



**United Nations Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**

**Contribution to the
2015 United Nations Economic and Social Council
(ECOSOC)**

Integration Segment

Concept Note
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
UNESCO's input

“2015 Integration Segment: Achieving sustainable development through employment creation and decent work for all”

Introduction

In December 2014, the Secretary General published a synthesis report on post-2015 agenda: “The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet”. Among the 17 goals developed, a specific goal is proposed for education: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. The post-2015 development and education agenda takes into consideration broad sustainable development trends and challenges that affect developed and developing countries alike in a globalized, interconnected world, and their implications for education.

Sustainable development happens through decent work which in turn requires quality education and training. This simple statement sums up the enduring reality that work is the way out of poverty and that Education and Training are critical for economies to grow in inclusive manner and in respect of the environment. However, at present, there is rising concern that education and training systems are not adequately preparing students to meet the labour market needs and to ensure access of individuals to decent work.

International community efforts towards achieving Education for All (EFA) since the year 2000 have yielded unprecedented progress, however the EFA and MDG education goals remain unfinished and the continued relevance and importance of the EFA agenda is recognized. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) indicates in its 2015 Global Report on out-of-school children that despite progress towards the Education for All goals, in total, 121 million children and adolescents have never started school or dropped out despite the international community's promise to achieve universal primary education by 2015. Children living in conflict, child labourers and those facing discrimination based on ethnicity, gender and disability are the most marginalised. There is also a growing concern that previous gains in expanding access to education will erode without a major shift in policies and resources. Furthermore, millions of children are graduating from primary school with reading, writing and numeracy skills far below expected levels. Many country-level sector analyses have documented the weak quality and doubtful relevance of secondary education. This is manifest in education systems' failure to prepare learners for higher levels of education and for seizing lifelong learning opportunities.

The ILO *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2015*¹ includes a forecast of worsening global unemployment levels and explains the factors behind it, such as continuing inequality and falling wage shares. The report looks at structural factors shaping the world of work, including an aging population and shifts in the skills sought by employers. ILO report finds that the global employment outlook will deteriorate in the coming five years. Over 201 million were unemployed in 2014 around the world, over 31 million more than before the

¹ http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/weso/2015/WCMS_337069/lang--en/index.htm

start of the global crisis. And, global unemployment is expected to increase by 3 million in 2015 and by a further 8 million in the following four years.

Youth, especially young women, continue to be disproportionately affected by unemployment. Almost 74 million young people (aged 15 – 24) were looking for work in 2014. The youth unemployment rate is practically three times higher than is the case for their adult counterparts. Many economies are simply not generating sufficient decent employment opportunities to absorb growth in the working-age population.

Youth unemployment and under-employment (working below their skills and abilities and dim prospects for improvement) jeopardizes social inclusion and cohesion, which is increasingly apparent in rising social tensions. The wave of youth-led transformative change processes in the Arab region to reclaim human and national dignity demonstrates the need to give more prominence to the inter-locking issues of authentic democratic governance, social justice and equity, and employment-led, inclusive and environmentally-sustainable economic growth.

The heightened youth unemployment situation is common to all regions and is occurring despite the trend improvement in educational attainment. The persistence of youth unemployment and underemployment suggests that mechanisms for the anticipation of skill needs and skills formation may not be functioning well, and that education and training systems are not providing young people with the skills they need for further learning or to enter the labour market. Many education and training systems are in a crisis they can ill afford. In this context, skills mismatch is central to the debate on education and training systems. In many countries, the most urgent challenge is to develop concrete actions for moving un- or low-skilled youth from unemployment to decent work through relevant skills development programmes. Learners must not only possess vocational skills, but they must also possess skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, persistence, collaboration, and curiosity. All too often, however, students in many countries are not attaining these skills.

The following set of key themes may guide the discussion during the ECOSOC conference:

Adopting integrated policies

In order to create and sustain decent work opportunities for young people it is imperative to ensure greater integration and consistency between public policies affecting youth employability (particularly education, employment and youth policies) at all stages of the policy process, from the design through to the implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review. Policy measures should be guided by an integrated, inter-sectoral approach that ensures stakeholders involvement and partnership in particular social partners and civil society in governance and management.

Enhancing the quality of education and training

There has been tremendous progress made toward reaching universal primary education and the expansion of equitable access to education. This progress has however often not been accompanied with the necessary provisions for ensuring quality, resulting in minimal impact on the lives of learners and decreased opportunities for social participation. Poor quality education denies individuals new learning opportunities. At the basic education level, it does not sufficiently prepare young people to seize skills development opportunities, translating into increasingly costly alternative programmes.

Using different learning settings to expand skills acquisition for the world of work

Too often, traditional formal technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has failed to achieve the outcomes expected, in particular as regards the employability of young people. TVET programmes frequently provide training for a specific job, yet employment opportunities require adaptability which in turn requires transferable skills such as learning to learn, entrepreneurial skills and other soft skills. Some programmes provide classroom education without workplace training, others technical training without entrepreneurship awareness. A combination of classroom and work-based learning, including through apprenticeships, smoothes the pathway to decent work and enables young people to continue learning.

Making education and training more relevant to labour market and individual needs

Education and training programmes must be built on a careful analysis of the needs and aspirations of the enterprises, individuals and societies in question, and be owned by national stakeholders. Increasing employability requires consideration of both short- and long-term perspectives: Enabling young people to seize immediate employment opportunities, while also equipping them with the ability to continue learning and be able to adjust to changes in the workplace and career opportunities.

Strengthening role of private sector, partnerships and diversifying funding for education and learning

New forms of partnership, networks and alliances at the local, sectoral and national levels, and among public, private and civil society stakeholders, must be built. The private sector serves a critical role in the link between education and labour markets. It includes users of the skills produced by the education sector so it also can help sharpen the relevance and quality of the curricula and of the modes of delivery. Strengthening private sector role particularly through public-private partnership will allow governments to increase learning opportunities, capitalize on the full potential of all learning settings and tap into the resources needed to make lifelong learning a reality for more people. This requires innovative funding models that ensure more efficient and sustainable approaches to the financing of learning, involving new stakeholders such as the ministries of finance and planning and financial institutions.

Giving voice to youth and strengthening their participation

Youth organizations and associations should be directly associated and engaged in the design, implementation and evaluation of public policies affecting them. This is crucial in ensuring that the entire policy cycle considers youth-specific trends, addresses youth-specific concerns and harnesses youth-specific or youth-led innovations and successful experiences in the area of skills development, employment creation and decent work for all.

Expanding learning opportunities for the most vulnerable

Access to opportunities to develop and enhance skills for work and entrepreneurship should be non-discriminatory and inclusive, contributing towards the achievement of gender equality, equal opportunities, social equity and social inclusion, and sustainable development. Sustainable and shared economic growth increasingly depends on the capacity of governments to develop targeted policies to reach marginalized groups and remove barriers to entry into the labour market. Youth who drop out of school early are vulnerable to unemployment, poverty, teen marriage, pregnancy, and delinquency. In addition to preventing young people from dropping out of school, alternative (“second-chance” or “catch-up”)

learning opportunities that take into account the reasons why they are not in school are needed.

Unlocking the potential of technology

Many countries are adopting education technologies to assist in improving learning outcomes and education attainments. Given the early stages of technology adoption, the full potential of technology on student learning has yet to be realized. In fact, much still to be done by countries and the international community to align technologies with learning objectives, and to develop learning approaches that efficiently deploy technology in different learning settings.