

Quality assurance for accountability in higher education

A global perspective

*UNESCO Regional Consultation Meeting for Western Europe
The role of quality assurance in higher education: challenges,
developments and trends*

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Geneva
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Background

- As **Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (GMR)**, it monitored the six EFA goals
- Editorially independent team based at UNESCO and funded by about 15 bilateral donors / foundations
- Published 12 reports between 2002 and 2015



Mandate

Received extended mandate to monitor education in the **SDGs**

Framework for Action Education 2030



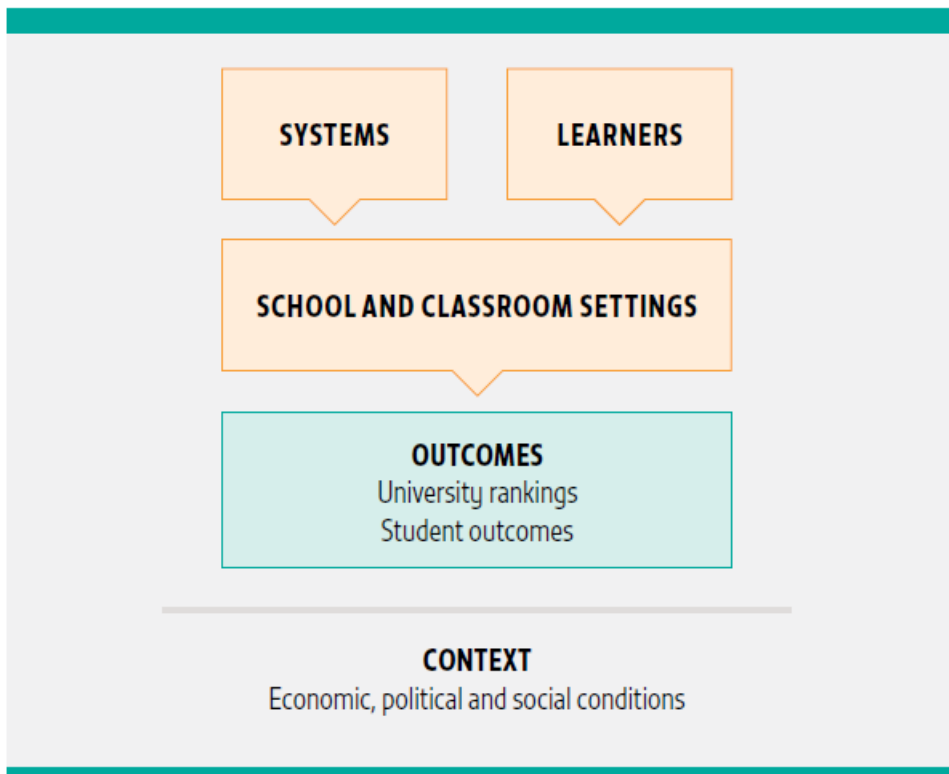
*The Global Education Monitoring Report will be ...
the **mechanism for monitoring and reporting on SDG 4 and on education in the other SDGs** and
will **report on the implementation of national and international strategies to help hold all relevant partners to account for their commitments**
as part of the overall SDG follow-up and review*



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Target 4.3

By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and **quality** technical, vocational and **tertiary education**, including university



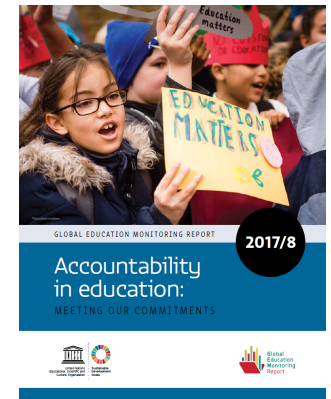
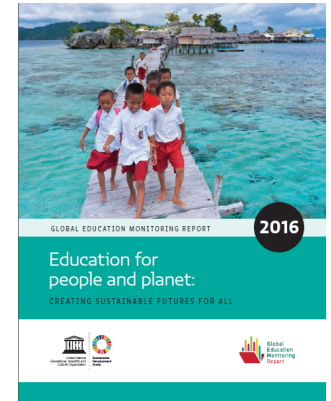
Report themes since 2015

2016 Education and the SDGs
+ SDG monitoring challenges

2017/8 **Accountability**
(launched 24 October 2017)

2019 Migration and displacement
+ internationalization of higher education
(to be launched 20 November 2018)

2020 Inclusion

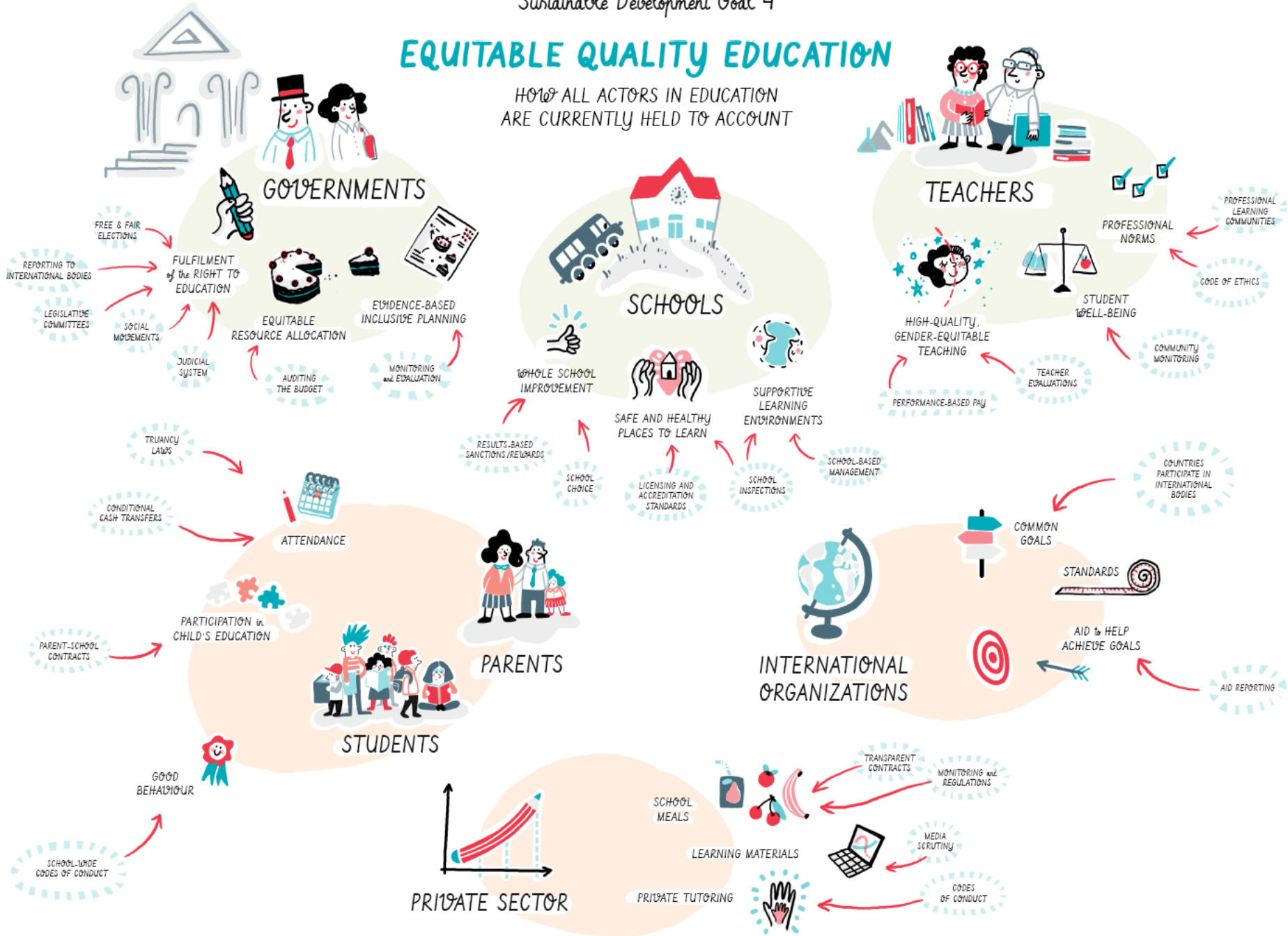


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Sustainable Development Goal 4

EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION

HOW ALL ACTORS IN EDUCATION ARE CURRENTLY HELD TO ACCOUNT



Quality assurance in higher education

Provides:

- ▶ **policy-makers** with detailed information about system and institutional performance to justify changes to funding and programs
- ▶ **students and parents** with data on graduation rates, financial aid or employment to help choose

Different roles, including authorizing and licensing, accrediting, auditing or monitoring, reviewing qualifications and awards

Different models, including:

- ▶ **accreditation** or probation, restrictions, closure
- ▶ **assessment** for formative purposes
- ▶ **audit** of internal processes or national system



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Legal frameworks reflect national contexts

Low income countries:

- ▶ Struggle to establish a QA system, e.g. **Bangladesh**
- ▶ Focus on audit model

Among **middle** income countries:

- ▶ Small countries have single agencies, e.g. **Mauritius**
- ▶ Large countries have multiple agencies, e.g. **Brazil, Malaysia, and the Russian Federation**

In **high** income countries:

- ▶ Various types of agencies exist
- ▶ Lisbon Convention and Bologna process spurred action, e.g. **Finland** and **Portugal**



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Regulation cannot keep pace with expansion

As private higher education institutions have proliferated, many countries responded slowly, e.g. [Indonesia](#), [Peru](#), and [Poland](#)

In some countries, there are calls to keep regulation to a minimum, e.g. [India](#)

But fraud, predatory lending and exploitative practices mean sensible regulations and effective quality assurance are important, e.g. [Ghana](#) and [UK](#)

Transnational market brings regulatory challenges, e.g. [Singapore](#) and [United Arab Emirates](#)



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Diverse objectives result in diverse systems

Mechanisms involve: standard setting, initial self-assessment, external expert and peer review, evaluation reports, and appeals processes

Range of **providers** (e.g. junior colleges ↔ research universities), **degree levels** (e.g. 6-month technical programs ↔ post-doc certificates), **disciplines** and **professions**, **governance types** (e.g. public/private, central/autonomous)

Criteria as basis for decisions span:

- ▶ Inputs, activities and outputs, e.g. equity in **South Africa** ↔ research output
- ▶ Impact: prescriptive or suggestive



Agencies should be more transparent

Agencies hold themselves accountable through:

- ▶ Regional and international agency registers
- ▶ National information centres
- ▶ Annual reports and databases

Some countries organize annual stakeholder meetings to discuss review outcomes, allow for debate and collect information on process impact ...

But in many countries, little of that information reaches the public or even professional groups; most stays within small circle of experts

Not sharing compromises system effectiveness, is a lost opportunity and represents a high cost

Conclusion

As a result of:

- ▶ rapid increase in higher education enrolment
- ▶ diversification of provision and governance
- ▶ (in some regions) growth of student mobility

More **demand** for quality assurance mechanisms

But *despite* sophistication, standards and good practices, and large investments, faculty, students and families may *not* yet be benefiting from improved teaching, learning and research

Quality assurance system outputs need to be more widely shared with the ultimate beneficiaries



Let's get accountability right

@GEMReport

#CountOnMe

Bit.ly/GEM2017

Other GEM Report outputs

Policy papers

= series of 33 since 2011:
incl. higher education (April 2017)

World Inequality Database on Education

incl. disparities in higher education attendance and completion

Policy Paper 30

April 2017

Six ways to ensure higher education leaves no one behind

Higher education is a cornerstone for sustainable development. It creates new knowledge, teaches specific skills and promotes core values like freedom, tolerance and dignity. Under the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, Target 4.8 states that, by 2030, countries should provide equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and higher education, including university. Achieving this target will facilitate the achievement not only of SDG4 but also of all other SDGs.

The higher education sector is very diverse. In addition to wide-ranging traditional degree and advanced degree programmes, there are short courses with a career, vocational or technical focus. While the tradition of face-to-face mode of delivery is still dominant, there is now an increasing number of distance and blended programmes. Within countries, higher education institutions vary widely in terms of size, cost, course offerings, procedures, traditions, governance and quality. These differences are amplified by different national policies on admission criteria and funding.

A defining characteristic of most higher education systems are the large disparities in access and completion, especially by income and wealth. In the absence of policies and programmes to support qualified students from disadvantaged backgrounds, efforts to expand higher education systems risk widening these gaps.

This policy paper uses higher education in the open access as a central indicator to track the Sustainable Development Goal of Quality Education (SDG 4). It shows that higher education (SDG 4.8) still lacks an essential element, providing learning access to a significant share of the population. It presents learning as a high level of complexity and specification.

To make higher education a catalyst for the creation of sustainable, innovative and equitable societies, governments and universities have to develop policies to raise colleges and universities both affordable and inclusive.

This policy paper, written in partnership with the UNESCO International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP), makes policy recommendations for equitable and affordable higher education to better support the implementation of the SDG agenda. To do this, it reviews recent trends in higher education expansion, identifies disparities in student participation, examines policy trends and practices for fostering equity and explores ways to target assistance at those who need it most.

Global demand for higher education continues to increase

Workforce, enrolment in higher education has been growing steadily between 2000 and 2014, the number of students in higher education institutions more than doubled, rising from 100 million to 200 million. In the same period, the global higher education gross enrolment ratio increased from 19% to 29%. This ratio expresses enrolment as a percentage of the population who are in the 18-year age group immediately following secondary school graduation (typically ages 19 to 24).

The global figures obscure major differences between regions: the higher education gross enrolment ratio ranges from an average of 1% in sub-Saharan Africa to 29% in Europe and Northern America. Nevertheless, over the last two decades, higher education participation has been on the rise in less well-off regions, which is reflected in



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