

Providing Access to Quality Primary Education:
A Stepping-stone to Resolving All Global Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviewed the various international conventions, declarations and agreements relating to the topic of children and their right to quality education. These documents were used as a foundation for researching the potential causes of why it has become a major challenge for numerous countries around the world to ensure that each child has access to and receives a quality primary education. The final portion of this paper examines what types of action and progress are being made by the leaders in this field, but also highlights what still needs to be done. To demonstrate the harsh reality, the Syrian Arab Republic was used as a reference point throughout the analysis section of this paper. The Syrian Arab Republic provides an extreme case as it is experiencing major conflict, lacks resources and a stable government, and it is a developing nation. Ultimately the paper will look towards the future in suggesting that radical change can assist in helping countries to make access to quality education their top priority.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is critical to every person's development and ability to reach their full potential. The benefits are endless for societies that have provided their citizens with a quality education, even if it only includes completing the primary education levels. However, this is far from a reality for millions of children each and every year. The world is taking insufficient action on a national, regional and community level. Countless international agreements, conventions and agendas have been established and adopted throughout the years and yet the world is coming up short. For that reason, those international agreements and agendas will be the foundation upon which this paper will work to look at the potential root causes, highlight the work already being done, and ultimately create an awareness for the severity of the challenge. Immediate action that is critical to ensure every child is provided with access to quality primary education.

SECTION 1: PURPOSE

The battle of eradicating the world of its global issues has been ongoing for decades and yet many persist with little progress forward. Providing access to education has been a widespread challenge across the world and has quickly reached a critical stage where immediate action is necessary. However, the global acknowledgements in United Nations' declarations, conventions and resolutions has proved to be inadequate, as 262 million children remained out-of-school at the end of the 2017 school year. Children are an extremely vulnerable group within society and require special care and consideration when making decisions to take action. Primary aged children have been particularly hard hit as 64 million were not in school to acquire the fundamental knowledge and skills to contribute to their society in 2017, which is an increase of 4 million over 5 years (UNESCO Institute for Statistics). Unfortunately, the numbers indicate a

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disparity between genders, as Figure 1 indicates more girls compared to boys fail to receive primary education.

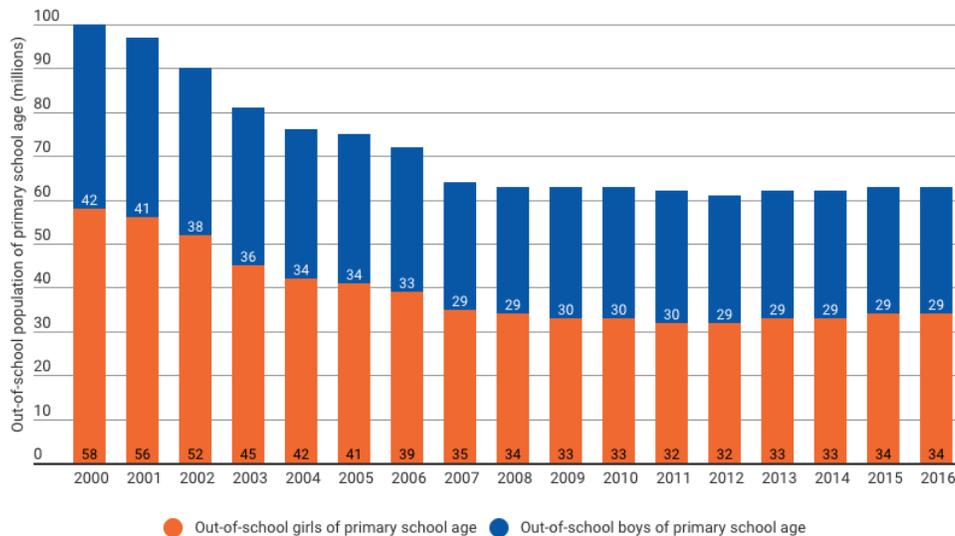


Figure 1: *Out of school population among children of primary school age (millions) by sex, 2000-2016.* Primary Education (2018, Jul). UNICEF Data. Retrieved from <https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/primary-education/>

Although every additional level of education a child receives is extremely valuable, this thesis will focus on primary education and touch on early childhood education. Educational systems can vary considerably depending on the nation being reviewed. However, the 2011 International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) provides a baseline for countries to use when defining their educational systems. Early childhood education is “...typically designed with a holistic approach to support children’s early cognitive, physical, social and emotional development and introduce young children to organized instruction outside of the family context.” Furthermore, the ISCED mentions that early childhood education is used to prepare children with the necessary skills to attend formal education. Depending on the type of early childhood education, a child will start around the age of 2 or 3 until the start of primary education (pg. 26). Additionally, the ISCED defines primary education as “...typically designed

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to provide students with fundamental skills in reading, writing and mathematics (i.e. literacy and numeracy) and establish a solid foundation for learning and understanding core areas of knowledge, personal and social development, in preparation for lower secondary education.”

Children get enrolled into primary education between the age of 5 to 7, depending on the country, and stay until they are between 10 and 12 years old (International Standard Classification of Education ISCED 2011, pg. 30).

The focus on early childhood and primary education is due to the importance these critical first years have on a child’s development and the overall benefit to society. Without completion of lower levels of education, any opportunities and additional knowledge that would be gained from higher levels of education are automatically lost. However, by providing access to quality primary education it has the potential to create crucial benefits for the improvement of individual societies and the global stage. A list of three general benefits can be concluded based on the research done by the Borgen Project and Global Partnership for Education. The Borgen Project focused primarily on ending extreme poverty and published an article in January 2018 outlining benefits of education in relation to eradication of poverty (Chowdhury, 2018). In addition, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) focused on creating change of educational systems within developing nations (The Benefits of Education). Both of these organizations identified that ensuring access to quality primary education can create environmental, health, and economic benefits. Through providing education, people become better informed of the consequences of natural disasters, the importance of climate change and they are better equipped to develop innovative ways to combat environmental challenges. The health benefits to having some level of education are vast. Educated mothers are better informed of the importance to vaccinate their children and avoid malnutrition, young females are less likely to become mothers

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at a young age, and the number of maternal deaths is reduced (Chowdhury, 2018) (The Benefits of Education). GPE estimated that if every mother were to have completed primary education that there would be two thirds fewer maternal deaths occurring in comparison to current day statistics (The Benefits of Education). Poverty levels would be drastically reduced, with a potential to receive higher income for those who have completed at least some level of education. The Borgen Project estimated that if all children achieved a basic reading level that close to 171 million people would be lifted out of extreme poverty (Chowdhury, 2018). Meanwhile, GPE concluded that individuals could experience as high as 10 percent increase in income for every additional year of education completed. The overall positive impact can in turn create an economic growth of 0.37 percent for a country's gross domestic product (The Benefits of Education).

Each of these benefits is an additional reason for countries around the world to take immediate action to ensure that every child is provided access to quality primary education. It is in the benefit of the child and the country to make this change. However, there are particular regions and countries around the world that are impacted more heavily than others. For that reason, this paper will use the Syrian Arab Republic as a point of reference to highlight how critical this global challenge is for today's world. The country has been experiencing a civil war since early 2011, with involvement of other nations and terrorist groups (Civil War in Syria, 2019). As of April 19, 2018, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) established that there are 13.1 million people in need within Syria. Furthermore, 6.6 million are internally displaced and 2.98 million live in areas that are difficult to reach or occupied by terrorist groups. UNHCR has over 5.6 million registered Syrian refugees with over 60 percent now residing in neighbouring Turkey (Syria emergency, 2018). It was estimated that almost 33

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percent of primary school age children were out-of-school in 2013 (Out-of-school rate for children of primary school age). It is the challenges of living in a war zone, refugee camp and foreign country as refugees that are a major hinder to these children having access to quality primary education.

SECTION 2: IDENTIFY

SECTION 2.1 – GLOBAL STATISTICS AND RELEVANCE

Providing access to education has in recent years become an increasingly prominent topic of discussion amongst global leaders in various positions of influence and sectors. The right to education was mentioned as early as 1948 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and has since then been a focal point in various other conventions, declarations and development programs. The most recent international-based action has been the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals program, with Goal 4 created to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all”. In the 2018 Global Annual Results Report from UNICEF a shock-worthy statistic of 262 million children and youth were recorded as out-of-school. A quarter of those children were of primary school age, which amounts to 64 million children between the ages of seven and twelve based on figures from 2017. To further illustrate the severity of the issue, it is worth noting that the statistics have been increasing rather than decreasing throughout the years. For example, in 2012 it was 61 million (Global Annual Results Report 2018). Improving the statistics of having more children enrolled and attending primary education will have a positive impact on both the national and international level. In a brochure

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in 2014, UNICEF stated that “investment in good quality early childhood education services prior to entering school improves learning outcomes for children.” The brochure goes further in outlining benefits such as a more efficient schooling system with fewer children dropping out as they are better equipped to understand the educational lessons (Early Childhood Development).

The overall scope of education, ranging from early childhood education through to university, is too broad a topic to analyze. For that reason, this paper will focus primarily on early childhood and primary education. The reason for this “bottom-up” approach is that educational systems at the early stages of a child must first be established before they are able to proceed through to secondary education and university level. Early childhood is defined by UNESCO “...as the period from birth to eight years old, ... a time of remarkable growth with brain development at its peak.” To further define this key time in a child’s understanding and learning UNESCO noted that education “aims at the holistic development of a child’s social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing” (Early childhood care and education). It is these internationally established definitions that demonstrate how critical a child’s first years of learning are as their impact is transferred through to social cohesion and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development defined primary education as beginning with the first years of a child attending formal and structured education, which starts around the age of five, and lasting between four to six years (International Standard Classification of Education, 2007).

As the fundamental years of learning for a child while their brain development is at its peak, it is troublesome that there were 262 million children reported to be out-of-school in 2017.

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However, as outlined in section 1 of this paper there are a vast number of benefits available if societies start creating a change in the quality and accessibility of education. Through education, the health of children can greatly improve. Educated mothers are more likely to be informed about vaccinations and the importance of avoiding malnutrition. In addition, the economic side of ensuring that every child has access to education can be seen through an economic growth of annual gross domestic product by 0.37 percent for every additional year of education received. As the educational years increase for an individual, they are able to earn more income and eventually reduce poverty levels (The benefits of education). Providing access to primary education is a stepping-stone for resolving completely or making significant progress towards eradicating the world of its major global issues.

SECTION 2.2 - UNITED NATIONS OVERVIEW

International organizations have more often than not been established in the aftermath of global disasters or as a method to mitigate and resolve challenges before they become disastrous. A relevant example is the United Nations (UN), an intergovernmental organization that was established following the end of World War II in 1945. To demonstrate the global reach that the UN has it is important to highlight the 193 Member States that together work on varying issues including human rights, gender equality, climate change, terrorism, and health emergencies. It is due to this organization that concerns can be raised, discussions can be had and solutions can be created (United Nations – Overview). María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, UN General Assembly President, recently made a speech in which she highlighted the relevance of the UN by stating “global challenges require global solutions, and there is no body or entity more representative or

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emblematic of global cooperation and multilateralism than the United Nations, and I think we all agree on that. We must continue to foster mutually reinforcing and coordinated efforts amongst the main organs of the United Nations to boost and uphold multilateralism. The General Assembly, the Security Council, and other UN organs and entities all play crucial roles, complementary roles, within their respective mandates, in fostering international peace and security.” Furthermore, she noted that “the international community, through dialogue and concerted efforts, has made remarkable gains in peacekeeping, peacebuilding, human rights, women peace and security, youth peace and security, and climate action” (Espinso Garcés, 2019).

SECTION 2.3 - UN DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

It was through the participation and collaboration of the UN Member States that on December 10, 1948 the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The basis for the Declaration was to establish the equal rights of people, in terms of a “...foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” It was determined that in order for the Member States to be successful in their pledge of promoting those rights that they would first need a common understanding. As a bedrock for the overall topic, it is worth outlining the relevant Articles. Articles 1, 2 and 19 lay out the right to be “...born free and equal in dignity and rights,” “...entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without any distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,” and “...the right to freedom of opinion and expression...” respectively. However, it is Article 26 that puts into

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writing that “everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages.” There may be no state, group or person acting in a manner that will damage or destruct any of the rights and freedoms written in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as established in Article 30. This includes the right to education. (General Assembly Resolution 217 A, 1948).

As a former First Lady of the United States, Mrs. Roosevelt became involved in the workings of the United Nations when President Truman chose her to be the chair of the Human Rights Commission. Through her hard work and advocacy for promoting humanitarian efforts she became a prominent figure on the global stage when it came to such issues as the rights of those that are disadvantaged. As part of the position she held within the United Nations, she gave a speech to the General Assembly in 1958 in which she said “where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world.” Mrs. Roosevelt’s longtime advocacy for ensuring that the rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were met, including the right to education, led to the eventual creation of the Convention Against Discrimination in Education (Roosevelt, 1958). Amongst those human rights mentioned by Mrs. Roosevelt is the right to education for children and it is exactly in those “small, close to home” locations that require immediate and radical change.

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SECTION 2.4 - UNESCO CONVENTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATION

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted the Convention Against discrimination in Education on December 14, 1960. While the Convention reiterates the right for every person to access education, it concentrates specifically on all types of discrimination within the area of education. Under section 1.01, the General Conference highlighted the necessity of education in relation the overall development. The General Conference believed “that in the absence of adequate educational facilities no nation can make its full contribution to the cause of international understanding and world peace to which UNESCO is dedicated.” To combat any discrimination in education and strive to provide adequate educational facilities, the Convention invites the Member States “to continue and intensify their efforts, jointly and seperately, to provide equal education opportunities for all, without regard to race, sex, or any other distinction, economic or social,” per section 1511 (b). While this responsibility has been placed on each nation, the Director-General has also been given a role in the fight against discrimination in education. She/he has been authorized to promote “equality of educational opportunity, particularly through the removal of obstacles to the education of girls and women” under section 1.1512 (b) (Records of the General Conference, 1960).

SECTION 2.5 – UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

As the first human rights treaty entirely focused on children, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted and opened for signatures and ratification on

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November 20, 1989. Currently, the Convention has been signed and ratified by 196 states parties, however, the United States of America is the only country that has yet to ratify (Office of the High Commissioner, 2019). The Convention consists of 54 Articles of which 9 have a direct or close relation to the topic of education. Article 1 outlines that any human being under the age of eighteen years is considered to be a child, which is then applied to all national and regional levels of legislation. Furthermore, Articles 2,3, and 4 outlines that no child should experience any kind of discrimination, that actions are taken with the child's best interests as the primary concern, and that the appropriate measures are taken to realize each of the rights outlined in the Convention (pg. 2). Article 27 highlights that every child has the right to an appropriate standard of living based on mental, physical, social, and moral development. However, it is Article 28 that entirely focuses on education as "States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity..." The States Parties will make primary education free and compulsory for all while also implementing measures that will ensure that attendance increases and that drop-out rates decreases. In addition, each of the States Parties will encourage international cooperation to share scientific findings and updates, with developing nations being of particular importance (pg. 8). The education of the child will need to be in accordance with the development of mental and physical abilities, personalities, respect for human rights, cultural identity and language, and the natural environment, as defined in Article 29 of the Convention. In order to ensure that countries are held accountable and progress is tracked, Article 43 outlines a Committee on the Right of the Child to be established (pg. 12) (UN General Assembly, 1989).

As the majority of the world's countries have signed and ratified the Convention, it sets an excellent base that demonstrates countries' acknowledgement of how important the rights of

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the child and education are to their development. Recognition is the first step in ensuring every child has access to quality primary education. Through the Committee on the Rights of the Child, that recognition is further translated into a responsibility for which countries will be monitored and held accountable. Looking towards the future, progress will only be truly felt on a community level when countries create radical change through their implementation of policy changes, resource allocation, and professional development.

SECTION 2.6 – UN MILLENNIUM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

As an attempt to eradicate the world of its major challenges to sustainable development, world leaders gathered in September 2000 at the United Nations headquarters in New York and adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Goals “...committed nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty...” as its central focus, which after its 15-year lifespan saw the most successful change in history. There are eight MDGs highlighting various focus areas, which include eliminating extreme poverty and hunger, providing universal primary education, promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality rates, improving maternal health, fighting malaria, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, establishing environmental sustainability, and cultivating global partnerships (Millennium Development Goals). The United Nations Secretary General at the time, BAN Ki moon, made a statement in which he highlighted that “eradicating extreme poverty continues to be one of the main challenges of our time, and is a major concern of the international community” (pg. 2) (Ki-moon, 2008). However, although progress was made towards achieving these goals, nations did not cause sufficient change to ensure that the goals were entirely met. The global challenges persisted and some have even worsened over the years

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to the extent that immediate and radical change is necessary for the well-being of the planet and its people. For that reason, the United Nations organization and its member states developed a new 15-year strategy in 2015.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Agenda (SDGs) was adopted in September 2015 and is "...a call for action by all countries – rich, poor, middle-income – to promote prosperity while protecting the planet." The SDGs Agenda expands on the MDGs from 8 goals to 17 as the various global challenges facing the world can only be eradicated and resolved through the understanding that each of them is highly interconnected. Countries will fight to end extreme poverty, hunger, inequalities, and the effects of climate change; while promoting health, education, gender equality, clean energy, sustainable consumption and production, water and sanitation, biodiversity on land and in sea, strong judicial institutions, economic growth, sustainable infrastructure, inclusive societies, and global partnerships. Depending on the Goal, there are designated targets to determine what level needs to be achieved in order for real progress to have been made. Nation States will change, implement and accelerate their actions, based on country resources and abilities, in order to meet the targets and indicators set out for each goal to track the progress being made.

Although each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals is extremely important, together they are too broad to consider for the purposes of this thesis. For that reason, the thesis will use Sustainable Development Goal 4 as the focal point and reference for creating awareness of how important the topic of access to quality primary education is for every child. Under the 2030 Agenda, the United Nations has labeled Goal 4 as "ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning." There are seven targets with eight corresponding

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indicators to monitor whether countries are making sufficient progress to reach the 2030 Agenda. Target 4.1 established that by 2030 “...all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary education and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes” while 4.2 sets out “...that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education” (Quality Education). With these two targets under consideration, this thesis will consider what is causing this to be a global challenge and what various organizations are doing to ensure that every child has access to quality primary education.

SECTION 3: CAUSES

Ensuring every child has access to quality primary education involves overcoming a long list of challenges and barriers. Each of these challenges and barriers needs to be eliminated through immediate action by all levels of society. Global Citizen, an organization focused on fighting extreme poverty through raising awareness and causing change, published an article in January 2019 outlining ten elements that are impacting the access of education. Although none of these factors is more important than the other, it includes discrimination, health, geographical location, lack of facilities, and financial expenses. In various countries, young girls and children with disabilities are excluded from attending school. More than 130 million girls in the world are not in school, with a 1 to 3 ratio of young girls under the age of 18 being married. Furthermore, girls often find themselves in unfair situations where their male siblings are prioritized to receive an education and, if they do attend school, girls are more likely to miss school days due to a lack of menstrual hygiene education. Alternatively, those children with a disability living in the poorest countries in the world experience a 95-percentage rate for being out-of-school. This may

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be due to a lack of teachers trained to be inclusive, inaccessibility of schools for those children, discriminatory societal views, and/or the lack of resources to make it possible for the child to travel to school such as a wheelchair.

In addition to the discriminatory factors, some children face health issues as a primary reason for not being in a state to attend school. Children with malnutrition are far from being able to travel to school and concentrate within the classroom. In 2013, more than 150 million children were reported to have their cognitive abilities impacted and as a result 19 percent less likely to have reading abilities by the age of eight. It would be the filled bellies of children that would help them endure the long journeys to and from school that are common for some. It is not uncommon for a portion of the world's children to travel three hours to and from home in order to reach their school. At times, the far distance between home and school can be due to conflict-affected areas, as nearly 250 million children live in those types of environments and close to 61 million being out-of-school. Even with these alarming statistics, humanitarian aid that goes toward education wasn't even 3 percent of the total money available in 2016. This leaves children in a vulnerable position without a safe place to be kids, free of worries and burdens.

However, there are times when it is the most basic elements that deprive children from those safe environments and keep them out of school. Available classrooms, qualified teachers and up-to-date learning materials are fundamental elements necessary to provide children with access to quality primary education. Children are unable to learn without the appropriate environment, which requires a classroom with facilities, such as bathrooms and running water. In Malawi and Chad these have become major factors impacting the enrolment and quality of education. An average of 130 children would typically be in a single classroom in Malawi, while for every seven schools only 1 has potable water. In Chad 1 in every 4 schools has a toilet. Even

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with sufficient classrooms and bathroom facilities, there is a major gap of available and qualified teachers. The United Nations estimates that there is a need for approximately 69 million new trained teachers to ensure the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 is reached by 2030. 69 million new teachers are necessary or the world risks damaging millions of children's futures and opportunity to better this world. Current statistics identify that 1 in every 3 countries has less than three-quarters of its teachers trained and qualified for the position, which is resulting in 130 million children not reaching basic reading, writing and math skills. A school with sufficient classrooms and trained teachers requires enough learning materials to be distributed amongst its students. Unfortunately, textbooks are often found to be extremely out-dated and require sharing amongst more than 3 or 4 students each time in a large part of the world. "In Cameroon, there are 11 primary school students for every reading textbook and 13 for every mathematics textbook in grade 2." The short supply of these types of learning materials can impact the quality of the teaching, the child's level of concentration, and overall knowledge and skills learned by the children.

Unfortunately, an element that should under no circumstances have an impact on a child's access to quality primary education is of a financial nature. Although there should be no cost on the family side of enrolling a child in education there are times when there are informal fees for items such as uniforms, books, and other items to help operate the school facilities. However, it should not be the responsibility of parents and guardians to fund those costs when universal primary education should be free for all children. Less than an eighth of global aid goes towards the education sector of low-income countries and yet it would only cost approximately 1.24 US Dollars per child to ensure they receive education for 13 years (Rueckert, 2019). For developed countries, that would be equivalent to three or four cups of coffee (McCarthy, 2018).

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Mathematically if approximately 31.2 billion people were to choose education over a cup of coffee then the 39 billion funding gap would be met and the world would be able to reach the goal set out by the UN to provide quality universal education by 2030 (Rueckert, 2019).

Each of these factors has been detrimental to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, which makes it complex to solve while also demonstrating how interconnected education is to other sectors. The benefits of access to primary education strongly outweigh the challenges facing these societies. However, for many they have yet to make this realization. Acknowledgement that providing children with access to quality primary education will be the first step towards gender equality, eradication of poverty and an improvement of society.

SECTION 4: ANALYSIS

As the global statistics have indicated, ensuring that the rights of the child are met in terms of access to education requires immediate and radical change. Although it is not sufficient, there are various regional, national and international organizations and initiatives being implemented and some progress is being made. Some of the most notable international actions being taken are through the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action 2016, UNESCO, UNICEF, Global Partnership for Education, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education and the Future of Education Report 2018.

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SECTION 4.1 – INCHEON DECLARATION AND FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION 2016

The 2015 World Education Forum, held by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), World Bank and United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) made an incredible step forward in providing universal access to education. With the attendance of various ministers and members of relevant organizations in the field of education, the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action 2016 was created. The Declaration and Framework will be a recommitment and strategy for meeting the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Agenda. Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, stated in relation to the Declaration: “it affirms that education, a fundamental human right, is the key to global peace and sustainable development.” Meanwhile, executive director of UNICEF, Anthony Lake, said “education is the key to a better life for every child and the foundation for every strong society – but far too many children are still being left behind. To realize all our development goals, we need every child in school and learning” (pg. 12). It is with these mindsets that the necessary radical change can be made without any delay.

The purpose of the Declaration was to be holistic and humanistic, centralizing human rights, inclusion, and a shared responsibility and accountability. Ensuring children will receive 12 years of free access to education, including 9 years that are required is amongst the first priorities mentioned in the Declaration. Furthermore, a commitment was made that the education received is of quality, to ensure learning outcomes are achieved, as the benefits are instrumental to a better society. Lastly, the preamble made note of education in conflict and/or emergency areas as being of importance. As the statistics have already indicated, and continue to, a majority of children do not attend school because of conflicts and crises. For that reason, the Declaration

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makes a recommendation to provide an appropriate response system with the relevant actors to establish the needs and procedures required. However, it has been reaffirmed that governments hold the ultimate responsibility of ensuring that the necessary steps and actions are taken to provide children with access to education. Governments are strongly encouraged within the Declaration to set aside a minimum of 15 to 20 percent of their total public expenditure for education purposes. To ensure that governments are taking action and making progress, the Declaration will look to create a monitoring and evaluating system to keep all relevant actors accountable and establish transparency.

The Framework for Action 2016 (Framework 2016) has been separated into three sections, including the vision and rationale, goal and strategic approaches, and the implementation. However, the overall purpose is to outline “how to translate into practice, at country/national, regional and global level, the commitment made in Incheon” through the Declaration. While providing access to education is crucial to meeting the 2030 Agenda goals, the Framework 2016 makes note of the danger posed if skills and learning outcomes are not monitored closely. There is little use in providing education that is not of a quality level that will ensure it is effective and helping improve society. The quality level must be highly adaptive to the changing environment in regard to available technology, demographic challenges, labour markets, and potential political instability to name a few. Each of these changes and challenges should not be a deterrent for governments, as the benefits will always outweigh the obstacles to provide education. As mentioned earlier in section 1, there are numerous benefits to providing quality education to children which include social cohesion, eradication of poverty, gender equality, overall health and nutrition, inclusion of persons with disabilities, and the promotion of peace and stability.

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To meet these benefits, the Framework 2016 has developed strategic approaches with individual indicative strategies for each of the targets under Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda. All levels of a country need to be mobilized in order to improve policies, distribution of resources and the effectiveness of evaluation systems. Framework 2016 encourages countries to: “Scale up innovative, evidence-based and cost-effective approaches that enable all individuals to gain access to, participate in, learn through and complete a quality education, with a special focus on those who are the hardest to reach in all contexts” (pg. 31). The strategic approaches include a strengthening of policies and legislation, emphasizing inclusion and equality, providing quality and lifelong learning, and dealing with education in crisis scenarios. Governments will need to take action and set benchmarks to ensure that they are making sufficient progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

Target 4.1 of the 2030 Agenda focuses on ensuring that “all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education” (pg. 35). Statistics indicate that close to 250 million children, of which 50 percent have been in school for over four years, do not have basic literacy and numeracy skills. Without these skills, children are unable to reach their full potential. For that reason, the Framework 2016 makes an “immediate, targeted and sustained...” call to action to rectify this by providing meaningful and quality education to every girl and boy. This will be done by establishing policies and legislation that ensure every child receives 12 years of free, publicly funded education. Quality standards will need to be created and regularly reviewed based on curriculum, inclusion and quality, learning environment, resources, and quality of teachers. Ensuring the community is involved in the overall effectiveness of the education system will create transparency to demonstrate the importance of quality education to parents by having both daughters and sons enrolled. The transparency will furthermore be

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helpful in the allocation of resources as those in less socio-economically advantageous positions will require more resources. Including each of these elements in the global, national and regional strategies will be pivotal in the achievement of providing every child with access to quality primary education. Children' peak brain development years start prior to enrolling in primary education. For that reason, the 2030 Agenda has a separate target (4.2) focused on ensuring that "all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education" (pg. 35). Early childhood care and education (ECCE) creates a basis for all life-long development and is increasingly beneficial to the overall learning capabilities of a child once they enrol in formal education. Similar to meeting target 4.1, indicative strategies set out by the Framework 2016 involve implementing inclusive and equitable policies with complimenting assessments of the ECCE programs, and providing professional development to the personnel working in early childhood care and education. Having appropriate policies in place that highlight the importance of providing quality ECCE, regular assessments and professionally developing staff will help ensure that children are prepared for primary education and ready to achieve their full potential.

Having qualified personnel at all levels of education is fundamental to providing quality education. Target 4.C establishes a need for significant "increase [in] the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries..." (pg. 53). Developing nations typically lack the necessary resources to maintain and attract qualified teachers into their education system. For that reason, countries should prioritize making the profession of teacher a desirable and well supported career track. In turn, this will attract motivated and qualified individuals within the country and from abroad, which is currently not the case. A third of the countries with recorded data have below 75 percent of their

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primary school teachers meeting national training standards. Untrained teachers will lack the skills and knowledge to assess learning outcomes and ultimately stall the progress of providing every child with access to quality primary education.

In combination with the indicative strategies, the Framework 2016 outlined implementation modalities which aim to provide support for country-level action while being effective, inclusive, transparent, and participatory. Ultimately, the implementation of the strategies will be reached through the collective effort of various stakeholders from government through to society's youth. Governments hold the primary responsibility as they are critical in regulating the standards, eliminating disparities between communities and improving the overall quality levels of the education system. Civil society organizations are important in creating public awareness and involvement in the planning of policies and legislation. Meanwhile teachers, educators and youth are the bridge between policy and practice as they are best equipped to discuss the realities of what works and what needs improvement within the classroom. Accurate and up-to-date information about the situation and an accountable government will make monitoring and resource allocation decisions easier, and ultimately meet the targets of Goal 4 from the 2030 Agenda (Education 2030, 2016). The Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action 2016 will continue to be a critical guidance method for the world, countries, regions, and communities as 2030 nears closer.

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SECTION 4.2 – UNESCO

Fighting “to build peace through international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and Culture,” the United Nations Educational, Sciences and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is the only UN agency covering all areas of education within its mandate (Education transforms lives). UNESCO currently has 193 members and 11 associate members. The Organization has helped create educational tools, promote cultural heritage and equal dignity as a way of encouraging people to be global citizens and to provide quality education to all. Furthermore, UNESCO is a laboratory of ideas as it helps in the implementing of international standards for nations and sharing of information. UNESCO has organized tsunami early warning systems all over the world, the reconstruction of the Mausoleums in Timbuktu, and been a leader in the worldwide effort to provide every child with quality education (UNESCO in brief). The person in charge of the operations and decision making is the Director-General, Audrey Azoulay, who took office on November 15, 2018 for a four-year term. Azoulay has stated “none of the major challenges facing the world today can be met by any one country on its own without relying on the fundamental pillars of science, education and culture. Thus, UNESCO can and must fully participate in a world order based on multilateralism and humanistic values” (Director-General). This type of perspective will be critical in the process of providing every child with quality primary education.

UNESCO has divided its areas of expertise into sectors focused on education, culture, national sciences, social and human sciences, and communication and information. Education is at the core of the Organization’s purpose as it is believed to be a human right. UNESCO attempts to provide leadership at all governmental levels to improve the educational system while also

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highlighting that “...no development can be sustainable without a strong culture component” and that “science and technology empower societies and citizens...” (Education transforms lives) (Protecting Our Heritage and Fostering Creativity) (Science for a Sustainable Future).

Furthermore, UNESCO provides people with information to function as independent citizens while “...promot[ing] the free flow of ideas by word and image” (Social and Human Sciences) (Communication and Information). It is these areas of expertise that determine the types of projects UNESCO undertakes, at the global, regional and country-specific levels. Currently the largest number of projects within one country are in Brazil, with a total of 71. Libya and Afghanistan follow with 22, Iraq has 21, Palestine 19, and Syria has 17 (UNESCO Projects, 2018).

The funding of these projects comes from various sources, such as contributions to regular programs (66 percent), voluntary government contributions (16 percent), private sector (3 percent), and the United Nations (3 percent). Based on 2018, UNESCO receives the majority of its voluntary government contributions from developed Western nations, such as Sweden, Italy, Finland, and Switzerland (Where do our funds come from?). Once collected, the money is allocated towards various areas around the world depending on need and resources. For example, Europe and North America arguably have well established educational systems, resources and are developed nations, which helps explain why only 1 percent (USD 3,451,675) is spent on the area. Alternatively, the Asian and Pacific area received 8 percent, which is USD 35,464,552. However, half of all money received goes towards institutions, which is close to 224 million US Dollars (Where are our funds being spent?). UNESCO closely monitors what type of programs the money is being used for and as the 2018 figures indicate, 31 percent (USD 138,804,352) goes directly towards educational purposes, which further breaks down into programs specified for

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teacher trainings, early childhood education and care, gender equality, research related to the UN SDG 4, and the Global Citizenship Education program (What are our funds being spent on?).

Figure 2 indicates the expenditure levels on each of the focus areas of education in 2018.

FOCUS AREA	↓ EXPENDITURE
ECCE	US\$ 20,690,696
Global Citizenship Education	US\$ 18,487,297
Teachers	US\$ 15,327,249
TVET	US\$ 13,052,165
Inclusive education for vulnerable populations, people with disabilities & in crisis-affected areas	US\$ 9,925,674
Education & ICTs	US\$ 8,663,589
Gender Equality in education systems	US\$ 6,976,840
Research & Foresight - SDG 4-Education 2030	US\$ 5,527,722
Global Leadership - SDG 4-Education 2030	US\$ 3,249,145
Higher education	US\$ 2,646,518

Figure 2: *What are our funds being spent on? – Jan. – Dec. 2018.* UNESCO Transparency Portal. United Nations Educational, Sciences and Cultural Organization. Retrieved from

<https://opendata.unesco.org/financial-flows/programmatic-breakdown>

Even with over a billion US Dollars being spent towards education, the sector remains at the top of UNESCO’S list for funding requirements. For the 2018-2019 year, UNESCO indicates it will need approximately 384 million USD while the next biggest need is for the sector of Culture, but it doesn’t even need half of what Education needs (Funding Breakdown per Sector). Ultimately, this is an incredibly strong indicator of how important it is for the governments to focus on their education systems by providing quality and allocating sufficient funds towards it.

Amongst the nations that have seen the benefits of UNESCO’s work is the Syrian Arab Republic, which became a member in November 1946. Between 2009 and 2013, the country saw

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a constant rise in the number of out-of-school children, from 22 thousand to over the 667 thousand, respectively. Furthermore, the enrolment rate of primary education has dramatically declined by 30 percent. In 2009, approximately 92 percent of boys and girls were enrolled in primary education. Four years later, at the start of the Syrian civil war, only 63 percent of children were enrolled. In 2009, the country spent only 5.13 percent of its Gross Domestic Product on educational expenditure rather than the recommended 15 to 20 percent. However, UNESCO is providing assistance in rectifying the access children have to quality primary education through various country-specific projects. From October 2015 to January 2019, the “Quality Universal Education for Syrian Students and Teachers Project” ran, which focused on improving the quality of teaching and access to education. The expenses for this project reached just under 5 million US Dollars (Quality Universal Education for Syrian Students and Teachers, 2018). Additionally, in response to the continuing conflicts within Syria a new project was launched at the start of 2018 until the end of 2019. The “Ensuring Access to and Participation in Quality Education for Crisis Affected Children and Youth in Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Yemen Project” has only a budget of just over 110 thousand, but is responsible for providing assistance in education for displaced, refugee, and vulnerable children (Ensuring access to and participation in quality education, 2018). These projects and actions taken by the United Nations Educational, Sciences and Cultural Organization are a step forward for the children of the Syrian Arab Republic, however they are far from enough. Government, organizations, and citizens will need to follow UNESCO’s lead in fighting this global challenge that requires immediate attention and action.

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SECTION 4.3 – UNICEF

A leading advocate for children’s rights throughout the past 70 years, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has a rich history and a bright future to inspire change for the benefit of children. The organization works with 190 countries and territories around the world and believes that “all children have a right to survive, thrive and fulfill their potential - to the benefit of a better world.” While all children are important to UNICEF, “...special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children...” is identified as a key area for the coming years. However, the organization did not start with that purpose in mind (About UNICEF). Instead it was created in 1946 as the International Children’s Emergency Fund to help the children that were impacted by World War II. Four years later, the organization was reorganized to extend its support outside of Europe and in 1953 it became a permanent agency of the United Nations with a specialized sector on education in 1961. After becoming an agency of the UN, changes were made to move away from a relief fund and towards an agency that would support international development and use a human rights-based approach. Early success was achieved with this system in 1968 when UNICEF was able to provide aid in conflict-affected Nigeria and Vietnam, which was largely due to the organization being “...non-political and non-discriminatory...” In addition, through the cooperation between UNICEF and UNESCO they were able to invent and distribute an initiative called School-in-a Box, which is a “...global effort to support uninterrupted education for children in humanitarian crises.” The careful consideration for what the needs are and which areas are a priority is the reason why UNICEF continues to be a leader in the global challenge of ensuring every child has access to quality primary education (UNICEF: 70 years for every child).

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In order for the organization to operate efficiently and provide appropriate support to countries it is crucial for accurate data to be recorded and transferred. For that reason, UNICEF launched the Data Must Speak Initiative in 2014 with partners Global Partnership for Education, Hewlett Foundation and Education Thematic Fund. Through the Initiative, “UNICEF’s goal is to enhance access to education for all learners and improve learning,” which is recognizing that critical importance education can have on a child’s future. It is believed that by being open about the data collected and using it accordingly that it will drive policy decisions, empower communities, and improve our current knowledge levels. Policy makers require current and relevant data to support changes in legislation, while parents and caretakers should be knowledgeable about performance levels to inspire change. Meanwhile, researchers will be able to evaluate and identify the areas in which a school is doing well to then apply that knowledge to the low performing schools. Without this type of data and knowledge it will be an impossible mission to create long lasting positive change when it is such a critical moment in time (Data Must Speak Programme).

The importance of data is outlined further in the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021 where the disparity of vulnerable children is mentioned. It was found that the poorest children are five times more likely to not be enrolled in school, in comparison with children from the highest income families in their region (pg. 5). In addition, an estimate of a “...third of the world’s children will live in countries affected by fragility and conflict” by the year 2030 (pg. 6). To ensure this does not become reality, UNICEF has set education specific goals to be reached by 2021, which include having 60 million children that are currently not enrolled in school gain access to primary and low-secondary education and to have 79 percent of countries being monitored demonstrate an improvement of learning outcomes for children (Division of

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Communication - UNICEF, 2018 pg. 14). Keeping the Strategic Plan in mind, UNICEF focuses its work on eight areas to ensure all challenges and barriers facing a child are addressed. These sectors include child protection and inclusion, child survival, education, UNICEF in emergencies, gender, innovation for children, supply and logistics, and research and analysis (What we do).

As indicated in their mission statement, UNICEF makes special efforts to assist the most vulnerable children, including those who are affected by regions in conflict. The Education in Emergencies area of work identifies that a disruption of school due to conflict can severely damage a child's future and yet 1 in 4 children currently not enrolled in school are living in those conditions. To put the situation in perspective, there are currently 35 countries classified as being crisis-affected and there are approximately 75 million children experiencing some level of disruption in their education that are between the ages of 3 and 18. Amongst the most important factors causing this problem are the lack of sufficiently trained teachers, refugee children, and those internal and externally displaced. Out of 17 million children that are either registered refugees or displaced, only half are receiving primary education. The children that have stayed in their country and who are able to attend school are facing a ratio of 70 students to 1 teacher. Moreover, that teacher is likely to be unqualified for the position thus creating an overall ineffective education system (Education in emergencies).

The Syrian Arab Republic is one country that has been experiencing the effects that conflict can have on a society and the results that this conflict has had on children in particular. According to UNICEF's data, 2.6 million children are internally displaced and 2.5 million are living in neighbouring countries as refugees. However, not all children escaped the war, as 2018 became the deadliest year for children since the fighting started (Syrian crisis). As an indication

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of the severity, the 2019 Humanitarian Action for Children Syrian Appeal established that close to 300 million US Dollars is needed for humanitarian aid, of which 64.4 million is for educational purposes. However, there is a 73 percent funding gap as only 17.6 million has been raised so far, which leaves an incredible number of children extremely vulnerable (Humanitarian Action for Children 2019 - Syrian Appeal, 2019). However, small progress has been made in the various areas that interconnect with providing access to education, including 57 thousand teachers who have received assistance in their training and 3.5 million children have been vaccinated against polio. Healthy children and correctly trained teachers are small steps towards Syria eventually being able to rebuild and give their children a prosperous future (Syrian crisis).

SECTION 4.4 – GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION

As an organization focused solely on education in developing countries, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is the only global fund of its kind. The diverse donors are strictly developed nations with a cooperative partnership from the private sector and various other organizations. The organization focuses on affecting change to ensure that all children receive a quality education, with a particular focus on those most vulnerable. This includes girls, those that are disabled, and those that are impacted by conflict, crisis and/or extreme poverty. Through partnerships with organizations, development banks, funds, and country donors GPE is able to help strengthen educational systems around the world. Amongst those donors, the United Kingdom has the highest share at 19.79 percent while the Republic of Korea is amongst the lowest at 0.06 percent. In combination with the funding, GPE encourages those countries looking to develop to set aside 20 percent of their national budget for solely educational purposes, of

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which 45 percent should go towards primary education, specifically (Global Partnership for Education).

In addition to the encouragement of increasing budget spending, GPE has developed a strategic plan - GPE 2020 Strategic Plan - which will advocate for increased domestic funding and attract additional funding from new and old donors to provide education. The Strategic Plan consists of three goals and five corresponding objectives with a vision “to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” The goals include, “(1) improved and more equitable learning outcomes, (2) increased equity, gender equality and inclusion, and (3) effective and efficient education systems.” To reach these goals, the objectives were separated based on country level and global level to provide the appropriate guidance. On a national level, each country will need to “(1) strengthen education sector planning and policy implementation, (2) support mutual accountability through inclusive policy dialogue and monitoring, and (3) ensure efficient and effective delivery of GPE support” (pg. 7).

Under the individual goals of the GPE 2020 Strategic Plan, there are various actions and supportive roles that GPE will fulfil that can prove to be extremely effective and beneficial towards the ultimate goal of providing quality primary education to every child. GPE has committed to publish reports on global trends in learning outcomes and provide support to governments in order for them to be better equipped to identify, change and implement their educational systems. Trained teachers are a key element to the success of providing quality education. For that reason, GPE will establish a monitoring system that will determine whether there is an appropriate distribution of teachers between high and low-income areas. In addition, GPE will focus its financial spending on those low- and middle-low income regions with a particular priority placed in crisis affected areas with high rates of out-of-school children. As a

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third element to the global goal of ensuring every child has access to quality primary education, it is important to rectify the high dropout and repetition rates within schools as this is an indication of an ineffective system (pg. 11-13) (GPE 2020, 2018).

Through the work of the Global Partnership for Education, close to 17 million children were assisted in 2018 that live in a fragile or conflict area. Meanwhile there was a 70 percent completion rate for primary education in those countries in 2016 (Countries affected by fragility and conflict). Amongst those countries that are in a fragile and conflict affected state is the Syrian Arab Republic, which has been listed as such by the World Bank for the last seven consecutive years (Harmonized List of Fragile Situations, 2018). For those children living in Syria, unable to flee, and those that are now refugees in neighbouring countries this means seven years of little to no access to education. However, recognition of these vulnerable children without education happened in February 2016 when a conference was held on the topic and world leaders committed 10 billion US Dollars to address the humanitarian needs. Malala Yousafzai, 2014 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, was quoted as stating that “we must make a promise to this generation - to empower them with education to rebuild Syria and bring peace” (GPE Secretariat, 2016). It is with this type of advocacy and vision that the Global Partnership for Education has created change, provided funding, and supported developing countries in ensuring every child has access to quality primary education.

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SECTION 4.5 – SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Appointed by the United Nations' Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on the right to education works independently of the UN organizational body. She/he is responsible for reviewing countries and situations in relation to the topic of education as a human right (Special Rapporteur on the right to education). The position is currently held by Dr. Koumbou Boly Barry of Burkina Faso, as of August 1, 2016 for a six-year term. She was a former Minister of Education and has actively advocated for gender equality within education. Under the mandate that was adopted in 1998 by the Commission on Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur makes country-based visits, follows up allegations made through individual complaints and facilitates a constructive discussion amongst the governments and other applicable actors to develop a solution (Dr. Koumbou Boly Barry).

Throughout the years, the Special Rapporteur has made country visits to countries all across the world, such as recently to Côte d'Ivoire in December 2017 or as far back as the United States of America in October 2001 (Country Visits). In the Côte d'Ivoire report it was noted that the country has made progress over the year, but also noted that there were areas of concern for the Special Rapporteur and the future of children. A major worry was the lack of inclusive education as it noted in 2008 that poverty was affecting almost half of the country's population. The cost of education-related expenses is estimated to be a third of household expenditures making it extremely difficult for parents and guardians to enroll their children into education while living in such poverty (pg.11). A continued concern and focus is placed on the literacy of both children and adults as the government hopes to reduce the illiteracy rate in 2017 from 43.8 to 20 per cent by 2020. However, both of those concerns stem from a lack of available quality education. Without appropriately trained teachers and facilities, children will not perform and

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parents will then be less likely to spend their limited income on enrolling their children (pg. 12). Based on the examination and concerns identified, the Special Rapporteur recommended the government of Côte d'Ivoire to strengthen “the teaching profession and improv[e] the quality of the education.” This could be done through providing training, regularly researching and updating the curriculum and establishing it as a desirable profession within the public and private sectors (Boly Barry, 2019 pg. 15).

The USA Report, written in 2001, highlighted the historical background in the country before focusing primarily on policy, financial expenditures, and the long-standing racial conflict that it continues to experience. The Report notes that the educational system in the US is almost completely influenced by domestic factors, which becomes more understandable when one considers that the United States is the only country in the world that has yet to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Office of the High Commissioner, 2019). Sufficient funding is an essential element in providing access to education for all levels of income; however, in the state of New York educational funding was considered to be below par. Suburban schools were identified as receiving 40,000 US Dollars while “inner-city ghetto schools” only received 4,000 US Dollars on an annual basis. Compounding this disparity is the fact that inner-city schools struggle to deal with the high level of diversity and family poverty. (pg. 14). When the Special Rapporteur analyzed the racial backgrounds of students in the New York City schools a concern was noted in the report relating to the terminology used by the government and schools. Although “35 percent of children are black, 38 per cent are Latino and 11 per cent are Asian” they continued to be identified as a minority group (pg.16). To rectify these concerns, the Rapporteur recommended a “revival of the common-school ideal, aimed at creating an informed and self-governing citizenry by educating all children together...”. In

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regard to the lack of recognition of the child's rights, it was recommended in the report to shift the focus from parental rights in voting and decision making to children's rights and a focus on children's best interests (Tomaševski, 2002 pg. 23).

Through the combination of country visits and annual reports, the Special Rapporteur is able to examine issues relating to the right of education and to provide recommendations to slowly progress towards ensuring that every child has access to quality education regardless of income, background or gender. Part of the Special Rapporteur's mandate is to present the annual reports on a yearly basis to the UN General Assembly to give a current overview of the global challenge. The most recent report was presented to the General Assembly on April 10, 2019 and focused primarily on the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 and the impact that private actors in education is having on access. The report uses Kenya as an example, noting that the number of private schools increased by 2,216 percent while the number of public schools increased only by 24.9 percent. Due to these statistics arguments are being made that it "... has led to segregation or discriminatory access to education particularly for disadvantaged and marginalized children," which would ultimately not help in the fight to ensure every child has access to quality education (Human Rights Council, 2019). It is through these reports that countries are benefiting from the work being done by the Special Rapporteur as she/he raises awareness of the issue and provides recommendations to improve lives. Children are an extremely vulnerable group within society, which creates even more urgency for countries to take immediate action and implement radical change that will be in the best interest of these young lives. Additionally, the Rapporteur provides a monitoring system to determine if sufficient action is being taken and what the problematic areas are that need to be addressed. Without this assistance, some countries may be unaware or disregard certain children due to various factors. However, the Special Rapporteur on

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the right to education strives to ensure that every child has access to quality education and is quickly being joined by various organizations and initiatives fighting for the same goal.

SECTION 4.6 – FUTURE OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS 2030 PROJECT

The severity of the challenge has reached an all-time high as millions of children continue to not have access to quality primary education. However, with an eye on the future, it can be argued that the social, economic and environment challenges also pose new opportunities for societies. With this in mind, the Future of Education and Skills 2030 Project looks towards what the children of the future need in order to be active, responsible and engaged citizens. “Education can equip learners with agency and a sense of purpose, and the competencies they need, to shape their own lives and contribute to the lives of others” (pg. 2). The Project notes that in order for this to be possible children “...will need to abandon the notion that resources are limitless and are there to be exploited...” and instead place sustainability over short-term gains and prioritize collaboration (pg. 3).

Future students will need to have extensive educational goals on both an individual and shared basis. The Project discusses the need for students to make use of agency, which is defined as being an active member in society and creating positive change. Agency can be achieved by being in a motivated and effective learning environment, and having basic skills such as numeracy and literacy. The motivated learning environment will largely be cultivated on an intrinsic level as personal attitude and values will play a role while also needing to be adaptive to the quickly changing environment (OECD Secretary-General, 2018). Involving all these

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elements in the thinking process will ensure that education systems and learning outcomes are effective. However, the first step for nations will be to provide access to all children.

CONCLUSION

Education is a critical element to the sustainable development of each nation and the achievement of all the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This paper has made the argument that providing access to quality primary education is a stepping-stone for resolving completely or making significant progress towards eradicating the world of its major global challenges. Immediate and radical change can see nations surpass the barriers of lack of resources and qualified teachers, extreme poverty, gender inequality, and an overall insufficient financial governmental expenditure for educational purposes. However, before the benefits of education can be felt, changes will need to include active input from the various stakeholders, strengthening of policies, promoting the teaching profession, and addressing education in emergency situations. It is with these actions that the future of children can become more secure, thereby providing them with the opportunity to reach their full potential. Every child has the right to education and deserves the chance to be an active, responsible and engaged citizen. To ensure that this is possible, every country will need to provide access to quality primary education.

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