access to polls and accurate counts on election day. Regional sample sizes: Europe and North America (42 countries, 298 elections), Pacific (8, 45), Latin America and the Caribbean (29, 137), Northern Africa and Western Asia (8, 25), Eastern and South-east Asia (11, 45), sub-Saharan Africa (40, 131), Southern Asia (9, 22), Caucasus and Central Asia (7, 22). *Source:* Bishop and Hoeffler (2016), Free and Fair Elections database (CSAE, n.d.).

EUROPE AND NORTHERN AMERICA	298
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARRIBEAN	137
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA	131
EASTERN AND SOUTH-EASTERN ASIA	45
PACIFIC	45
NORTHERN AFRICA AND WESTERN ASIA	25
CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA	22
SOUTHERN ASIA	22

Civil society organizations (CSOs) use a range of strategies, including legal mechanisms, surveys and other research, open data, coalition building and media campaigns. Argentina's Civil Association for Equality and Justice took the Buenos Aires city government to court for not responding to access to information requests related to early childhood education.

Surveys collect information that can highlight policy deficiencies and advocate for change. In many countries, including Kenya, Pakistan and Senegal, citizen-led surveys assessing children's basic reading and arithmetic abilities have been used to pressure government to improve education delivery.

CSO coalitions, such as the Campaign for Popular Education in Bangladesh, have built momentum to increase pressure on government, for instance to increase resources for education. Citizen report cards, first used in Bangalore, India, in 1994, have been adopted elsewhere, including Rwanda.

In some countries, including India and the United Republic of Tanzania, CSOs have played an important role in countering corrupt practices by using budget tracking and analysis to monitor government disbursements and expenditure, and in assessing whether resources are allocated and spent in line with budgets and plans.

Organizations for people with disabilities can lobby governments for change. NGOs and independent human rights institutions can provide information and raise awareness. Disabled people's organizations helped monitor CRPD implementation in 50 of the 86 reporting countries but took part in the national review in only 29 countries. Lack of capacity is an obstacle to participation.

> " Disabled people's organizations participated in monitoring the implementation of the CRPD in 50 of 86 reporting countries "

Teachers' unions are part of the broader civil society but also have a distinct voice and role. They can help hold governments accountable by supporting or resisting education reform and promoting dialogue on sensitive issues the government may hesitate to address. Formally including unions

in policy-making increases accountability and teacher buy-in while improving union–government relations. Unfortunately, however, unions are not regularly consulted on reform. Of 70 unions in more than 50 countries, over 60% were never or rarely consulted on the development and selection of teaching materials.

> " Of 70 teacher unions in more than 50 countries, over 60% were never or rarely consulted on teaching materials "

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IS KEY IN RAISING CRITICAL EDUCATION ISSUES

Citizens need valid information to hold government accountable. The media can serve as a watchdog on the government, helping citizens evaluate its performance. It also serves as a channel for CSOs to disseminate their work and bring issues such as equity to the public agenda. International, national and local media have published results of citizen-led assessments to illustrate the challenge of ensuring basic skills for all children.

The media also reports findings of research by think tanks, universities and government institutions. Increasing media information about how public funds are spent can help empower citizens and increase pressure on education officials to act responsibly. In Uganda, a 2.2 km decrease in distance to a newspaper outlet increased the share of funding that reached a school by nearly 10 percentage points.

While traditional media still plays an important role in explaining complex issues to the public, social media allows users to share information widely, free from editorializing, journalist filtering or, in some cases, government censorship. At a time of often rapid change in education policies, the functions social media can fulfil are important.

Yet the media also needs to be independent, accountable, and able to provide relevant information and reflect diverse social views. Media personnel directly involved in researching, analysing, organizing, and writing or broadcasting the news should have the technical expertise to report on education issues and be trusted.

CREDIBLE EDUCATION PLANS WITH CLEAR LINES OF RESPONSIBILITY ARE IMPORTANT TOOLS

Once governments are sworn into power, their education planning documents facilitate accountability by establishing official commitments and clarifying responsibilities. Governments often set multiyear strategic plans for the education sector, but annual operational plans are usually key to planning and coordination.

Institutional mechanisms granting more formal powers to all stakeholders can strengthen accountability. A joint steering committee of government and non-government stakeholders with formal power to appraise and approve sector plans is recommended. However, where capacity is a challenge, stakeholders may not always represent all constituents.

> " Governments that assign experts, consultants or donors to draft plans quickly risk undermining local ownership and commitment "

Truly participatory education planning can be time-consuming. Governments may be tempted to assign experts, consultants or donors to draft plans quickly, avoiding extended consultation. Such shortcuts undermine local ownership and commitment. Aid recipient countries should take care to avoid donor monopolization of planning.

Clearly delineated responsibilities are important, particularly in decentralized systems, where responsibilities are often undefined and overlapping, blurring lines of accountability. Decentralized administrations, especially in low income and fragile countries, often lack capacity for strategic planning.

Using performance-based conditional grants to increase local government capacity and transparency has improved financial management in several low and middle income countries. In the United Republic of Tanzania, authorities meeting minimum conditions for grant eligibility rose from about 50% to 90% within three years.

But mandating strict local accountability for centrally determined outcomes can also have negative consequences. An excessive audit culture can obscure responsibilities, reduce collaboration, undermine innovation and cause service providers to focus on targets rather than improvements.
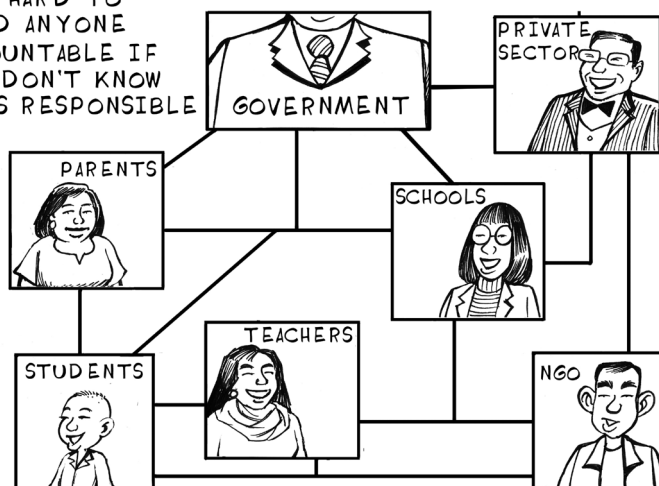
INCREASED OVERSIGHT DURING BUDGET FORMULATION CAN ENSURE RESOURCE ALLOCATION TO PRIORITY AREAS

Empowering stakeholders to participate in budgeting and review planned expenditure can improve equity in resource allocation.

Budget scrutiny is the paramount function of legislatures, requiring time and expert input. CSOs can help them assess proposed budgets and inform deliberations, as in Indonesia and Kenya. Programmatic rather than line-item budgets aid legislators in evaluating expenditure more effectively.

HORIZONTAL ACCOUNTABILITY CAN BE EFFECTIVE

Legislative committees, ombudsman offices and courts are examples of horizontal accountability tools that represent public voices and challenge executive overreach. Internal and external audits are effective budget execution accountability tools and help limit waste, misallocation and corruption. However, they require sufficient capacity.

> The legislatures of New Zealand, Norway, Peru, the United States and Zambia have education committees which scrutinize government actions, review laws and recommend changes

Legislative committees fulfil a critical monitoring function. Lack of independence, capacity or authority can limit their ability to drive change, but deliberation among legislators with specialized education expertise can improve policy proposals on the less divisive issues. The legislatures of New Zealand, Norway, Peru, the United States and Zambia have permanent education committees which scrutinize government actions, review laws and recommend changes. In the United Kingdom, committee recommendations were identical or similar to government policy measures in 20 of 86 cases, especially in the development of legislation to reform the inspection system.

Ombudsman offices receive citizens who wish to lodge complaints against government. They are especially important when citizens are uncomfortable engaging with government officials. In 2010, 118 countries had an ombudsman. The office often deals with politically contentious issues, which can put it in conflict with the government. In Latin America, the presence of an ombudsman, even without sanctioning power, helped improve access to education, health and housing from 1982 to 2011. In Indonesia, the ombudsman office was essential in exposing fraud involving tests being sold to students and answers being shared on mobile phones.

CSOs and citizens can strengthen external audits. In Chile and the Republic of Korea, online citizen complaints and suggestions highlight areas for auditor attention. Public expenditure tracking surveys enable CSOs to conduct social audits of expenditure. However, these are often one-off, donor-driven interventions that rarely lead to substantive, lasting changes.

BUILDING AN INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE OF INTEGRITY IS KEY TO TACKLING CORRUPTION

Corruption can occur in all aspects of education provision, from finance and service procurement to institutional accreditation, teacher management, examinations, scholarships, research and textbooks. Whether it involves headline-grabbing misappropriation or entrenched, low-level practices, its repercussions extend well beyond accounting losses, affecting education access and service quality. Corruption biases government resource allocation decisions, reduces productivity and decreases public revenue.

While World Bank studies on leakage in funding transfers from central to local government and thence to schools inspired much of the work in this area, tracking funds to receipt at point of service remains challenging, especially when there are no clear rules for allocations. Non-existent 'ghost' teachers and schools constitute a complex and contentious topic. Nigeria had 8,000 allegations of ghost teachers or teachers collecting more than their official salary in the first half of 2016 alone.

After reforms to improve the education equalization fund mechanism in Brazil, inspections by the Comptroller General of the Union in 120 municipalities and 4 states still found that 49 had irregular bidding processes, 28 had irregular contract executions and 21 had 'cash withdrawals' out of the account.

Egregious practices may be imperceptible to outside observers and their scale difficult to verify, for instance in challenging circumstances such as conflict settings. About 80% of the 740 schools in Ghor province, Afghanistan, were not operating even though the education department was paying teachers' salaries.

Some corruption that is too entrenched often goes undetected. In a public expenditure tracking survey in Bangladesh, about 40% of district and subdistrict primary education officers admitted to making 'speed payments' to accounts officers for expenditure reimbursement. These payments may not involve actual or direct leakage from the public purse, but they encourage officials to make up the costs in other ways.

Revelation of irregularities is not sufficient, and even legal norms and structures need to be accompanied by improved monitoring mechanisms, including strong and independent audit institutions, open information systems and a facilitating environment for media oversight and NGO involvement. When cases of corruption are uncovered, the police and courts play a crucial role in follow-up.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF EDUCATION SHOULD BE SYSTEMATIZED

Monitoring and evaluation can promote government accountability. To be useful, monitoring must report on desired outcomes and data must be accurate and collected regularly. However, monitoring and evaluation systems are often fragmented. Agencies differ in method and frequency of data collection, and data may not be centrally compiled, comparable or accessible.

> " Of 209 countries, 108 have published a national education monitoring report at least once since 2010, but only about 1 in 6 countries worldwide does so regularly "

One way to consolidate information is for governments to prepare national education monitoring reports as part of obligations to bodies such as legislatures or international organizations, and to help citizens hold governments to account. Of 209 countries, 108 have published a national education monitoring report at least once since 2010, but only about 1 in 6 countries worldwide does so regularly.

> ❝
> **Of existing national education monitoring reports, only one-third cover adult education** ❞

National education monitoring reports are more common in richer countries, but middle income countries, such as the Dominican Republic and the Republic of Moldova, as well as some low income countries, such as Uganda, also prepare reports. Almost all reports cover primary and secondary education. About three-quarters cover early childhood care and education, two-thirds cover higher education and one-third cover adult education.

Reports differ in their emphasis. About 60% focus primarily on describing actions taken and 25% on assessing the situation, reflecting the accountability concerns associated with various domestic contexts. Reports may also focus on accounting for expenditure.

Some, such as Germany's Bildungsbericht (Education Report), are legally required as part of reporting to the public and generally focus on accounting for actions or expenditure. Panama's education ministry publishes an annual report as stipulated in the law on transparency in public management. In the Philippines, the 'transparency seal' provision of the budget law, 'to enhance transparency and enforce accountability', calls on all national government agency official websites to post annual reports for the last three years, in line with precise instructions in the national budget circular.

Some monitoring information may need to be externally commissioned or produced by an institution whose work is respected and widely accepted as free of government control. Over the last decade, autonomous evaluation agencies have been established in Latin American countries including Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico, and their responsibilities have been strengthened either by practice or through new legal provisions. Sustainable funding is a key factor in their ability to play their role effectively.

In aid recipient countries, annual joint sector reviews that bring together government, donors, civil society actors and other stakeholders are now common. However, they have weaknesses, as participation is not broad enough, implementation plans for recommendations are lacking and agendas are often driven by donors.

Accountable schools

Schools and other education and training institutions are formally responsible to governments and informally to parents and students. Many countries devolve decision-making to regional and local school authorities, encouraging both bottom-up and top-down accountability. Emphasis on accountability poses several challenges for schools.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS HELP IN MONITORING SCHOOL QUALITY

Government education regulations vary worldwide. For example, while nearly all 71 systems reviewed for the GEM Report had teacher qualification regulations, less than 40% had maximum pupil/teacher ratios (**Figure 4**). Regulations can hold education providers accountable but may not be effective in practice. In poorer countries, many schools did not comply with existing regulations for reasons outside their control. For instance, underfunding means many schools in Tajikistan are not properly heated in winter despite regulations.

Traditionally, school inspections monitored regulatory compliance, with effectiveness depending on inspectors' skills. Some research indicated that principals who felt strong accountability pressure from inspections acted to improve performance.

Many private schools in poorer countries are not regulated

Private schooling has expanded. The number of countries with over 20% private enrolment increased between 2005 and 2015 (**Figure 5**). In some countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, many private schools are unregulated, especially low-fee schools serving poor populations, which have grown faster than governments

FIGURE 4:

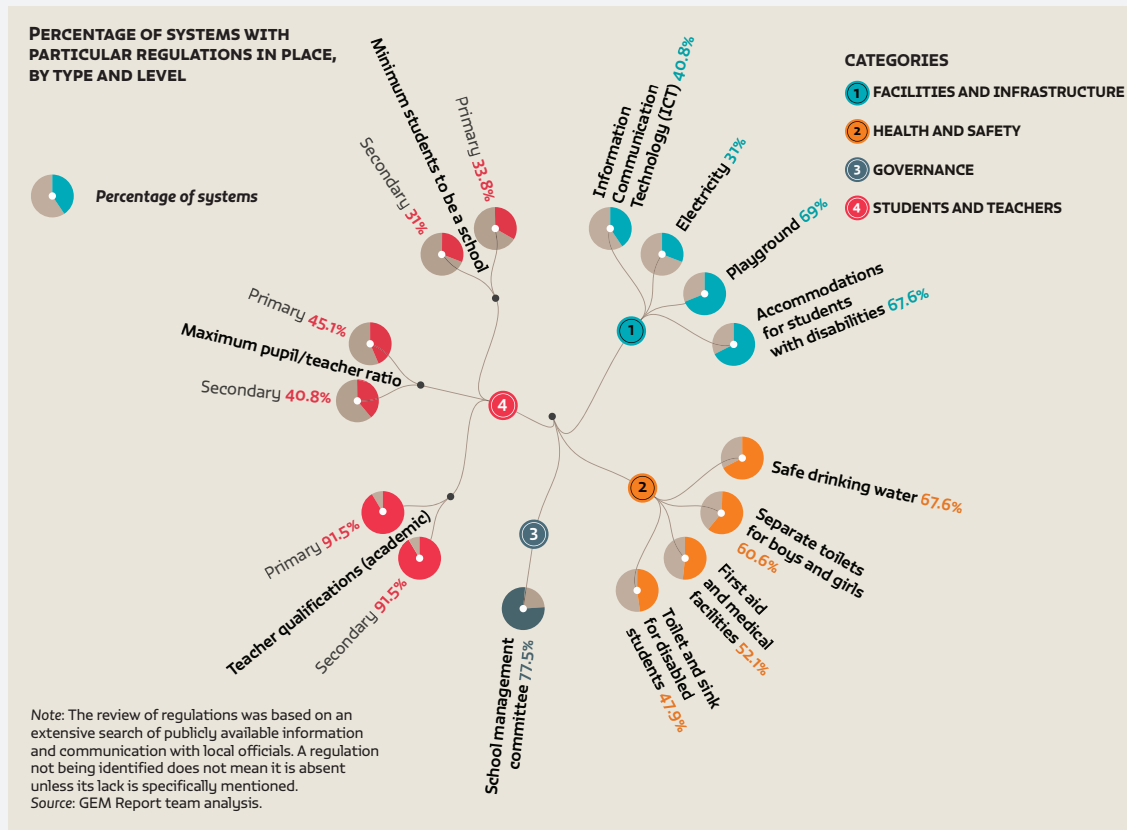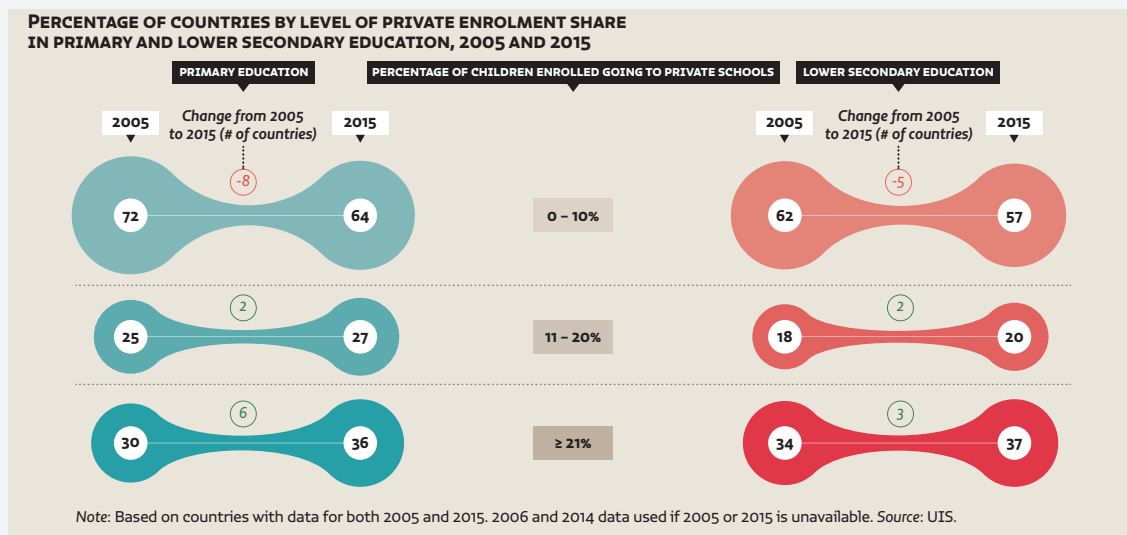**Government education regulations vary worldwide**

PERCENTAGE OF SYSTEMS WITH PARTICULAR REGULATIONS IN PLACE, BY TYPE AND LEVEL

CATEGORIES

1 FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE
2 HEALTH AND SAFETY
3 GOVERNANCE
4 STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Percentage of systems

Minimum students to be a school — Secondary 31% / Primary 33.8%

Information Communication Technology (ICT) 40.8%

Electricity 31%

Playground 69%

Accommodations for students with disabilities 67.6%

Maximum pupil/teacher ratio — Primary 45.1% / Secondary 40.8%

Teacher qualifications (academic) — Primary 91.5% / Secondary 91.5%

Safe drinking water 67.6%

Separate toilets for boys and girls 60.6%

First aid and medical facilities 52.1%

Toilet and sink for disabled students 47.9%

School management committee 77.5%

Note: The review of regulations was based on an extensive search of publicly available information and communication with local officials. A regulation not being identified does not mean it is absent unless its lack is specifically mentioned.
Source: GEM Report team analysis.

FIGURE 5:

Private sector enrolment has expanded in primary and lower secondary education

PERCENTAGE OF COUNTRIES BY LEVEL OF PRIVATE ENROLMENT SHARE IN PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION, 2005 AND 2015

PRIMARY EDUCATION

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN ENROLLED GOING TO PRIVATE SCHOOLS

LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION

	2005	Change from 2005 to 2015 (# of countries)	2015		2005	Change from 2005 to 2015 (# of countries)	2015
0 – 10%	72	-8	64		62	-5	57
11 – 20%	25	2	27		18	2	20
≥ 21%	30	6	36		34	3	37

Note: Based on countries with data for both 2005 and 2015. 2006 and 2014 data used if 2005 or 2015 is unavailable. *Source:* UIS.

OFTEN SCHOOL INSPECTIONS HAVE LITTLE TO DO WITH QUALITY EDUCATION

SCHOOL INSPECTOR

can handle. Some schools remain unregistered to avoid overly restrictive regulations. Regulating private schools to improve equity requires concerted action.

Weak regulatory environments are especially problematic when powerful private chains expand rapidly. Bridge International Academies operates more than 500 schools in 5 countries. Inspections in Kenya and Uganda reported unqualified teachers, inadequate infrastructure and unauthorized curricula and courts have upheld ministries' moves to close some schools.

An inspection focus on education quality is welcome but difficult to implement

Increasingly, especially in richer countries, inspection is shifting away from compliance with regulatory standards and towards evaluating the quality of teaching and learning that takes place in schools. However, this supportive function is difficult to carry out well. Inspection systems in poorer countries face resource and capacity constraints. In South Africa, supervisors resisted inspection reform, partly from memories of apartheid inspections. In many contexts, improving inspection takes time. By 2015, only 45% of inspectors in Angola had received training in reforms begun in 2010.

Quality assurance in early childhood education focuses on easily observable aspects

Despite the importance of early childhood education to children's holistic development, the World Bank's Systems Approach for Better Education Results between 2010 and 2015 showed that only 14 of 34 low and middle income countries had established early childhood education standards and compliance monitoring systems.

In quality assurance, countries often favour easily measurable and observable operational characteristics, such as infrastructure and pupil/teacher ratios. Even so, countries often struggle to monitor compliance systematically, as examples from Belize, Indonesia, Nepal and Swaziland suggest.

Other systems try to assess more nuanced aspects of teaching. In Chile, educators at all municipal schools are evaluated every four years against the Good Teaching Framework standards, a process involving self-evaluation, external observations, peer assessment and a portfolio. Teachers rated 'unsatisfactory' are re-evaluated the following year and barred from teaching if no progress has been made.

> " Only 14 of 34 low and middle income countries had established early childhood education standards and compliance monitoring systems "

Some instruments, such as the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, help assess the quality of interactions between teachers and children. Developed and widely used in the United States, the scale has also been adapted for use in other high income countries, including Germany and Italy.

Direct measures of early childhood development can support quality assurance processes. The longitudinal study Growing Up in Scotland aims to link early experiences with later outcomes among 14,000 children in three cohorts, with results feeding back into redesign of early childhood care and education policy.

Community contributions, particularly by parents, are crucial for ensuring quality of early childhood care. In France, the National Family Allocation Fund produces a regular barometer based on parent satisfaction surveys, and elected parent representatives provide input to the Early Childhood Commission of the General Council.

Quality assurance mechanisms in higher education reflect varying objectives

Countries' legal frameworks provide for single or multiple national agencies responsible for quality assurance in higher education, although many low income countries have not yet established national systems. Regional arrangements, such as the Lisbon Convention, have spurred development of national quality assurance systems, with countries incorporating regional standards into national law.

Quality assurance assessment involves standard setting, institutional self-assessment, external expert and peer review, evaluation reports and appeal processes. Standards, either prescriptive or advisory, cover higher education inputs, activities and outputs. China's Quality Assessment of Undergraduate Education standards encompass 19 indicators in 8 major areas: university mission, teaching staff, facilities, academic curriculum, management, atmosphere, learning outlines and feature programmes.

> " Quality assurance in higher education involves standard setting, institutional self-assessment, external expert and peer review, evaluation reports and appeal processes "

Quality assurance agencies hold themselves accountable via annual reports, databases, regional and international agency registers, and national information centres. The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education publishes a manual of best practices to encourage accountability and transparency; 18 members in countries from Costa Rica to the United Arab Emirates have been aligned with its Guidelines of Good Practice. However, much of the information in accountability reports is not widely disseminated beyond higher education experts.

Regulatory frameworks covering cross-national higher education largely focus on supporting institutions. International students are often unaware of their rights, and information may be difficult to access. Countries should prioritize identifying and raising awareness about disreputable providers and encouraging student bodies to disseminate information on good-quality providers.

Many scholarship programmes regularly account to donors for resources spent, but their reports would be more useful if they also provided timely information to students, families and universities. Longitudinal studies measuring programme impact and capturing university and alumni feedback are useful. The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom, for example, surveys award holders and uses the results to inform future programme design.

Governments need to be held accountable for ensuring affordable access to higher education

Higher education enrolment has been growing steadily, driven by improved student progression rates and higher numbers of part-time students.

Governments use national legislative frameworks to foster equity and affordability in higher education, but few countries guarantee universal access. Those that do include Ecuador, Greece and Tunisia. Many laws guaranteeing access to higher education, including those in Brazil and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, prohibit discrimination and encourage access for minorities and disadvantaged groups.

As demand for higher education has grown, governments have shifted some of the cost burden onto individuals, either by increasing tuition and fees or encouraging private sector provision. Even where there are no fees, however, this by itself is not sufficient to ensure affordability. Without additional support, free universal access can still end up subsidizing the rich. The Philippines, for example, abolished public colleges' fees in 2016, but these were already attracting students from richer backgrounds.

> " Tuition fees should be combined with financial aid programmes, which may include grants, loans and tax benefits "

Tuition fees should be combined with financial aid programmes, which may include grants, loans and tax benefits. Loan repayment assistance for students with low income can help increase affordable options. Targeting low income populations is critical, but means testing can be difficult in countries with less reliable measures of household finances, as in many low income countries.

Skills providers and certifiers are accountable to trainees and employers

A robust quality assurance system for professional skills development helps hold authorities and service providers accountable to beneficiaries, such as workers and employers, and to each other.

Skills development qualification systems need coherent governance, with a common framework that outlines clear aims. One way to link labour market demand and provider supply is to involve employers and social partners in developing frameworks, although this has not always proved easy, for instance in Poland and Tunisia.

The increasing number of non-government training providers should comply with regulatory standards and procedures to be accredited and operate. As with higher education, accreditation is a quality assurance process whereby usually external government or professional authorities confirm providers have met set standards.

Aiming to train 400 million people by 2022, India's ambitious skills development programme has to ensure that certification is transparent, trainees receive the full benefits, candidates register using a unique identification number and no illegal subcontracting to non-accredited providers occurs. The government needs to protect trainees from false claims promising them employment and requesting fees in return. Similarly, in Australia, a Senate inquiry examined whether private training providers' marketing misled candidates, especially disadvantaged ones, about the value of qualifications to be earned.

> **All of the more than 200 adult literacy and numeracy programmes in a UNESCO database have carried out some monitoring and evaluation**

Monitoring can improve accountability in adult literacy programmes

Accountability in adult literacy and numeracy programmes is complicated by the wide range of programmes, providers, funding streams and perceived aims. Even so, countries are increasingly setting quality standards and expectations for results. Monitoring systems are becoming common: all of the more than 200 adult literacy and numeracy programmes in the UNESCO Effective Literacy and Numeracy Practices Database have carried out some monitoring and evaluation, usually as part of programme management and implementation.

Collecting financial data helps governments hold non-government providers accountable for quality and resource allocation. South Africa's Kha Ri Gude (Let Us Learn) literacy programme contracts with a private company for financial accounting and reporting, and to update the learner and educator databases of a management information system. Teacher payments depend on expenditure and attendance data submission. An audit in 2016 found that volunteers had been allegedly paid stipends for more learners than indicated on their claims.

Monitoring literacy programme results can help ensure accountability. Field visit assessments are one method, used for example in Pakistan. Others include formative and summative strategies, such as tests, oral presentations and self-assessments.

High income countries often assess achievement using standardized national assessment frameworks and tools, sometimes linked to public funding, as in the United States. Some middle income countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran and Mexico, give online final exams automatically generated for each district. Other countries rely more on class facilitators to generate formative and summative assessment and do not systematically collate data for analysis. And some programmes go beyond narrowly construed literacy skills in assessing learning achievement. France's Fight Against Illiteracy programme evaluates participants on autonomy, confidence, motivation, daily life interactions and cognitive development.

USING STUDENT-LEVEL LEARNING DATA TO HOLD SCHOOLS TO ACCOUNT IS COSTLY...

Governments are increasingly interested in collecting data on school and student learning outcomes. In principle, this information should enable education leaders at the national, subnational and school levels to make evidence-based decisions, as long as the information is of good quality and they have decision-making power independent of political interests.

Summative assessment results are used at the individual level to make student admission and progression decisions and at the institutional level to position schools relative to one another to identify areas for improvement. At the system level, summative assessment results can help monitor whether standards are met.

Countries differ in how they use individual learning data. Some systems, such as Japan's, focus on national examinations, which determine progression between levels in a given year but do not enable comparisons of learning over time.

Other systems define standards for expected learning and organize assessments to report against them. England (United Kingdom)'s complex and comprehensive system on learning outcomes is based on national standards, an elaborate student assessment mechanism and an external evaluation system. The data collected are used to prepare inspectors prior to school visits, inform parents, help school leaders set targets, identify pupils in need of additional support, and support local and national authorities in monitoring performance for accountability purposes.

Different countries assess different learning outcomes, with some focusing exclusively on language and mathematics and others assessing a broader range. Countries also differ in the kind of school and student background information they collect to enable contextual comparison. In Australia, context information on schools, including finance, demographic structure and socio-educational advantage, is made available through the My School website. In Denmark, the Agency for Education and Quality introduced a student well-being indicator.

> **Managing the information from learning outcomes can be challenging for education systems. Even high income countries need to work hard to avoid simplistic interpretations**

But managing all this information can be challenging for education systems. Even high income countries need to work hard to avoid simplistic interpretations by adjusting for school and student socio-economic information and for whether schools and students improve over time. Countries are increasingly introducing such value-added measures, but they can be insufficiently precise, and the conclusions drawn from them need to be tempered.

These problems are exacerbated in middle and low income countries. Information on outcomes that would allow reliable comparisons is costly to produce, and the necessary investment in capacity may be prohibitive. These countries often focus more on final examination results than on comparisons against standards. Jordan's National Test, for example, assesses each grade every three years, but the results are not comparable over time as test items change regularly. Published reports consist mostly of descriptive tables with no policy-related analysis, and teachers receive no support to understand the results despite the objective to provide pedagogical assistance.

...AND THE EVIDENCE THAT PERFORMANCE-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY DELIVERS GOOD-QUALITY EDUCATION IS MIXED

Of 101 education systems reviewed, 51 make student test scores publicly available, including 17 which use them to sanction and reward schools and educators. Test scores, however, are heavily determined by factors outside school control.

There is no clear evidence that sanctioning schools for test scores improves learning: Statistics typically show no or marginally positive gains. The United States No Child Left Behind Act threatened low-performing schools with closure. It had marginal positive effects on student performance, widened the black–white achievement gap and exposed students, especially in low-performing schools, to narrower curricula as schools prioritized tested subjects.

Schools may adjust to performance-based accountability systems in negative ways, gaming the system and avoiding sanctions to the exclusion of longer-term reforms. Reshaping the testing pool, narrowing curriculum, teaching to the test and cheating were found in Australia, Chile, the Republic of Korea and elsewhere, disproportionately affecting disadvantaged schools and students.

> **Performance-based accountability may result in schools adjusting in negative ways, gaming the system and avoiding sanctions to the exclusion of longer-term reforms**

MARKET COMPETITION IN EDUCATION CAN DEEPEN SOCIAL DIVISION

One potential accountability mechanism is competition. The idea is that, if parents can choose their children's school, it puts schools under pressure to perform better to attract students.

Making school information publicly available and understandable is a prerequisite for parents to choose and for a market to function. In many middle and high income country education systems, school-level test results are posted publicly. However, in poorer countries, information is not easily accessible or understandable for intended users. For instance, online report cards are rarely accessed in the United Republic of Tanzania, where internet access is low. In Kenya, 72% of parents did not know how to use literacy and numeracy information.

Some middle and high income countries have been proactive in creating a market for schools. School choice policies have increased in over two-thirds of member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in the last 25 years. However, evidence suggests that school choice policies benefit more advantaged populations. Parents frequently base choice on factors such as demographic composition, which can lead to diminished diversity and reinforce socio-economic divisions. In Finland, school choice was primarily exercised by educated families whose children excelled academically. In Santiago, Chile, only one in four parents of grade one students chose the highest performing school from their shortlists, and almost 70% looked at schools only in terms of religious affiliation.

Voucher programmes can equalize school choice, but their impact on education is mixed. Colombia's programme targeting low income neighbourhoods increased private school enrolment, as well as voucher recipients' achievement levels and graduation rates. However, making vouchers universally available and allowing schools to raise their fees may increase inequality in access without improving student performance. Sweden's universal voucher program has been associated with growing segregation. Chile has a highly stratified system. Its voucher programme has encouraged selective admission of high-achieving or high-income students. Reforms to improve targeting in 2008 did little to improve equity.
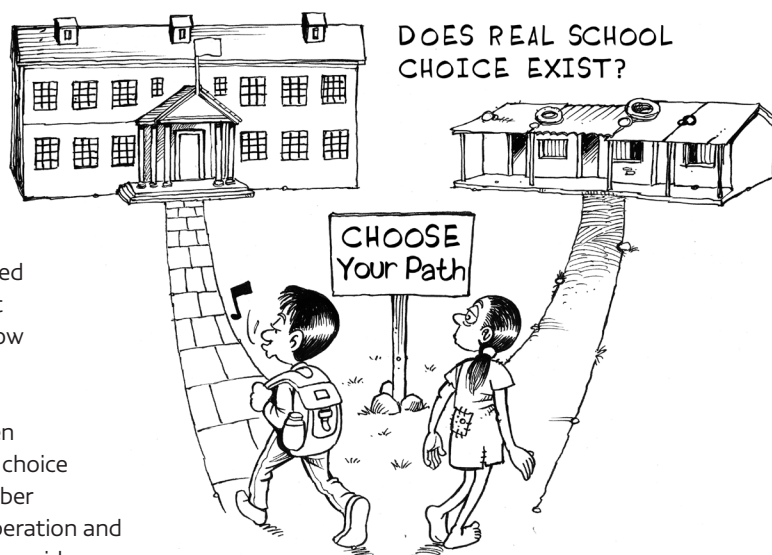
COMMUNITIES CAN HELP SHAPE AND MONITOR SCHOOL POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Social accountability by communities can improve school responsiveness and efficiency. Community monitoring often focuses on infrastructure, staff attendance and budgeting, but the impact of one-time interventions can be unsustainable. In Ethiopia, community partnering with government to collect school data and increase community dialogue had positive results. However, lack of resourcing can threaten such projects' sustainability.

Community stakeholders participate in school-based management (SBM), which sees decision-making authority and responsibility transferred to local actors. SBM has improved student achievement and attendance in countries including Indonesia and Mexico. However, unwillingness to share responsibility with community members has stymied some SBM efforts, as in Hong Kong, China. Community representation sometimes excludes marginalized groups. Elite capture was a problem for some SBM committees in Nepal.

> " In school choice systems, parents frequently base choice on factors such as demographic composition, which can lead to diminished diversity and reinforce socio-economic divisions "

Accountable teachers

Teachers have the primary responsibility for educating students. In many countries, they face growing pressures. The complexity and variety of their tasks can put conflicting demands on their time, complicating efforts to hold them accountable.

PROVIDING HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTION IS TEACHERS' CORE RESPONSIBILITY

Most countries allocate the vast majority of teachers' work time to teaching. Formal instruction in some countries has expanded beyond core subjects into cross-curricular skills and social, behavioural and emotional competencies. Teachers participating in the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) spent about two hours a week on extracurricular activities, on average, ranging from one hour in Sweden to eight in Japan. Teachers also have responsibilities that are often not recognized or rewarded, which can lower motivation.

A study of six low and middle income countries in the early 2000s suggested that the average teacher absenteeism was 19%. However, the extent of teacher responsibility for absenteeism is often exaggerated. Between 2007 and 2014, Senegalese students received, on average, 108 of 188 official annual school days. Most reasons for absence were beyond teachers' control (**Figure 6**). In Indonesia in 2013 and 2014, 10% of primary school teachers were absent. Nearly half these absences were excused time for study.

> "
> Teachers participating in the Teaching and Learning International Survey spent about two hours a week on extracurricular activities, on average
> "

EVALUATING TEACHERS FOR QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION CAN BE HARD AND TAKES MANY FORMS

Government and public trust in the teaching profession, and teachers' trust in the evaluation process, greatly influences the effectiveness of accountability approaches. In Finland, teachers originate and govern their own accountability policies, evidencing mutual trust among stakeholders. By contrast, trust in teachers in Japan declined upon underperformance on international assessments, and an increase in external accountability mechanisms has added reporting responsibilities to a workload already averaging 54 hours per week.

FIGURE 6:
Senegalese students lose over 50 school days annually owing to school closures

AVERAGE DAYS PER YEAR TEACHERS WERE ABSENT, BY CAUSE, SENEGAL, 2007–2014

- 31.2 — SCHOOL CLOSURES IN JUNE AND JULY
- 18.1 — LACK OF RESOURCES TO OPEN SCHOOLS
- 10.7 — STRIKES
- 4.7 — ABSENCE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES
- 3.5 — SCHOOL CLOSED FOR OTHER REASONS
- 11.6 — TEACHER INDIVIDUAL ABSENCES

Source: Niang (2017).
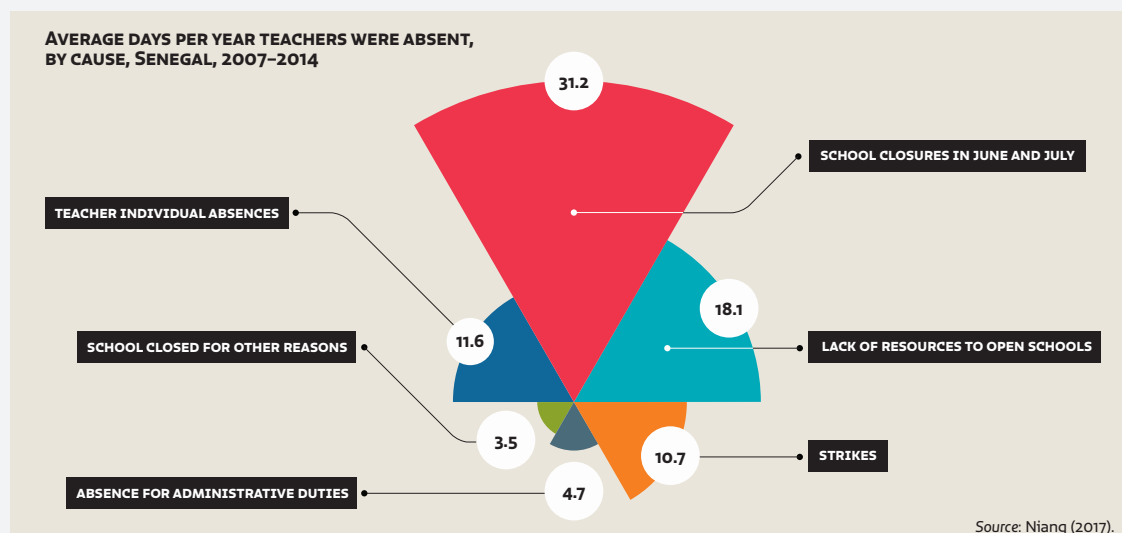
Contract teaching was initially a stopgap measure to overcome teacher shortages, but short-term teacher contracts are increasingly used as an accountability mechanism in low-trust environments, with contract renewal meant to incentivize improved performance. A dearth of tenured positions often coincides with increased staff workload, reduced public funding and diminished staff and organization rights. Contract teachers are also frequently underqualified, unsupported and underpaid.

> **Teachers' trust in the evaluation process greatly influences the effectiveness of accountability approaches**

FORMAL EVALUATIONS ARE THE MOST COMMON MECHANISM FOR HOLDING TEACHERS ACCOUNTABLE

Most countries evaluate teachers, using a variety of approaches. Classroom observations were used in evaluations for 96% of teachers in the mostly rich countries which participated in the 2013 TALIS. Observations are usually conducted by principals or management team members, and consequences vary. In Singapore, the information is mainly used for formative purposes; in Israel, observations are used in promotion. In the United States, ratings have often been poor at distinguishing teacher competence. Reliable and useful observation requires fine-grained, actionable feedback. Trained observers with subject and pedagogical expertise, including peer reviewers, provide more consistent feedback.

In the 2013 TALIS, 83% of teachers reported that student surveys were part of evaluations. Using student evaluations assumes students can recognize good teaching and report it truthfully. Reliability depends heavily on evaluation purpose and design and can be hindered by student bias. In France and Italy, teachers who gave higher grades received better evaluations. Teacher gender may also affect student perceptions.

> **The reliability of student evaluations of teachers depends heavily on evaluation purpose and design and can be hindered by student bias**

Student test scores were the most common component of teacher evaluations in the 2013 TALIS, reported by 97% of teachers. However, test scores are influenced by many factors, including curriculum covered, student capacity, parental involvement, and school culture and resources. Scores alone are insufficiently reliable indicators of teacher effectiveness. More accurate evaluations use multiple sources, which may be difficult in under-resourced systems.

Teacher evaluations are increasingly consequential. Those who believe this approach to accountability can provide an effective response to perceived education problems typically assume (a) all education actors agree on desired outcomes that can be accurately measured; (b) responsibilities are clearly identified and communicated, and responsible actors have the ability to influence desired outcomes by themselves; and (c) chosen incentives will motivate action that produces desired outcomes.

But performance-based pay has a mixed impact on learning outcomes and can be detrimental to equity. It also tends to promote a competitive environment, which reduces teacher motivation, contrary to its intentions. Some studies suggest it affects female teachers more negatively than male teachers.

Teacher evaluations in high-stakes systems in richer countries have limited ability to improve instruction. The lack of actionable feedback and the focus on monitoring over improvement can reduce teacher satisfaction and cause many to view evaluation as merely an administrative task.

Education systems focused on accountability do not prepare teachers sufficiently

There is a clear trend of shifting instructional and management responsibilities to schools. Alongside the introduction of stronger accountability systems, this trend increases workload and requires additional skills on the part of teachers and school leaders, which can lead to grievances. In the United Kingdom, 56% of teachers reported that data collection and management caused unnecessary work.

Teachers need skills to assess student performance, analyse data and use them to inform instruction. But many teachers feel ill-prepared to use data. A study in the United States found that two-thirds of teachers lacked the facility to use data to improve instruction and often found the amount excessive.

Many high income countries increasingly embed data literacy in teacher and principal preparation and professional development programmes. However, such programmes tend to focus on understanding reports, and few have student teachers practise using data for instruction. Also, programmes often emphasize technology rather than data literacy skills.

Minimizing data collection duplication can reduce the burden on teachers and principals. But the increasing trend of using data for education management also raises more general questions. First, the idea that learning improvement can be programmed ignores education's social and cultural aspects. Second, the emphasis on learning outcomes that can be monitored may in fact serve primarily the accountability system, which is premised on a very narrow set of learning outcomes. Therefore, despite their usefulness, it is important to guard against taking data at face value. There should be more emphasis on using data diagnostically.

PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY CAN SHAPE THE TEACHING CULTURE

Professional accountability is designed with teachers' involvement and relies on their expertise and professionalism. Systems incorporating professional accountability generally result from public trust in the teaching profession to deliver high-quality education.

Peer learning can improve instruction. Typically found in middle and high income countries, professional learning communities provide structure for collaborative learning, involving sharing lessons with peers. The Lesson Study model, used in Australia; Hong Kong, China; Japan; Singapore; Sweden; the United Kingdom and the United States, uses collaborative planning, observation, analysis and refinement to improve lesson delivery and student learning. In England (United Kingdom), Lesson Study encouraged instructional risk-taking and reduced teachers' feelings of isolation. Effective peer learning requires teacher autonomy and considerable time and resource commitments.

Most countries have teacher-developed codes of ethics to provide self-disciplinary guidelines via formulized professional norms. A review of codes of ethics in 24 countries found that many teachers did not know about them. Lack of clear enforcement mechanisms can also hinder effectiveness. Reporting mechanisms and sanctions are not always defined. Those evaluating misconduct should be trained.

CITIZENS CAN HELP HOLD TEACHERS ACCOUNTABLE

Community monitoring can be particularly useful in addressing teacher absenteeism. In Uganda, community-designed report cards reduced teacher absences. However, reliance on parents to hold teachers accountable is not sustainable. In Kenya, learning gains from parents monitoring and evaluating teachers wore off one year after the intervention concluded.

More systems are using technology to monitor teachers, despite concerns about trust and intrusiveness. Pakistan has monitored the attendance of over 210,000 education staff in 26,200 schools using biometrics. As of February 2017, 40,000 absent teachers and 6,000 absconders had been disciplined. Thousands of classrooms in China are live-streamed, allowing parents and the public to monitor and comment on teaching practices and student behaviour. Critics worry continual surveillance violates teachers' and students' privacy rights and could negatively affect instruction.

> ❝
> A review of codes of ethics in 24 countries found that many teachers did not know about them
> ❞

Engaging in teacher monitoring can be affected by socio-economic status, individual capacity and teachers' attitudes. Disadvantaged parents often lack the skills, knowledge or confidence to interact with teachers. For such monitoring to be successful, both community members and teachers should be involved in deciding criteria and in designing accountability mechanisms, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

Accountable parents and students

Accountability policies usually hold governments, schools and teachers responsible for the right to good-quality public education. But as education is a shared societal endeavour, parents and students also have important roles to play. Parents are responsible for providing a stimulating home environment but also for supporting their children's school attendance, effort and behaviour. Students take on more of the latter responsibilities as they get older.

TRUANCY LAWS STIPULATE PENALTIES FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

Truancy – unauthorized absence from school – is a pervasive problem worldwide. On average, across 33 countries participating in the Global School-based Student Health Survey, one in three adolescents aged 13 to 17 reported being truant in the previous 30 days, varying from 20% in the Bahamas and Uruguay to over 40% in Kuwait, Oman and Tokelau. Truancy is associated with negative short- and long-term consequences for students; it is linked with grade retention and dropout, as well as involvement with the justice system.

Disadvantaged students are more likely to be truant. While truancy is a multidimensional phenomenon involving various factors, parents' role in mitigating it is important.

Many countries have truancy laws that hold parents accountable for attendance. Fines are the most common penalties, although a few countries apply criminal charges (**Figure 7**). Severe sanctions disproportionately affect low income families and women, who head most single-parent households.

Therefore, truancy laws, while providing a legal framework, need to be accompanied by a supporting structure for prevention. Improving parents' accountability starts by understanding and improving the school–parent relationship, as examples from Australia, France and Ireland suggest.

CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFERS TARGET POOR FAMILIES

Conditional cash transfers (CCTs) provide poor families with subsidies conditional on parents ensuring that their children go to school. They were pioneered in Latin American countries, including Brazil, Colombia and Mexico, and expanded to middle and low income Asian and sub-Saharan African countries. In Europe and Northern America, CCTs generally apply negative incentives, which act like fines. Romania, for example, interrupts poor families' child allowance after several unexplained absences.

FIGURE 7:
Fines are the most common consequence for truancy

MAXIMUM CONSEQUENCES FOR PARENTS OF TRUANT CHILDREN IN 34 COUNTRIES WITH TRUANCY LAWS

Notes: The amount of fines was converted from local currency using exchange rate (10 May 2017). National and regional laws and guidelines are included. Regional representation includes Ontario (Canada), Bogotá (Colombia) and Naga (Philippines). *Source*: GEM Report team analysis.

FINES
FINES AND JAIL TIME
NEITHER
35%
24%
29%
9%
3%
JAIL TIME
NOT IDENTIFIED

SAMPLE MAXIMUM FINE
BELIZE — $100
BULGARIA — $556
JAPAN — $878
SERBIA — $441

SAMPLE MAXIMUM JAIL TIME	
BELGIUM	1 MONTH
FRANCE	2 YEARS
SINGAPORE	1 YEAR
SOUTH AFRICA	6 MONTHS

CCTs have increased attendance, particularly of girls, in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nicaragua and elsewhere. A review of CCT programmes in 34 high income countries found similar results. Their effectiveness depends on their targeting, the ease of access to school and the size of the transfer, which must be sufficient to cover opportunity costs of attendance.

PARENTS AND STUDENTS PLAY AN ESSENTIAL ROLE IN FOSTERING SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

To learn, children and adolescents need to feel safe and supported in their learning environments. As active partners in creating this environment, students have a responsibility to ensure that their behaviour does not deny others the right to such safety and support.

Schools are increasingly using codes of conduct to teach students acceptable interaction strategies. Such codes have been shown to be effective in reducing school violence. While mostly found in Europe and Northern America, the approach has also been applied in Asian countries, such as Singapore.

> " Codes of conduct aiming to teach students acceptable interaction strategies have been shown to be effective in reducing school violence "

In addition to clear and consistent rules and disciplinary standards for students, meetings and training for parents form an important component of reducing the incidence of school violence. Parents contribute to the development of their children's peer relationships both directly (e.g. helping children develop peer relationship skills) and indirectly (e.g. through parent attitudes).

In the United States, home environments where parents unduly criticize their children, impose few rules, mistreat their children and are violent towards each other have been linked to greater incidence of bullying. In Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, greater parental encouragement, emotional support and parent–child communication has been associated with a reduced likelihood of peer victimization.

Accountable international organizations

International, transnational and supranational organizations mobilize and support countries in meeting international standards. But holding them accountable is difficult, partly because they are responsible to multiple stakeholders. For example, the United Nations is accountable to both member states and the people whose rights member states may be violating.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS HELP SET COMMON GOALS

> " Taking the example of the sustainable development agenda, accommodating diverse interests has meant cumbersome goals, unclear prioritization and relatively weak monitoring "

International organizations should help member countries and other stakeholders devise common education goals and establish implementation mechanisms. They should be accountable for ensuring diverse voices are reflected in education agendas and agreements. However, to take the example of the sustainable development agenda, accommodating diverse interests has meant cumbersome goals, unclear prioritization and relatively weak monitoring. 'Accountability' is conspicuously absent from the SDG foundation document.
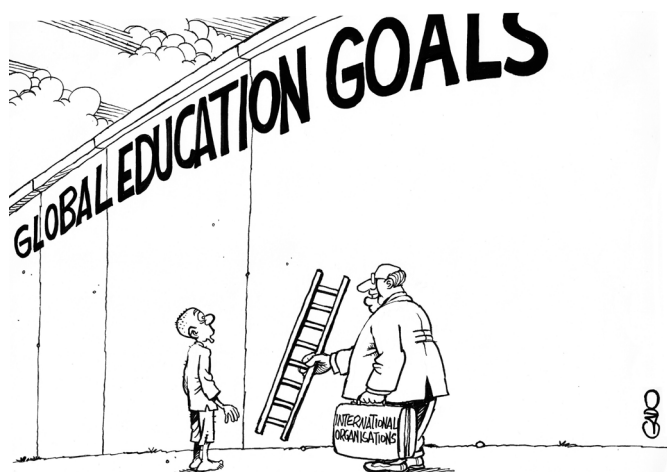
In the absence of a precise description of who is responsible for what, there is an accountability vacuum, not only for countries not living up to their commitments but also for international organizations. An evaluation of the Education for All coordination mechanisms found that partner and agency roles were unclear and accountability mechanisms were lacking. Multiple roles and competing agendas result in a situation where ill-defined responsibilities make holding any actor accountable difficult. Holding organizations accountable also requires resources that may be scarce.

While the responsibility of international organizations for setting goals and facilitating their achievement is considerably diluted at the global level, the situation may be different at the regional level. In Europe, the ET 2020 strategic framework addresses education as part of its overall growth strategy. The European Union uses its dense institutional structures to delegate tasks. The European Commission prepares an annual report tracking countries' progress against targets and benchmarks and, along with the European Council, submits a report every five years on priorities and common challenges best tackled through cooperation. But despite strong institutional and organizing capacity, accountability for coordinated actions remains fragmented.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS MUST BE TRANSPARENT WHEN SETTING STANDARDS

International organizations set standards for formal education processes to support coordination, consensus and equity. The development of the SDG indicator framework, which is open to considerable consultation, is one example. Another is the Bologna Process, which established a European Higher Education Area linking 48 countries with a common qualifications framework, credit system, quality assurance standards and implementation tools to facilitate mobility. It is praised for providing an accountability mechanism without coercing national implementation.

International organizations have also driven the dissemination of education standards generated outside formal processes, e.g. for learning standards. The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has shifted education policy towards outcomes but is also criticized for influencing non-OECD-country systems to which it is not accountable.

DONORS SHOULD BE HELD TO ACCOUNT FOR THEIR AID COMMITMENTS

" Aid predictability decreased between 2010 and 2015, and mutual accountability conditions concerning inclusiveness were not met "

Several organizations' missions include responsibility to improve poor countries' education systems through financial or technical assistance. Donor agencies are accountable to both donor country citizens and aid recipients, presenting potentially competing responsibilities.

There is a lack of follow-up mechanisms holding donors to account for aid commitments. In 2015, only 6 of 28 OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) member countries met their commitment to allocate 0.7% of national income to aid. Organizations are held accountable for aid volumes through formal processes, such as the OECD's peer review mechanism, and informal channels, such as the media and NGOs.

It is not just volume of aid that matters but also its effectiveness. The Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation monitors development partner activities. Its 2016 monitoring report showed modestly improved transparency in aid reporting. However, aid predictability decreased between 2010 and 2015, and mutual accountability conditions concerning inclusiveness were not met. Strong monitoring processes have neither increased aid volumes nor improved targeting towards countries most in need, although it is difficult to tell what the collective record would have been without these processes.

Multilateral donors disburse about one-third of total education aid. NGOs have expressed concern that policy decisions affecting citizens occur outside the democratic process. The World Bank is the world's largest education lender. Following the 2015 shareholding review, it expects the vote share of developing countries to exceed 50% as part of a reform process to increase their representation.

Results-based aid does not necessarily achieve effectiveness and accountability

The 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness was an effort to increase donor and partner country accountability to citizens and legislatures. One of its commitments was to increase results-based management. 'Payment by results' is part of this drive, which, ideally, gives recipients greater autonomy and shifts away from processes. In practice, things are more complicated.

Results-based programmes target outcomes and impact, unlike earlier forms of conditionality that tied aid to adoption of policies. They take many forms. The World Bank's Program-for-Results financing links disbursement directly to results. A key education example is the Big Results Now in Education programme in the United Republic of Tanzania, with indicators on pupil/teacher ratios but also on improved reading skills.

Some programmes contract with non-government providers to deliver education services. The donor covers per-student service delivery costs and sometimes variable incentive-oriented payments. Challenge funds make organizations compete for aid allocations, aiming to strengthen provider accountability. The United Kingdom Department for International Development's Girls Education Challenge Fund is one of the largest examples in education.

Few evaluations of such programmes have been made. Process evaluations have included that of the Program-for-Results instrument, which found that, contrary to expectations, results were mostly achieved at the institutional rather than the outcome level. Moreover, impact evaluations have faced challenges attributing observed changes to results-based programmes, partly because most interventions target a range of results, complicating efforts to draw conclusions about the payment approach's effect. Finally, it takes time for data to be made available and results to appear. Donors are currently investing to improve the evidence base.

> " Indicators used in results-based financing must also be aligned with long-term goals, and prioritise equity "

The evidence that exists points to some questions. Superimposing external incentives can damage providers' intrinsic motivation. Since the level of aid is uncertain, recipients also assume risk, which undermines part of the rationale. Giving providers autonomy to innovate through results-based programmes is expected to increase effectiveness, but providers are reluctant to change trusted methods if they must ensure results for payment.

Measurable and cost-effectively verifiable indicators are difficult to develop. Indicators must also be aligned with long-term goals. Inappropriate indicators that ignore equity can provide indirect incentives to target the most easily reached recipients.

Furthermore, payment by results can undermine country ownership, since the approach originates in donor countries and does not always align with country systems. Donors often favour non-government providers and neglect investment to strengthen public sector capacity. Basing aid disbursements on outcomes may also jeopardize the predictability of resource flows. Indeed, the approach may work best where it is needed least: in education systems that have a clear sense of purpose and well-aligned objectives, and can afford to take risks.

Accountable private, for-profit actors

Private, for-profit actors provide both core education and ancillary services, such as feeding programmes and instructional materials. Given their influence in education, they must be held to account effectively.

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMMES REQUIRE GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT

School meals are the world's most widely provided form of social protection. One in five children eats school meals daily. In several countries, meals are partly or wholly contracted to private companies. To be effective, private contracting requires clear government and provider responsibilities, transparency and adequate funding.

Effective government monitoring can help ensure that food providers target those in need. In Chile and Ghana, the entire school feeding supply chain is outsourced. But while Chile's nutrition programme is well monitored and targeted to poor students, in Ghana food does not properly target poor communities, political interference is widespread and government funding for monitoring is insufficient.

> " In several countries, meals are partly or wholly contracted to private companies "

PRIVATE TUTORING CAN AFFECT EDUCATION EQUITY

Private tutoring is a global phenomenon involving at least half of surveyed high school students in countries as diverse as Azerbaijan, China and Spain. In the Republic of Korea, an estimated 81% of elementary students and 56% of high school students received tutoring in 2014. The global market is expected to surpass US$227 billion by 2022. Private tutoring can increase students' stress and strain household budgets.

Governments mainly encourage accountability by providing consumer information, partnering with schools and working with teachers' unions to develop standards. Hong Kong, China, requires tutorial centres to obtain licences and supply information to clients. It promotes transparency with an online list of registered centres and prosecution of unregistered centres.
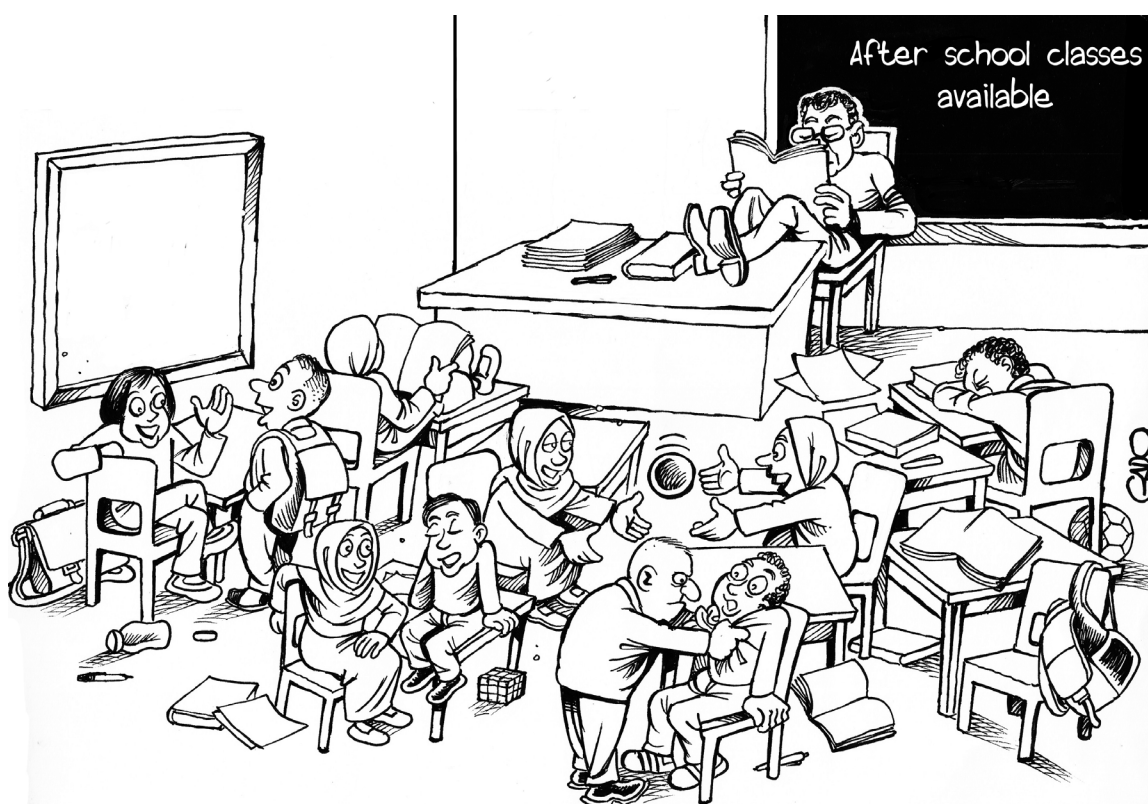
> **The global market of private tutoring is expected to surpass US$227 billion by 2022**

Allowing teachers to provide tutoring can create conflicts of interest. In Nepal, teachers covered less material in school to generate more demand for tutoring. However, many teachers offer private tutoring to cope with low salaries and lack of adequate instruction time. Some countries have regulations governing teacher involvement in private tutoring. Georgia's 2010 Teachers' Code of Ethics discourages teachers from tutoring their own students, while Japan prohibits full-time teachers from private tutoring. By contrast, teachers are permitted to tutor their own students in Uzbekistan.

GOVERNMENTS AND CSOS SHOULD HOLD INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS PROVIDERS TO ACCOUNT

Many governments use private textbook providers to reduce publication and distribution costs. Some public-private partnerships have been cost-effective; one in Uganda reduced textbook costs by two-thirds.

Clear responsibilities, media coverage, government commitment and societal action can improve textbook delivery and development. In the Philippines, a combination of government action and civil society involvement helped increase transparency in textbook bidding processes, cutting average prices and development and delivery time in half between 2002 and 2005. CSOs can also help monitor textbook content. In Texas, United States, grass-roots action pushed publishers to revise textbooks that strongly distorted climate change facts.

Private corporations are answerable only to their shareholders, raising concerns about their accountability to citizens for delivering a public good such as education. Antitrust lawsuits have been filed to block Pearson, a large education services company, from achieving a monopoly in education markets. In response, the company launched an internal accountability initiative whose results will be known when formal reporting begins in 2018.

> **Private corporations are answerable only to their shareholders, raising concerns about their accountability to citizens for delivering a public good such as education**

Governments have partnered with private tablet and laptop providers to overcome the 'digital divide' among students and schools. However, many such initiatives have benefited vendors, not students, owing to poor procurement and contract enforcement, as in Thailand. India abandoned its Aakash programme in 2015 without meeting its objectives. In the meantime, the vendor, DataWind, had become a leader in low-cost tablet innovation.

GOVERNMENTS HAVE LITTLE CONTROL ONCE MARKETS BECOME A MONOPOLY
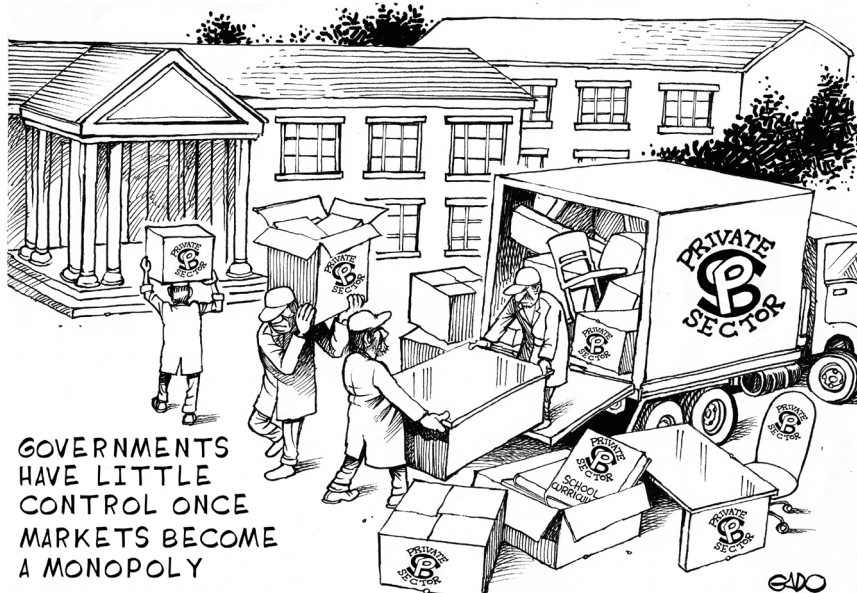
Pupils study at a school near Manaus, in the state of Amazonas, Brazil.

Monitoring progress in SDG 4

The sustainable development agenda has ushered in a new monitoring framework in education. Its aims are to be truly universal, to match the ambition of the targets, and to go beyond the traditional boundaries of education management information systems. Still, as mentioned in the 2016 GEM Report, it barely scratches the surface of core education and lifelong learning questions, especially those linked to sustainable development.

Even so, the new monitoring focus is ambitious enough to demand a considerable mobilization of resources for setting standards and deploying relevant tools to capture equity, quality and learning. Coordination efforts that genuinely involve countries are costly. In an era of considerable constraints in the funding of global public goods such as statistics and research, this is not an easy undertaking.

Some of the institutional foundations have been put in place, notably the Technical Cooperation Group on the Indicators for SDG 4-Education 2030, whose secretariat is at the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. This aims to build consensus in the definition of indicators and national ownership over the process. Still, as the review shows, the international community needs to invest a lot more to ensure all indicators are well defined and monitored.

Goal 4
Ensure quality
education for all
10 targets
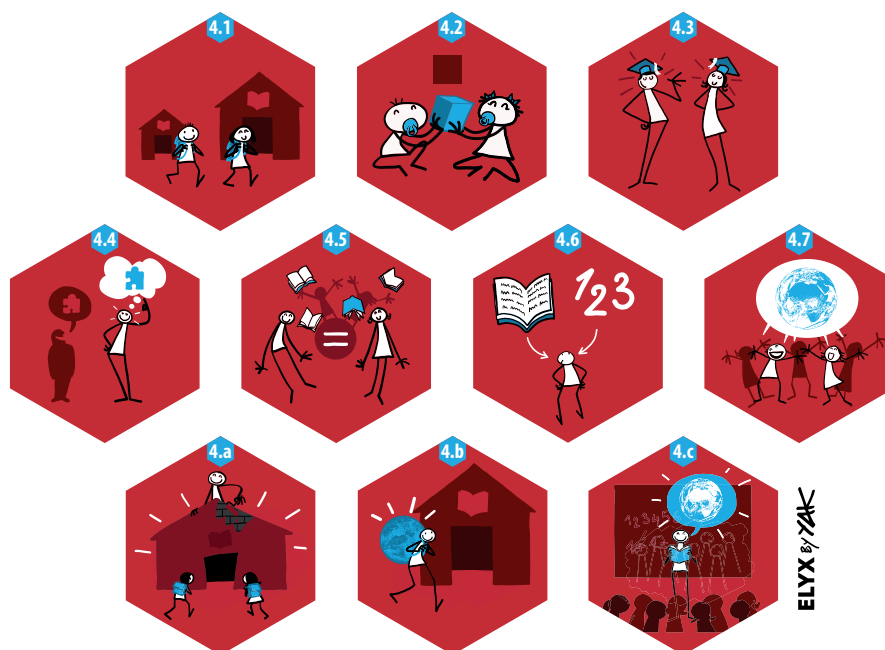
TARGET 4.1

Primary and secondary education

The global indicator for target 4.1 is a measure of proficiency in reading and mathematics at an early grade, the end of primary and the end of lower secondary education. There is no global standard for proficiency yet, although steps have recently been taken in that direction through the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning coordinated by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Roughly half of all countries administer a national learning assessment in reading and mathematics at the end of primary and end of lower secondary education. Yet, as of 2017, only between 25% and 38% of countries that participated in regional or international learning assessments have contributed data towards the global indicator. Moreover, results are reported in terms of the proficiency levels defined by each survey, which are not comparable.

Countries of the E9 group, a forum of low and middle income countries that have committed to achieving SDG 4 and account for over half the world's population, hold the key to global reporting on learning outcomes. Among them, Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia and Mexico contribute data at some of the three education levels, while Bangladesh, China, India, Nigeria and Pakistan do not report on this indicator at any level. It is critical, therefore, for all nine either to participate in a cross-national survey or to use their national assessments for reporting, provided they meet quality standards.

FIGURE 8:

In almost half of countries, less than one in two youth complete secondary school
*Completion rate, by level of education, selected countries, 2010–2015*
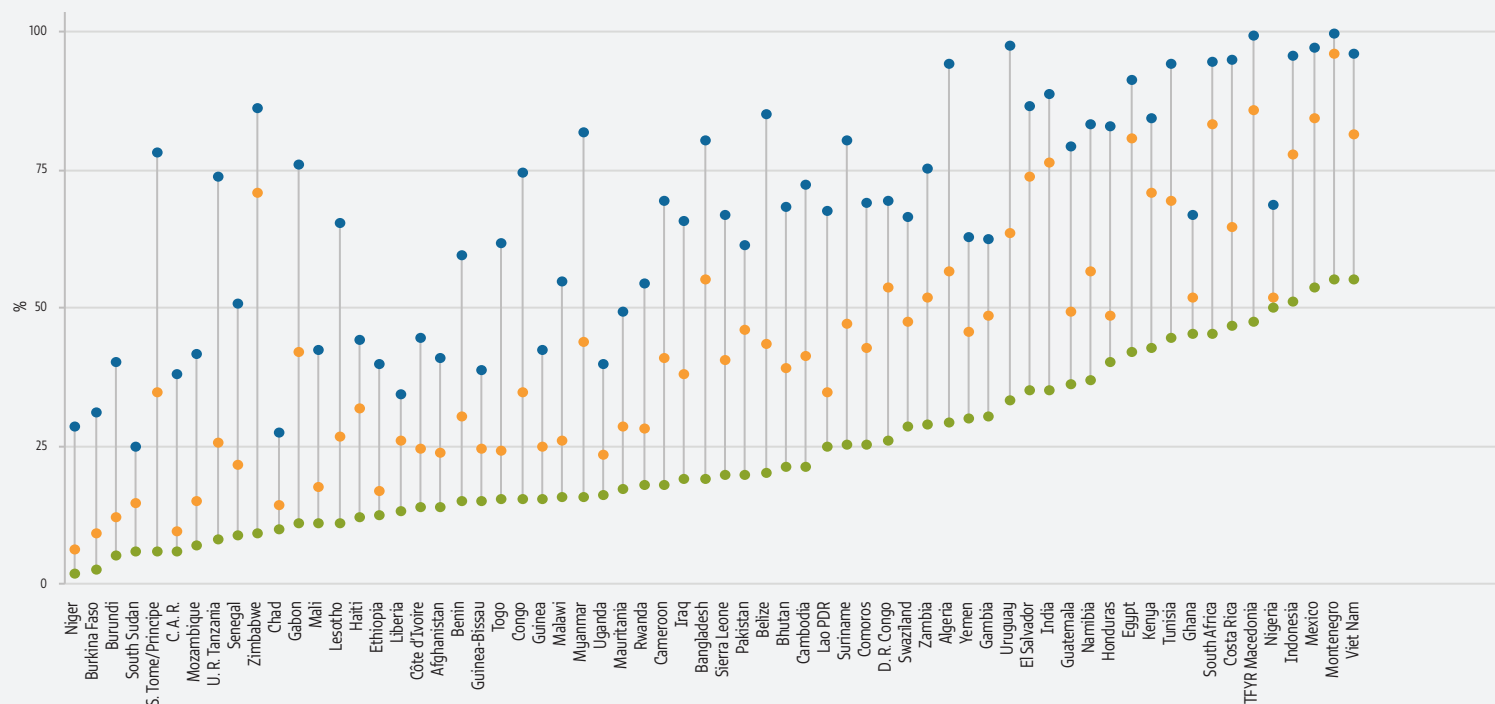
Source: GEM Report team analysis using household surveys.

These challenges notwithstanding, data from cross-national learning assessments suggest that, in many countries, particularly low and middle income ones, many students do not reach the minimum proficiency levels. In mathematics, one-third or less of students met the minimum benchmark at the end of primary education in Chad, Kuwait and Nicaragua and at the end of lower secondary education in Algeria, Indonesia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In reading, less than half of students met the minimum benchmark at the end of primary in Cameroon, Congo and Togo and at the end of lower secondary in Albania, Georgia and Lebanon.

These benchmarks measure achievement among those who had reached the respective grade. Assuming those who dropped out or never enrolled do not meet the benchmarks, the real percentage of those who reached the minimum proficiency level needs to be adjusted downwards. In 2015, 264 million children and youth of primary and secondary school age were out of school. After a decline in the early 2000s, out-of-school rates have stagnated – since 2008 for primary education, 2012 for lower secondary and 2013 for upper secondary.

Being in school does not guarantee graduation. According to household survey data for 2010–2015, the global completion rate was 83% for primary education, 69% for lower secondary and 45% for upper secondary. Based on data from 128 countries over the period 2010–2015, which represent 90% of the global population of secondary school age, less than one in four young people had completed secondary school in 40 countries and less than one in two in 60 countries. There were only 14 countries with a completion rate of at least 90% (**Figure 8**).

Ensuring that education is free and compulsory is one way to prevent school dropout. About 70% of countries, but only 40% of those in sub-Saharan Africa, have at least nine years of compulsory education. Globally, less than one in five countries guarantees 12 years of both free and compulsory education. Such guarantees are most common in Latin America and the Caribbean (47% of countries) and in Caucasus and Central Asia (38% of countries), while no low income country makes that provision.

- Primary
- Lower secondary
- Upper secondary
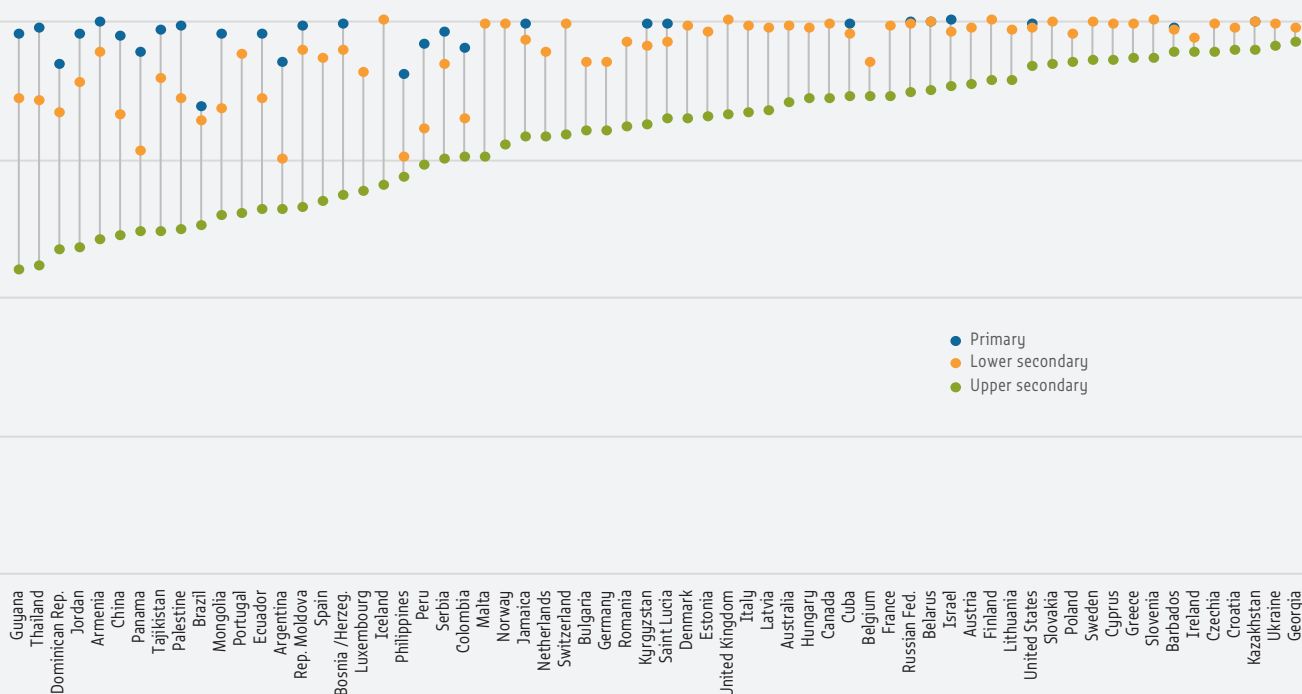
Early childhood

Regarding early childhood education, just one-third of countries worldwide legally stipulate at least one year of free provision, 21% one year of compulsory provision and 17% one year both free and compulsory.

Even so, in 2015, 69% of children one year younger than the primary education entrance age participated in organized learning, which is the first global indicator for target 4.2. Regional shares ranged from 95% in Europe and Northern America and in Latin America and the Caribbean to 42% in sub-Saharan Africa. Many countries have seen large enrolment increases since 2000 (**Figure 9**).

In much of the world, early childhood education opportunities are very unequally distributed. Across 52 low and middle income countries between 2010 and 2015, just over two 3- to 4-year-olds from the poorest fifth of households attended an organized learning programme for every ten children from the richest fifth. In Serbia and Nigeria, the attendance rate was over 80% for the richest children and no more than 10% for the poorest.

The rural–urban attendance rate gap exceeded 40 percentage points in Tunisia and Turkmenistan, while there was near parity or even a slight advantage for rural children in Bangladesh, Jamaica, Mexico, Palestine, Saint Lucia, Sao Tome and Principe, and Thailand.

FIGURE 9:

**Early childhood education participation has increased rapidly in many countries**

Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), selected countries, 2000–2015
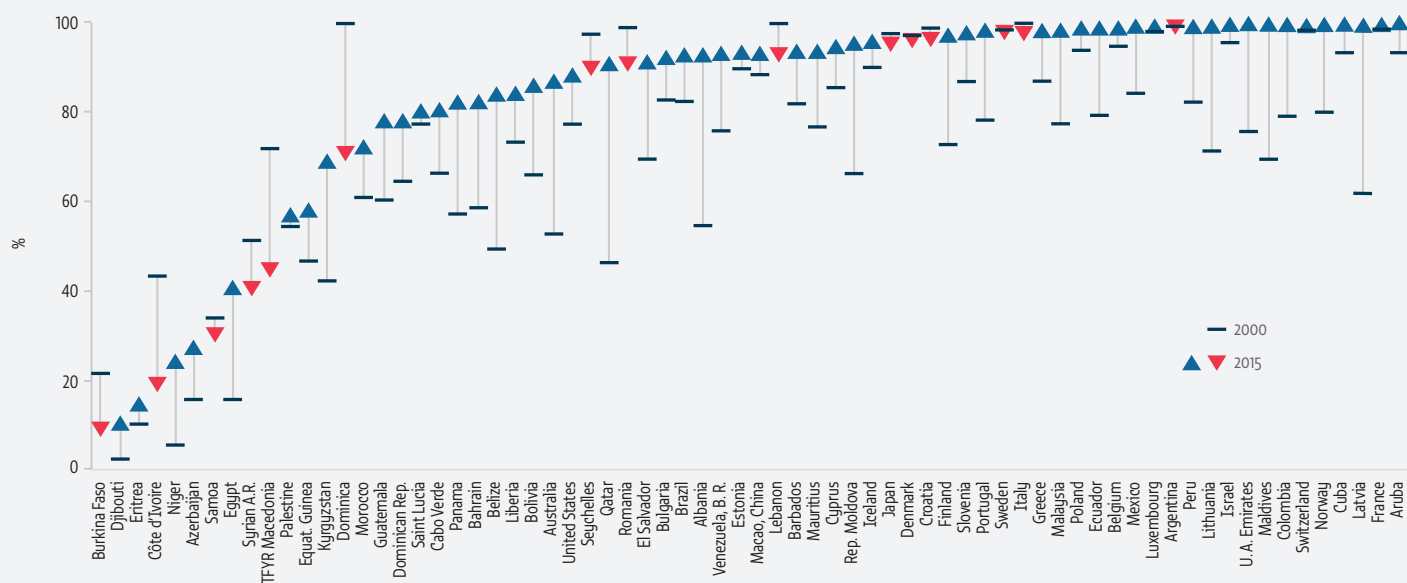
Source: UIS database.

The second global indicator aims to capture early childhood development, but views differ on what should be measured with respect to the health, psychosocial and learning dimensions. According to the UNICEF Early Child Development Index, which is the main source of data, less than two-thirds of children aged 36 to 59 months were considered developmentally on track in countries including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mauritania and Nepal. Considerable effort is under way to further develop the methodology of this indirectly assessed measure.

Home environments exert a strong influence on early childhood development. In almost half the countries with data, at least one-quarter of children aged 36 to 59 months lived in households where caregivers did not engage in four or more activities to promote learning and school readiness, such as reading or looking at picture books, singing, counting or drawing. The poorest households were less likely than the richest households to engage in such activities.
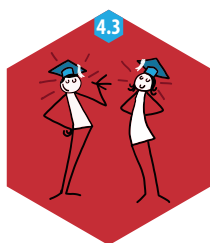
Technical, vocational, tertiary and adult education

The global indicator for target 4.3 is the youth and adult participation rate in formal and non-formal education and training. Labour force surveys hold potential as a data source. For example, the European Union Labour Force Survey, which covers participation in both formal and non-formal education and training, shows that women and younger people are more likely to participate. For cross-national comparability and for completeness, labour force survey design elsewhere in the world needs to develop a common module addressing both formal and non-formal education.

Over 60 million secondary students worldwide were enrolled in technical and vocational education in 2015 – about 10% of all secondary students – mostly at the upper secondary level. Most regions had seen little change in this rate since 2000, although participation rose in the Caucasus and Central Asia and fell in the Pacific. Technical and vocational education remained male-dominated, with girls accounting for 43% of enrolment.

In 2015, 213 million students were enrolled in tertiary education. Since 2000, the gross enrolment ratio has risen by almost 30 percentage points in upper middle income countries, from 17% to 46%. However, enrolment growth in the Caucasus and Central Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa almost stagnated. The share of private enrolment has been increasing.

> " In 2015, over 60 million secondary students worldwide were enrolled in technical and vocational education, and 213 million enrolled in tertiary education "

Women have outpaced men in tertiary enrolment, with sub-Saharan Africa the only region where fewer women than men enrol. Still, women lag behind men in completing science, technology, engineering and mathematics degrees.

Household surveys can be used to demonstrate disparity in post-secondary education participation and attainment. New estimates for this report show the attendance rate for 18- to 22-year-olds taking off among the richest fifth of the population in low and middle income countries but remaining close to zero among the poorest fifth. In El Salvador, 51% of the richest fifth and less than 2% of the poorest attended any form of post-secondary

education while in Mongolia, the respective shares were 67% and 3%, suggesting an urgent need for many middle income countries to introduce policies to make post-secondary education accessible (**Figure 10**).

A large share of the adult population has not completed primary school in low and middle income countries. Even so, they are not likely to return to primary school to complete their basic education. In Kenya, only one in two adults has completed primary school, but the share of adults in primary school enrolment is only 3%. These statistics do not capture details on continuing education outside the formal system.

FIGURE 10:

The poorest have hardly any post-secondary education opportunities in low and middle income countries
Post-secondary education attendance rate by wealth, selected countries, 2010–2015
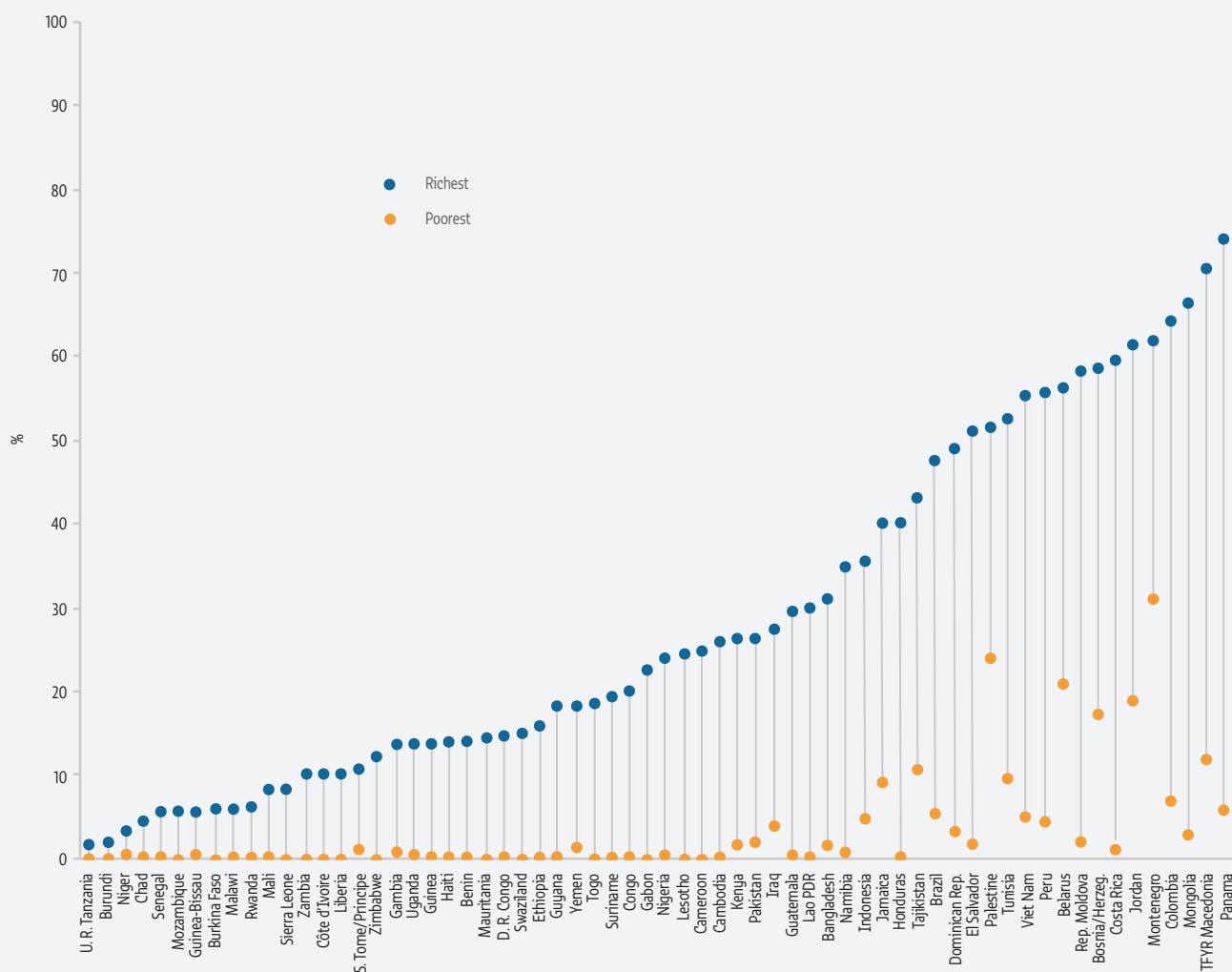
Source: GEM Report team calculations based on household surveys.
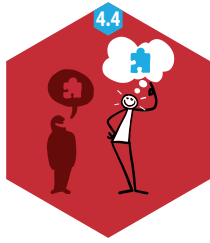
Skills for work

Identifying skills for work that remain relevant in all contexts is prohibitively complex, so the monitoring framework for target 4.4 focuses on information and communications technology (ICT) and digital literacy skills. Focusing on outcomes for a particular skill can shift policy-makers' attention to the different routes for acquiring them. These are commonly found outside formal education systems.

Assessment of skills acquisition can be direct – preferable, but costly – or indirect, for example via household survey data. A comparison of direct and indirect measures using Eurostat data and results of the OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) showed that the two types of measures were positively correlated, although correlations were higher at lower skill levels.

According to data on the global indicator, adults had not performed even basic computer tasks in low and middle income countries. For example, only 4% of adults in Sudan and Zimbabwe could copy and paste files (**Figure 11**).

Regarding more sophisticated skills, the disparity among countries is considerable. Within the European Union, 1% of Bulgarian adults could write computer programmes, compared with 14% in Denmark. Gender disparity is also high. In Czechia and Hungary, about 25 women had programming skills for every 100 men. Few countries achieve parity even in simpler skills: In Italy, Germany and the Netherlands, about 75 women for every 100 men could use basic arithmetic formulas in a spreadsheet.

FIGURE 11:

The diffusion of basic ICT skills is very limited in low and middle income countries
Percentage of adults who had carried out a computer-related activity in the past three months, selected countries, 2014–2016
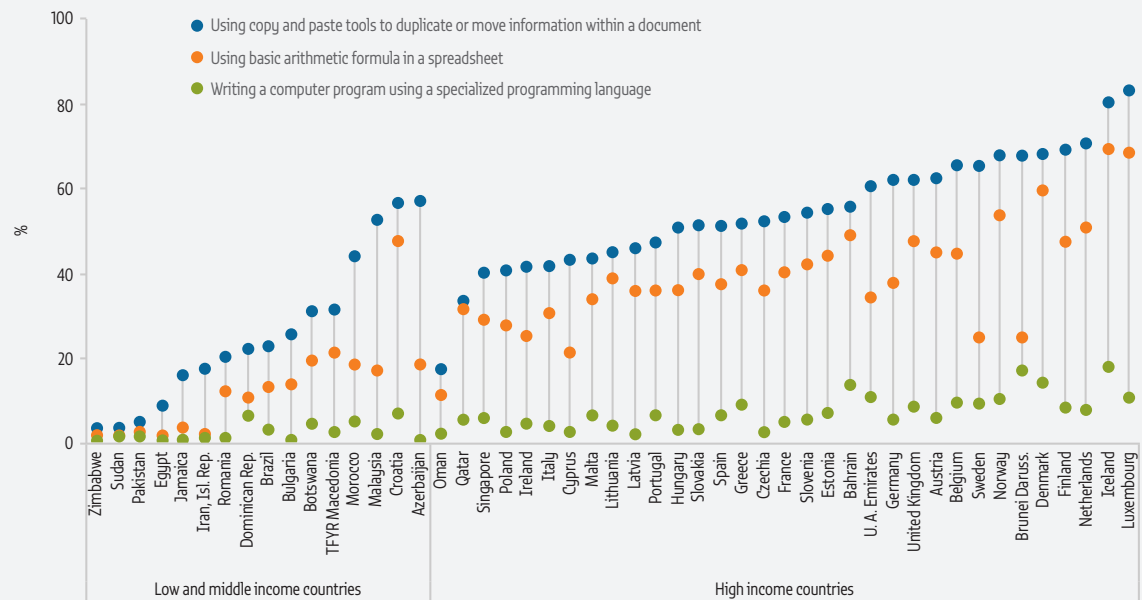
Source: International Telecommunications Union database.

Equity

The sustainable development agenda underlines the need to monitor equity across a range of individual characteristics, inputs and results, and education levels.

On average, the world has achieved the target of gender parity at all levels except tertiary education (**Figure 12**). However, this is not true of all regions and country income groups or at the individual country level. Only 66% of countries have achieved gender parity in primary education, 45% in lower secondary education and 25% in upper secondary education.

Gender disparity in learning outcomes exhibits often unexpected patterns across subjects and over time. For example, in some low and middle income countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and in sub-Saharan Africa, there is a clear disadvantage in mathematics for girls at the end of primary school. At the lower secondary school level, countries appear on average to achieve gender parity in learning outcomes, albeit for a different set of countries and learning assessments.

Women are under-represented in educational management positions. In Japan, 39% of lower secondary school teachers, but only 6% of head teachers, are women. Where data are available for different levels, women's share in leadership roles declines as levels increase: In Austria, 79% of primary school heads are women, compared with only 32% of lower secondary school heads.

FIGURE 12:

Countries are increasingly achieving gender parity but the challenge remains, especially at higher education levels
Percentage of countries by level of gender parity index of the gross enrolment ratio and by education level, 2000 and 2015
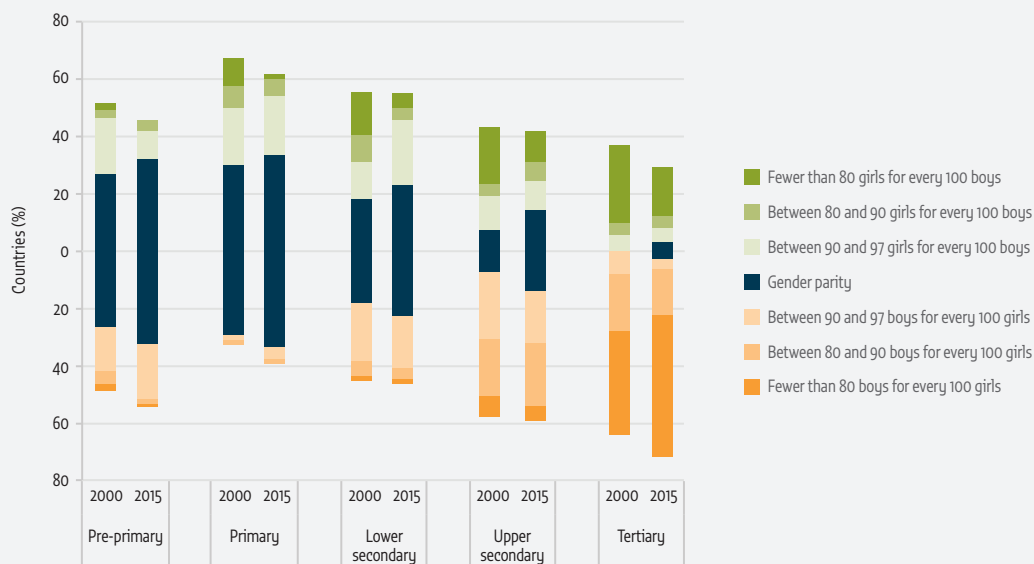
Source: UIS database.

Location and wealth are two key dimensions that merit close monitoring. In 2010–2015, for every 75 adolescents in rural areas who completed lower secondary school, 100 urban adolescents did so. The parity index is worse for the poor. Globally, 61 in the poorest fifth of the population completed lower secondary school for every 100 of those in the richest. The corresponding figures are 54 for every 100 in lower middle income countries and 14 for every 100 in low income countries. While the global completion rate was 69%, only 12% of the poorest males and 8% of the poorest females completed lower secondary school.

Moreover, household surveys do not capture many vulnerable populations, including seasonal workers, homeless people, refugees and populations in conflict zones. It is estimated that around 250 million people worldwide are excluded as a result of survey design, and a further 100 million are under-represented, including slum dwellers.

> Around 250 million people worldwide are excluded as a result of survey design, and a further 100 million are under-represented

Language is a less easily comparable characteristic across countries but has a major bearing on equity. Instruction in students' first language for at least six years improves student performance. A review of policy documents from 21 countries in eastern and southern Africa shows that most have an early-exit transitional bilingual education policy, teaching in one or more local languages until grade 4 or 5. But policies are not always implemented, due to resource constraints or resistance from key actors, such as teachers and parents.

New analysis for this report combines population statistics, language demographics and policies on language in education to classify 11 Eastern and South-eastern Asian countries according to the percentage of students who speak the language of instruction at home. The analysis estimates that in Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia, less than 25% of children have access to education in their home language, while in Viet Nam around 90% do.

Cross-national learning assessments can also help capture language issues. For example, the 2015 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) showed that 78% of fourth-graders in participating countries always or almost always spoke the test language at home.

With respect to disability, the twin challenge is to assess the prevalence of disability in the population and the related educational disadvantage. In two Demographic and Health Surveys, a large difference in the estimated disability rate (2.1% in Cambodia and 9.7% in the Maldives) was also reflected in separate estimates of the effect of disability on school attendance: In the Maldives the primary attendance rate was 85% for those with disabilities and 94% for those without, while the respective rates in Cambodia were 43% and 93%.

IDENTIFYING DISADVANTAGED GROUPS IS NOT ALWAYS STRAIGHTFORWARD

Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the foundation document of the SDGs, recognizes that 'All people, irrespective of sex, age, race or ethnicity, and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples' should have access to lifelong learning opportunities. Countries must collect data to monitor progress towards the SDGs as well as to comply with human rights conventions they have ratified. In practice, however, there remain considerable obstacles imposed by countries and concerns expressed by marginalized populations.

Data collection on marginalized groups can infringe on privacy. Under data protection laws, information on ethnic and religious affiliation may be classified as sensitive. Some countries, including Sweden, do not collect data on ethnicity even though there is nothing to prohibit it. Others disallow collection of individually identifiable data but allow collection of anonymous data. Over one-third of census questionnaires included no form of ethnic classification.

As ethnic minority data have been misused to single out populations, marginalized groups themselves may be reluctant to provide data. Out of fear of discrimination, Roma people in Europe often mistrust censuses. People with disabilities may not self-report as such, fearing stigmatization. In addition, governments may avoid collecting data out of concern that results will reflect badly on their policies or exacerbate tensions in the population.

Measuring and comparing disadvantage are complicated by the multiple definitions of disability, ethnicity and other categories. Most disaggregated data categories, including racial and ethnic ones, evolve with social and political attitudes or developments, making results hard to compare over time. Although self-identification of disadvantage is useful for resolving ethical dilemmas in data collection, individuals may not report accurately. External identification of disadvantage is also problematic, as it is subject to observer bias.

Literacy and numeracy

Between 2000 and 2015, the adult literacy rate increased from 81.5% to 86%, although it remains at 64% in sub-Saharan Africa and just below 60% in low income countries. The number of adults with no literacy skills has fallen by just 4% to 753 million.

By contrast, the number of youth with no literacy skills has fallen by 27%. Still, there are more than 100 million young people who cannot read, including more than one in four in sub-Saharan Africa and in low income countries.

> " There are more than 100 million young people who cannot read "

The continuing disconnect between home language and language of instruction plays a particularly important role in the slow development of literacy skills in sub-Saharan Africa. New analysis for this report shows that in 36 countries in the region, only half of adults with five years of schooling could read an entire sentence. However, 69% of adults whose five years of education were in systems privileging home languages could read a sentence, compared with 41% in colonial or mixed language systems.

Despite significant efforts to replace the traditional, largely self-reported, dichotomous measure of literacy with the more appropriate, directly assessed, nuanced concept of literacy proficiency levels, the new approach, which is necessary to report on the global indicator for target 4.6, has not yet taken hold except in a few high income countries. An estimated 19% of adults in countries that participated in the OECD's PIAAC survey did not achieve the minimum proficiency level in literacy.

Inequality in literacy and numeracy proficiency by socio-economic status is widespread. For example, across OECD countries participating in PIAAC, the probability that an adult would fall below the minimum numeracy proficiency level was more than three times higher for those whose parents did not attain upper secondary education than for those who had at least one parent with tertiary education (33% vs 10%). In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the difference was 10 times higher (29% vs 3%).

Some types of disparity are evolving. Comparing PISA surveys at age 15 and PIAAC surveys 12 years later showed surprising changes over young adulthood. Socio-economic disparity widened in 75% of 20 countries compared and was concentrated among those scoring poorly at age 15. By contrast, the gender gap appeared to close almost completely. However, the PIAAC survey showed low gender disparity at age 16, suggesting the change may be due to the different ways in which the two surveys are administered (**Figure 13**).

FIGURE 13:
While socio-economic literacy gaps at age 15 increase in the next 12 years, gender gaps disappear
Standardized literacy score gap at age 15 according to PISA and at ages 26 to 28 according to PIAAC, selected countries, 2000–2003 to 2011–2014
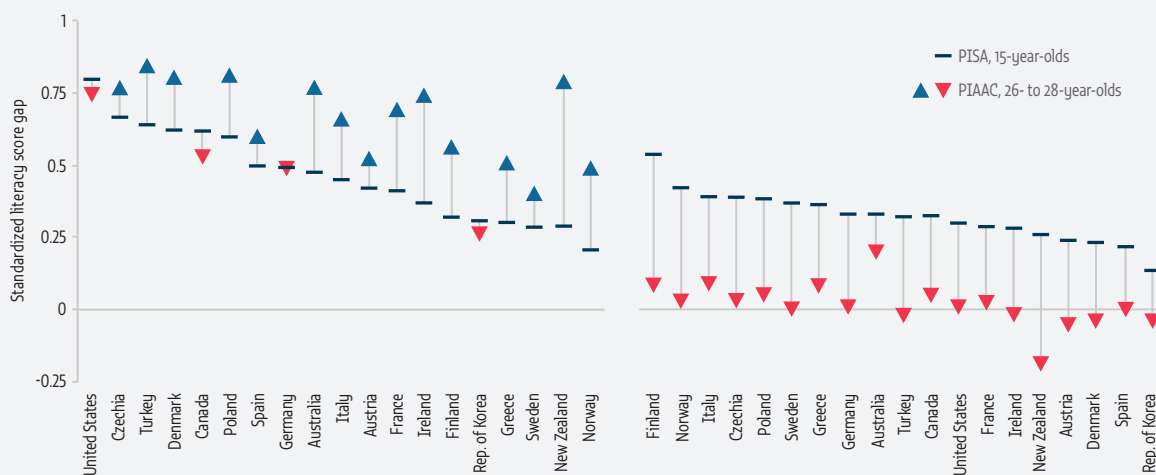
Source: Borgonovi et al. (2017).

Sustainable development and global citizenship

The reporting mechanism for the 1974 Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms has been proposed as the means of monitoring progress on the global indicator for target 4.7. However, self-assessment of policy implementation may not be objective, credible or nuanced enough for policy purposes, and may be insufficient to establish whether policies are implemented. UNESCO recognizes the need to further fine-tune the guidelines for preparation of national reports so they better meet the requirement of monitoring the global indicator.

During the fifth consultation period of the 1974 Recommendation, over 85% of countries reported including human rights and fundamental freedoms in education policy and curricula, but only 51% integrated education for sustainable development in policy and 33% in curricula. In teacher education, about half of countries covered peace, non-violence, human rights and fundamental freedoms, 16% discussed cultural diversity and tolerance, and only 7% included education for sustainable development (**Figure 14**).

In many countries, teachers are poorly prepared to teach topics related to target 4.7. Teacher education programmes have begun to adapt, but efforts are fragmented. Ireland and Jamaica have made progress, including sustainability and global citizenship in initial teacher education. Continuous professional development is a more frequent teacher support tool but is rarely provided systematically.

FIGURE 14:
Only 7% of countries included education for sustainable development in teacher education
Percentage of countries reporting to the fifth consultation of the 1974 Recommendation that included selected terms in their education policy, curricula and teacher education, 2012
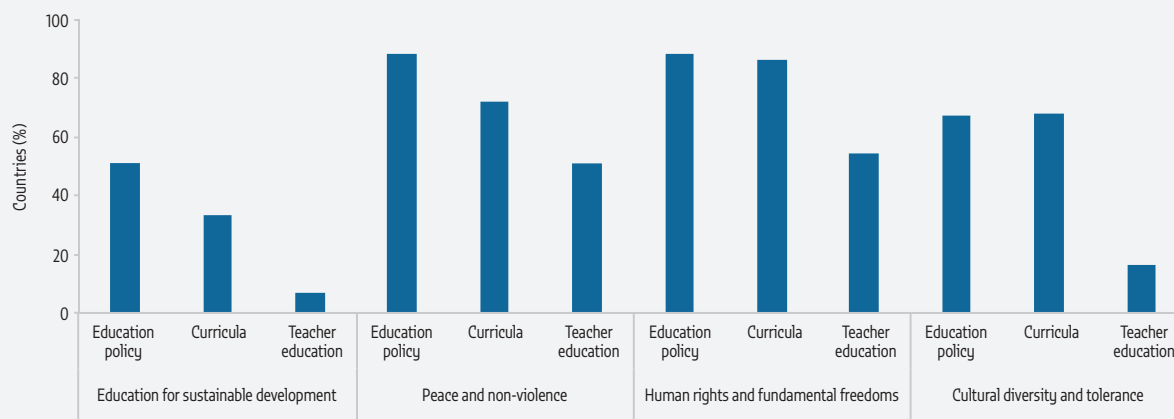
Source: McEvoy (2017).

Comprehensive school-based sexuality education programmes addressing gender power relations quintuple the likelihood of reducing rates of sexually transmitted disease and unintended pregnancy. A 2015 review of 48 countries found almost 80% had policies supporting comprehensive sexual education, though they were not always implemented. Studies in Ghana and Kenya found that incomplete and sometimes inaccurate information was being taught.

There is still no consensus on what outcomes education for sustainable development and global citizenship education should achieve. Measuring scientific knowledge on climate change and the earth is one straightforward option. The 2015 PISA round showed 21.5% of 15-year-olds in OECD countries performed below the minimum proficiency level in the 'earth and space' content area. The TIMSS showed earth science knowledge among primary school students improved between 2011 and 2015 in 15 countries, declined in 9 and showed no significant change in 16.

Existing tools assess student knowledge levels only in basic education. The pilot Sustainability Literacy Test of 2014–2016 assessed knowledge on sustainable development in higher education students and adults. Participants correctly answered 54% of core questions in examination mode and 60% in learning mode (at home and unsupervised). They performed much better on questions related to human rights and the economy than on environmental issues.

TEXTBOOKS ARE CRITICAL TO AN AGENDA OF DIVERSITY, TOLERANCE AND PEACE

Textbooks convey not only subject knowledge but also social values, political identities, history and an understanding of the world. Yet in many countries, they still do not adequately address crucial concepts of social cohesion, political stability and the planet's future.

> In 2000–2008, 25% of textbooks worldwide mentioned global citizenship, compared with 13% in the 1980s

Global citizenship education aims to instil principles such as human rights, democracy and social justice. In 2000–2008, 25% of textbooks worldwide mentioned global citizenship, compared with 13% in the 1980s. To help build peaceful societies, textbooks should discuss conflict prevention, resolution and reconciliation. Only 10% of textbooks include explicit statements on these topics. Many textbooks still glorify militarism and war.

Coverage of diversity remains rare: Only one in four secondary social studies textbooks mentioned ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic minorities in 2000–2011. Coverage of immigrant and refugee rights has increased, but some textbooks still include stereotypical images of migration and migrants.

In 2000–2011, 37% of textbooks mentioned women's rights, up from 15% in 1946–1969, while depiction of discrimination against women increased from 16% to 38%. However, many textbooks continue to convey implicit messages that perpetuate gender inequality. Many either do not include women or depict them in submissive, traditional roles.

International and regional actors have helped support reforms. UNESCO in particular has established norms and standards and supported countries in making change. In post-conflict countries, transitional justice initiatives can foster change, as in Peru, where the Truth Commission encouraged textbooks promoting respect for diversity and human rights. Civil society actors can prepare the ground for government-backed projects, but political actors remain crucial in fostering change.
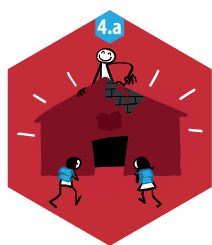
Education facilities and learning environments

School infrastructure is complex to assess because of the many dimensions involved. However, school surveys found that the state of physical infrastructure often impeded instruction in countries of all income levels, particularly in socio-economically disadvantaged schools. The 2013 Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study in Latin America showed that more than four-fifths of the richest grade 3 students attended schools with adequate water and sanitation facilities, while only one-third of the poorest students did.

Primary schools in many poorer countries lack access to electricity. In sub-Saharan Africa, only 22% of primary schools have electricity. Disparity also exists in technology and internet access among and within countries, with rural schools less likely to be connected than urban schools (**Figure 15**).

Primary school access to drinking water was below 75% in 72 of 148 countries. Access to basic sanitation facilities was below 50% in 24 of 137 countries, including 17 in sub-Saharan Africa.

Learners with disabilities continue to face obstacles, such as lack of mobility equipment, inappropriately designed buildings, absence of teaching aids and unsuitable curricula. In countries including Serbia, South Africa and Turkey, over 35% of schools are affected by resource shortages.

FIGURE 15:

Rural schools are less likely to be connected to the internet
Percentage of schools with internet-connected computers, by location, selected countries, 2015
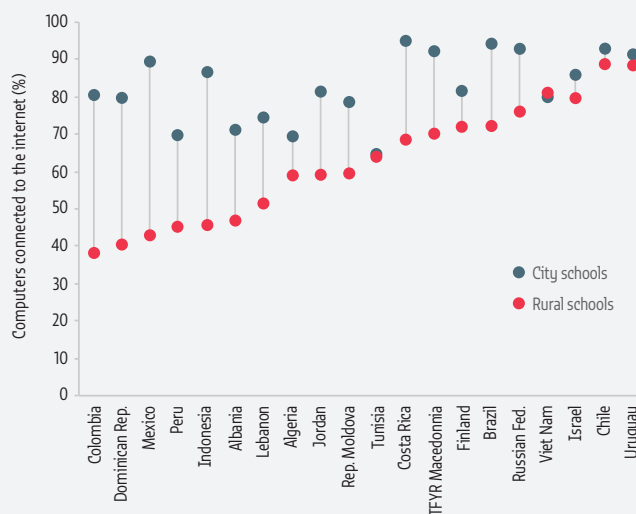
Source: OECD (2016).

There has been a sharp uptick in attacks on schools since 2004, disproportionately affecting Southern Asia, and Northern Africa and Western Asia. Between 2005 and 2015, armies and armed groups in at least 26 countries used educational institutions for military purposes.

ADDRESSING SCHOOL-RELATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IS CRITICAL

Addressing school-related gender-based violence requires effective laws and policies, appropriate curricula and learning materials, training and support for educators, partnerships between the education sector and other actors, and monitoring and evaluation.

Countries need to adopt legislative frameworks that explicitly protect students from adult-to-child and peer-to-peer violence and promote accountability. Chile, Fiji, Finland, Peru and Sweden are among countries that have introduced legislation specifically referencing violence in school. Codes of conduct for teachers need to explicitly refer to violence and abuse and clearly stipulate penalties consistent with legal frameworks.

> Between 2005 and 2015, armies and armed groups in at least 26 countries used educational institutions for military purposes

Laws and policies do not always translate into practice. Many countries fail to implement policies, allocate sufficient resources or ensure support from key actors, such as the police. Too often, local actors lack awareness of rights and obligations.

Reporting mechanisms must be seen as reliable and ensure victim confidentiality. Educators should be trained to listen to, support and help students report incidents. After training in Malawi, teacher awareness of school-based sexual harassment increased from 30% to 80% regarding girl victims and 26% to 64% regarding boys. Yet school staff are often poorly prepared to act. In the United States, less than one-third of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual or intersex students who reported incidents of victimization said staff had effectively addressed the problem.

Sexuality education addressing sexual diversity and gender identity/expression can improve school climate, as in the Netherlands. Often, sex education programmes fail to go beyond sexual and reproductive health to deal with gender dynamics.

Educational programmes that promote critical reflection among boys and young men on gender behaviours and norms, including in India, have yielded promising results in improving understanding and attitudes and reducing incidents of violence. Extracurricular activities, such as school-based clubs and sports, can complement classroom instruction to impart positive messages about gender.

Scholarships

The global indicator on scholarships is based on aid programme data. It is incomplete for several reasons, not least the fact that many donors' aid programmes do not include scholarships. Among those that do, spending decreased from US$1.2 billion in 2010 to US$1.15 billion in 2015, or by 4%, on par with the overall decrease in aid to education (**Figure 16**). Australia (23%), France (14%) and the EU institutions (15%) account for over half of all scholarship aid. In addition, donors report imputed student costs, which reached US$1.76 billion in 2015.

About US$423 million in scholarships (37%) cannot be assigned to students from a given country. Of the remaining, students from the least developed countries received US$151 million.

The 2016 GEM Report reported that scholarship data monitoring and reporting systems were non-existent or difficult to access, or did not collect the information necessary to report on target 4.b. A five-country pilot study for this report evaluated how data were collected by three scholarship management agencies, three scholarship programmes and one funding organization in Australia, Canada, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. Data seem to be available even if not yet reported in a way that helps monitor target 4.b. Building a direct measure of the number of scholarships will require a global endeavour to standardize data points, build capacity and facilitate collaboration among data managers.

> " Building a direct measure of the number of scholarships will require a global endeavour to standardize data points, build capacity and facilitate collaboration "
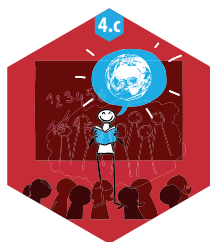
FIGURE 16:
Aid to scholarships has remained at roughly the same levels since 2010
Official development assistance disbursements on scholarships and imputed student costs, 2010–2015
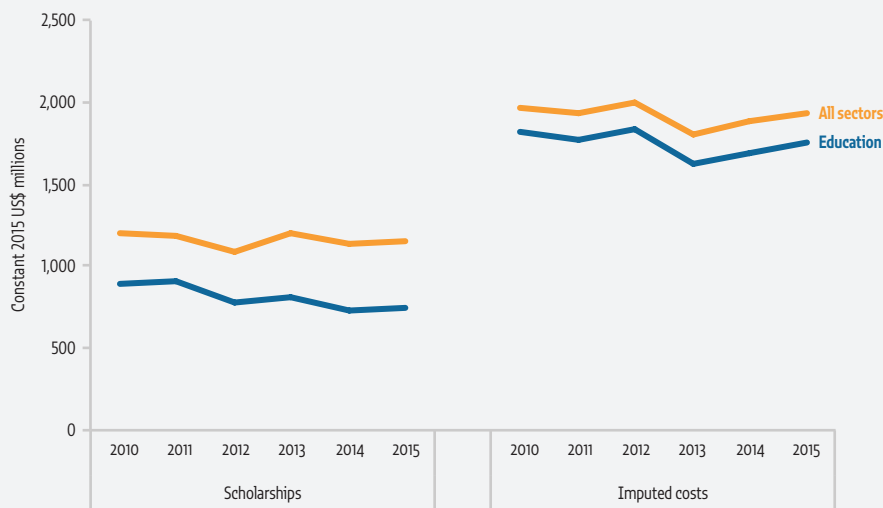
Source: GEM Report team analysis based on OECD-DAC Creditor Reporting System data.

Teachers

Data are limited on how many teachers received the minimum pedagogical training prescribed by national standards. The available data show large numbers of teachers inadequately trained in several regions. Globally, 86% of primary school teachers are trained; the proportion is lower in Southern Asia (77%), the Caribbean (70%) and sub-Saharan Africa (62%).

> **Globally, 86% of primary school teachers are trained**

Strikingly, while in many sub-Saharan African countries there has been a positive trend over time in the number of trained teachers, in countries including Eritrea, Ghana and Niger the percentage of trained teachers has decreased since 2000 (**Figure 17**).

The SDG target refers to 'qualified' teachers, while the global indicator refers to 'trained' teachers, perpetuating some confusion. Qualified teachers are those with the minimum academic qualification, while trained teachers have professional training. There is a discrepancy between the two in some countries because of differing teacher preparation requirements, the gap being greatest in low and lower middle income countries: In Jamaica, for example, 15% of secondary school teachers are qualified, while 85% are trained.

Developing a comparable definition of 'trained' teachers is a difficult prospect, and a global taxonomy of teacher education is unlikely to be developed for years. Cross-national surveys can be an alternative, since they record information on teacher characteristics. The TIMSS, for example, showed that the percentage of grade 4 students taught by qualified and trained mathematics teachers fell between 2007 and 2015 from 89% to 54% in Kazakhstan but increased from 18% to 38% in Denmark.

Worldwide, pupil/teacher ratios are higher in poorer countries, but the number of primary pupils per teacher has decreased since 2000.

Information on teacher salaries, professional development and attrition rates is scarce. In OECD countries, teachers tend to earn less than other workers with similar qualifications. About 88% of lower secondary teachers in the TALIS survey had participated in professional development in 2013.

FIGURE 17:

In some sub-Saharan African countries, the percentage of trained teachers has fallen

Percentage of trained primary school teachers, selected sub-Saharan African countries, 2000–2015
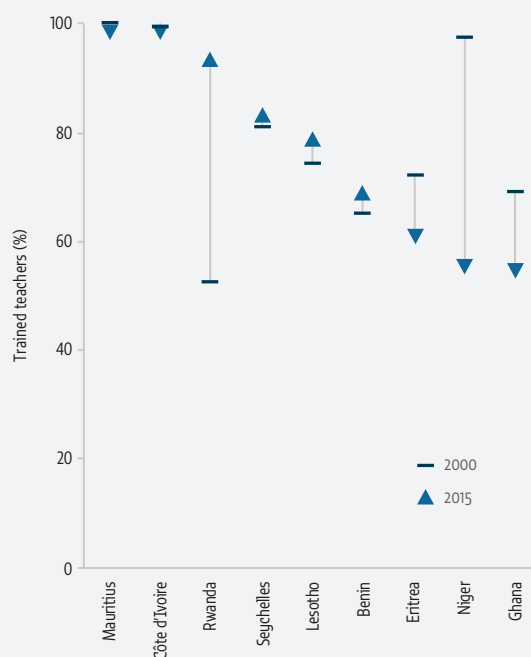
Source: UIS database.

Education and the other SDGs

Education is key to achieving outcomes in several SDGs, including those on health, water and sanitation, and food security.

EDUCATION CAN HELP PREVENT NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

As of 2012, non-communicable diseases, including cancer, diabetes, chronic respiratory ailments and cardiovascular disease, accounted for 68% of all deaths worldwide, almost three-quarters of them in low and middle income countries. Education can help change behaviour to reduce the occurrence of these diseases.

Tobacco use caused 6.4 million deaths in 2015. People with more education are less likely to use tobacco in both poor and rich countries. In lower middle income countries, men lacking formal education were between 1.75 and 6.5 times as likely to smoke as those with at least a secondary education. In the United States, high school dropouts were three times more likely to smoke than college graduates.

Aside from formal education, mass media campaigns can be effective in discouraging smoking. However, they are often more effective for populations of higher socio-economic status, so can increase inequality in smoking prevalence. They need to be better designed to target vulnerable populations.

Worldwide prevalence of obesity more than doubled between 1980 and 2014. The relationship between educational attainment and obesity depends on countries' economic development level and overall prevalence of obesity. In low income countries with low prevalence of obesity, more educated women are more likely to be obese, while in high income countries, tertiary education is linked to a lower probability.

Parental education strongly influences childhood obesity, with effects again dependent on economic development level. Children of educated parents were more likely to be overweight in Kenya, but less likely to be overweight in Brazil.

Promoting better nutrition in schools helps teach good lifelong habits. In Seinäjoki, Finland, a programme to integrate health into education policies is credited with reducing obesity among 5-year-olds from 17% to 10% between 2009 and 2015.

EDUCATION HELPS BUILD CAPACITY FOR IMPLEMENTING SDG STRATEGIES

Skilled professionals are needed to achieve the targets of SDG 3, the goal on improving health. The World Health Organization estimated a global shortage of 17.4 million healthcare workers in 2013 and projected it would still reach 14.5 million in 2030, with worsening needs-based shortages in the poorest sub-Saharan African countries. High international mobility of African, Asian and Caribbean doctors and nurses means low income countries lose professionals and face a high financial burden. Richer countries should pay for the training of the physicians who serve their populations, regardless of where they were trained.

> " The World Health Organization projected a global shortage of 14.5 million healthcare workers in 2030 "

Institutional and instructional shortcomings create equity challenges: 26 countries in sub-Saharan Africa had one or no medical schools in 2008. Within countries, there is a strong urban bias, leaving rural populations underserved. To improve capacity, human resource planning for health systems should be better linked to technical and vocational education institutions to facilitate school-to-work transition, youth apprenticeships and continuing professional development, shifting away from the emphasis on hospital- and university-based training.

Achieving SDG 6 requires increased expertise to improve water and sanitation services. Human capacity issues are too little considered in the sector. Of 94 countries surveyed, less than 15% reviewed their strategies at least every two years. Lack of funding and skilled graduates and reluctance of skilled workers to work in rural areas hold back capacity development.

To achieve SDG 2 on food security, education and capacity building are essential. More educated farmers are more productive, take more measures to mitigate climate change risk and adopt more new technology. In Pakistan, educated farmers were likelier to irrigate with improved water pumps using renewable energy sources because they were better at finding and using information.

The health, agriculture, water and sanitation sectors must emphasize education completion as a key strategy for achieving their objectives. Progress on the SDGs also requires targeted actions that prioritize equity concerns in capacity building, skilled worker distribution and public awareness campaigns.

Finance

The major contributors to education financing are governments, donors and households. Current education funding levels are inadequate, but perspectives differ on who should pay more.

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE

In 2015, the median global public education expenditure was 4.7% of gross domestic product (GDP), within the range of 4% to 6% proposed by the Education 2030 Framework for Action. Expenditure ranged from 3.7% in low income countries to 5.1% in high income countries. However, public education expenditure was 14.1% of total public expenditure in 2014, below the framework's proposed 15% to 20%. At least 33 countries – both poorer and richer – do not meet either of these education financing benchmarks (**Figure 18**).

FIGURE 18:

At least 33 countries do not meet either of the education financing benchmarks
Public education expenditure as a share of GDP and as a share of total public expenditure, 2015 or most recent year

Source: UIS database.

AID EXPENDITURE

To meet SDG 4, aid to education in low and lower middle income countries needs to be six times above the 2012 levels. Instead, total aid to education in 2015 was 4% below 2010, even though total official development assistance rose by 24% over the period. Donors are shifting their priorities away from education. Its share in total aid (excluding debt relief) fell for six years in a row, from 10% in 2009 to 6.9% in 2015.

Targeting needs to improve to better account for recipient countries' financing gaps. Low income countries received 19% of total aid to education and 23% of aid to basic education in 2015, down from 21% and 29%, respectively, in 2014 (**Figure 19**). Regionally, sub-Saharan Africa, with over half the world's out-of-school children, received 26% of basic education aid in 2015, less than half the 2002 level.

Humanitarian aid to education increased by more than 50% in 2016 to US$303 million, but funding for education in emergencies remains insufficient at 2.7% of the total.

With current levels of aid to education falling well short of what is needed to achieve key SDG 4 targets, existing and emerging programmes with the potential to help redress the balance merit close attention. The Global Partnership for Education is expected to complete its replenishment campaign by early 2018, which – if successful – will result in annual disbursement levels quadrupling.

The establishment of an International Finance Facility for Education, initially proposed by the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, received a boost when a reference to it was included in the G20 Leaders' Declaration at the July 2017 summit in Hamburg. Its aim would be to expand development banks' lending capacity to lower middle income countries.

Finally, Education Cannot Wait, hosted by UNICEF, aims to transform education delivery in emergencies, not only by rapidly deploying funds at the onset of a crisis but also, critically, by helping bridge the divide between humanitarian and development aid. Donors will need to work in a concerted and coordinated way to ensure that these three initiatives complement one another and do not add unnecessary administrative costs or lead to duplication of effort.

FIGURE 19:

The share of aid to basic education to low income countries fell sharply in 2015
Share of low income countries (LICs) and least developed countries (LDCs) in total aid to education and to basic education, disbursements, 2002–2015
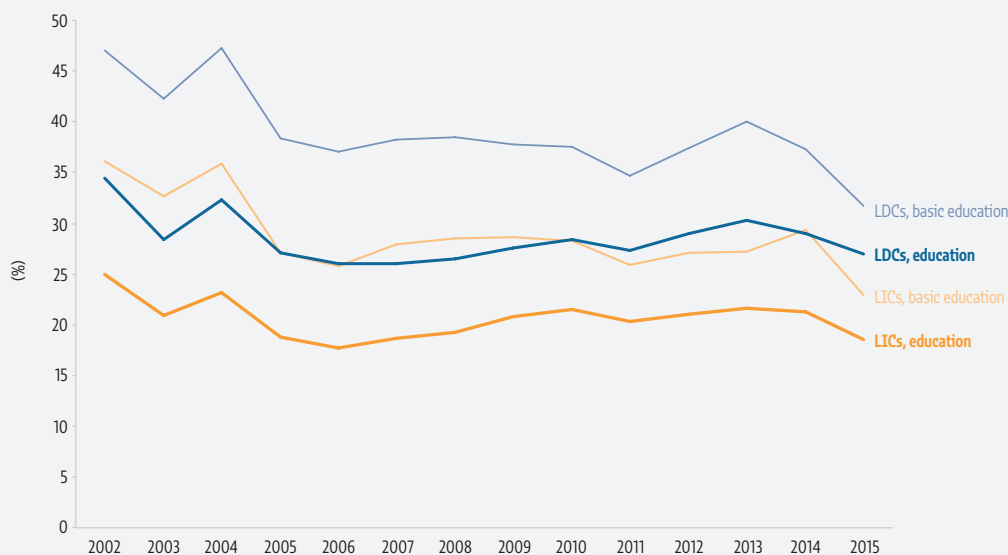
Source: GEM Report team analysis based on the OECD-DAC Creditor Reporting System.

HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE

The cost of education, which represents a major barrier to participation for households in low and middle income countries, is insufficiently considered. Many ministries fail to look at public and private spending as an integrated whole. Moreover, lack of standardization of household surveys means estimates may over- or understate total household expenditure. UNESCO, the OECD and Eurostat have created a standard, but it has not yet sufficiently influenced survey design.

Including household expenditure can change the understanding of countries' investment in education. For example, El Salvador's government spends two percentage points of GDP less on education than France's, but El Salvador as a whole spends more because households allocate more than three percentage points of GDP to education. In general, the share of total education expenditure borne by households is greater in low income countries than in high income countries.

Among countries with data, the share of households in total education expenditure ranges from 15% in high income countries, to 25% in middle income countries and 32% in low income countries. Excluding EU and OECD member states, in more than one in three countries, the share of households was at least 30% of the total. In Cambodia, the share was 69% in 2011 (**Figure 20**).

FIGURE 20:

In a third of countries, households contribute at least a third of total education costs
Distribution of total education expenditure by source of funding, selected countries, 2005–2015
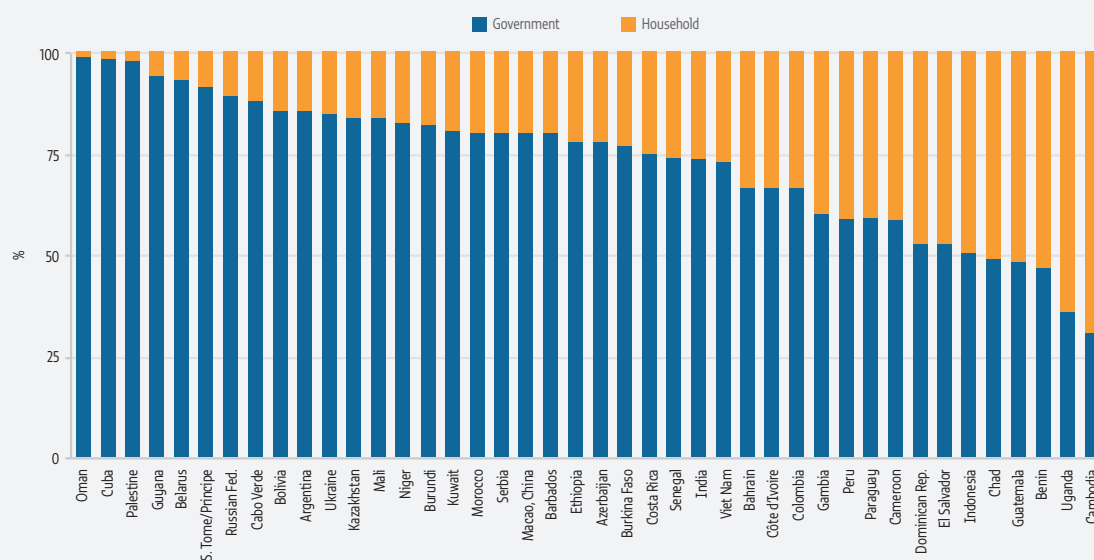
Note: The figure covers all countries with data during the period, excluding EU and OECD countries.
Source: UIS database.

DRAWING LESSONS FROM THE HEALTH SECTOR TO INTRODUCE NATIONAL EDUCATION ACCOUNTS

The National Education Accounts framework, supported by the Global Partnership for Education, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning, is a tool to compare education expenditure from public and household sources across countries. It aims to capture all education levels, from pre-primary to tertiary, including vocational training, and cover all providers and funding sources.

Lessons from its precursor, the National Health Accounts system, should be applied. The System of Health Accounts was agreed in 2000 and revised in 2011, and 112 countries have produced accounts based on that framework. Still, not enough countries have adopted the system, and it has been criticized as a donor-driven project. Lack of capacity mean accounts have sometimes relied on international consultants and concentrated on certain areas of the sector, so the process is not always country-owned. For education accounts, data must be made useful to national policy-makers, especially for budgeting, and resources must be made available to communicate its usefulness.

The National Education Accounts pilot project, which ended in 2016, shows potential in evaluating and reconfiguring financing mechanisms and enabling international comparability. The next steps should be to form an international task force of actors in education expenditure data collection and establish a platform enabling countries to share knowledge and challenges.

> "
> An international task force of actors in education expenditure data collection should be set up, along with a platform enabling countries to share knowledge and challenges
> "

Recommendations

Clear accountability mechanisms should be in place to meet global common commitments to inclusive, equitable and high-quality education and lifelong learning for all. This report has shown the whole array of approaches, ranging from countries where the concept of accountability is unknown, and violations of the right to education go unchallenged, to countries where accountability has become an end in itself instead of a means to improve education.

Accountability in education starts with governments, which bear the primary duty to ensure the right to education. Every country in the world has ratified at least one international treaty illustrating its commitment to the right to education. However, in only 55% of countries is the right to education justiciable, meaning that there are laws allowing citizens to legally challenge failures in the education system. Civil society organizations and the international community should lobby for the right to education, including for making the right justiciable in national legal frameworks.

Of course, laws are only powerful if they are implemented. Effective accountability requires governments to build stronger systems to enforce the laws. This report therefore lays out the following recommendations to help governments – but also other actors with a stake in education – to design and implement robust accountability systems.

DESIGNING A ROBUST ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

1. **Governments need to create space for meaningful and representative engagement to build trust and a shared understanding of respective responsibilities with all education actors** – all government tiers and departments, legislative and judicial authorities, autonomous institutions, schools, teachers, parents, students, civil society, teachers' unions, the private sector and international organizations. Steps in that direction would include:
   a. Providing formal space for meaningful dialogue among multiple stakeholders, especially those sitting outside government.
   b. Strengthening the role of legislatures' education committees by introducing regular review processes and building the capacity of their members.
   c. Publishing an annual education monitoring report that presents actions taken and the results to which they have contributed, across all levels of education, for the benefit of the public.

2. **Governments should develop credible education sector plans and transparent budgets with clear lines of responsibility and truly independent auditing mechanisms.** Fundamentally, government actors cannot be held accountable if there is no clarity on what they are accountable for. Budget document transparency can help clarify where and when funding is released, providing information necessary for critical review, especially in the legislature.

3. **Governments should develop credible and efficient regulations and monitoring mechanisms and adhere to follow-up actions and sanctions when standards are not met.** These should cover providers of both public and private education and ancillary services. Processes, such as registration and accreditation or bidding and contracting, should be clear and transparent. But regulations should also address equity and quality aspects of education.

4. **Governments should design school and teacher accountability mechanisms that are supportive and formative, and avoid punitive mechanisms, especially the types based on narrow performance measures.** Using student test scores to sanction schools or evaluate teachers can promote an unhealthy competition-based environment, narrow the curriculum, encourage teaching to the test, demotivate teachers and disadvantage weaker students, all of which undermine overall education quality and student learning.

5. **Governments need to allow for a democratic voice, protect media freedom to scrutinize education and set up independent institutions for citizens to voice complaints.** Free and fair elections increase citizen trust in the government and electoral competition can make incumbents more responsive to citizen demands. The media can provide a valuable source of easily comprehensible information, particularly for population groups that have limited access to it. Ombudsman offices can provide an important outlet for citizen complaints, as long as political incentives are aligned with the need to respond to these grievances.

IMPLEMENTING A ROBUST ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

Regardless of design, if governments and other key stakeholders lack genuine commitment and appropriate information, resources and capacity, accountability systems are hard to implement.

1. **Information: Transparent, relevant and timely data should be made available to decision-makers.**
   a. It is essential for governments to invest in information that improves understanding of the education system's strengths and weaknesses, and helps build an effective accountability system.
   b. At the same time, they need to be judicious in their use of this data. The information should be tailored to its intended use and the cost of collection should match the capacity of the country to process it.
   c. Reporting tasks for teachers and principals should not be merely procedural but should be linked to improved teaching.

2. **Resources: Adequate financial resources should be provided to fund the education system.**
   a. Governments should fulfil their commitment of spending at least 4% of GDP on education or allocating 15% of total government expenditure.
   b. Donor countries should keep to their pledge to provide 0.7% of national income to aid. Of that, 10% should be allocated to basic and secondary education. They should be careful in making aid available through results-based mechanisms that shift risk to countries that are least prepared to bear it.

3. **Capacity: Actors should be equipped with the skills and training needed to fulfil their responsibilities.**
   a. Governments should ensure strong institutions are in place, including those serving policing, judicial and auditing functions, with the capacity to help deter, detect and investigate corruption in education.
   b. Governments should treat teachers as professionals. They should help build their professionalism by investing in the necessary initial and in-service education programmes and providing them with autonomy. In turn, teachers' unions aiming to strengthen professionalism through codes of ethics should raise members' awareness and build the skills of those entrusted with following through on such internal accountability mechanisms.
   c. Governments need to ensure that teacher evaluators have the appropriate training so as to be able to focus their work on supporting teachers and enabling them to deliver equitable, high-quality and inclusive instruction.
   d. Governments should increase the capacity of their representatives to participate actively and monitor the work of international organizations. In turn, international organizations should be inclusive and transparent and report to their members.

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Accountability in education:

MEETING OUR COMMITMENTS

The second edition of the *Global Education Monitoring Report* (GEM Report) presents the latest evidence on global progress towards the education targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

With hundreds of millions of people still not going to school, and many not achieving minimum skills at school, it is clear education systems are off track to achieve global goals. The marginalized currently bear the most consequences but also stand to benefit the most if policy-makers pay sufficient attention to their needs. Faced with these challenges, along with tight budgets and increased emphasis on results-oriented value for money, countries are searching for solutions. Increased accountability often tops the list.

This summary of the 2017/8 GEM Report shows the entire array of approaches to accountability in education. It ranges from countries unused to the concept, where violations of the right to education go unchallenged, to countries where accountability has become an end in itself instead of a means to inclusive, equitable and high-quality education and lifelong learning for all.

The report emphasizes that education is a shared responsibility. While governments have primary responsibility, all actors – schools, teachers, parents, students, international organizations, private sector providers, civil society and the media – have a role in improving education systems. The report emphasizes the importance of transparency and availability of information but urges caution in how data are used. It makes the case for avoiding accountability systems with a disproportionate focus on narrowly defined results and punitive sanctions. In an era of multiple accountability tools, the report provides clear evidence on those that are working and those that are not.

Global Education Monitoring Report

UNESCO
United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Sustainable
Development
Goals

Sustainable
Development
Goals