The Commonwealth
Education Hub

Increasing Access to Education

Discussion Summary

This e-Discussion was conducted by The Commonwealth Education Hub between 29 February 2016 and 25 March 2016.

Increasing Access to Education

Introduction

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 2030 agenda highlights the need for access to education for all which goes beyond physical infrastructure, to ensuring equitable and equal access to quality education. While significant access-related progress has been made across the Commonwealth and beyond, a backlog still exists in the provision of education to all sectors of society. Issues include universal access, the impact of conflict and health crises on attendance, the lower participation of marginalised groups and people, and gender disparities.

The Education Hub ran an eDiscussion on access to education to address the issue of ensuring equitable and equal access to quality education. The objective of the four-week discussion was to bring together practitioners, academics and policymakers to discuss what different stakeholders can do to overcome access-related challenges to education by 2030.

The discussion reached out to over 700 participants, comprising representatives from Education Ministries, development organisations, the private sector and academia. Responses were received from seven countries across all Commonwealth regions and beyond, and were moderated by Mr. Paul West of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

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About The Education Hub

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Conceived as a 'network of networks,' The Commonwealth Education Hub is intended to promote knowledge sharing and collaboration among policy-makers and practitioners across the Commonwealth. Through its virtual 'one-stop-shop,' the Hub offers an array of online knowledge services designed to enable easier access to relevant information and resources, as well as to strengthen the collaborative context within which approaches, solutions, and best practices can be shared and adopted at scale across the Commonwealth, and perhaps even more widely.

www.thecommonwealth-educationhub.net

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Discussion Summary

Key points

Discussions emphasised the importance of access to quality education for sustainable development and individual wellbeing. The discussion adopted a general understanding of access to education and the capacity to participate in and receive a good quality education, whilst accounting for equity and other considerations. Whilst issues affecting access to education were discussed, participants centred on theoretical and practical solutions to improving access for all.

Key conclusions and recommendations:

- Improving access to education requires a holistic, multi-sectoral and participatory approach, which engages different stakeholders and reaches all levels and means of education (e.g. exploring the use of technology and roles of online and distance learning to expand access).
- A wide range of stakeholders have roles to play in improving access to education.
- Population growth as a key issue to be addressed for improved access, which if unaddressed will exacerbate existing and emerging access challenges.
- Evidence-based policy decision-making, backed by comprehensive data, and engagement with stakeholders and across sectors is necessary for effective policy development and implementation.

Issues discussed

Defining access, its importance and factors of influence
With reference made to the 2016 Commonwealth Lecture, access to education was presented as a shared aim across the Commonwealth. Education was discussed as being central to sustainable development and as a tool to break the cycle of poverty. Access to education was not viewed as simply a measure of numbers, but necessitating a holistic understanding, central to which is the quality of education. Education without quality cannot realise its potential to improve individual wellbeing and livelihoods and foster sustainable development.

While the issue of access is not new, numerous contributors pointed to the considerable progress that has been made both in the Commonwealth and globally to improve education participation. Addressing the challenges that affect access to quality education requires an understanding of the complex interconnection of influencing factors. The Commonwealth Lecture was used as a focal point for highlighting the link between lack of access to education and opportunity, conflict and violence, as well as the critical need to address the youth bulge. The differentiation between equity (i.e. fair) and equality (i.e. equal) in access also highlighted the potential need for differential investment and focus on disadvantaged and marginalised individuals and groups.

The discussion adopted a general understanding of access as the capacity to participate in and receive a good quality education – influenced by factors such as individual and community socioeconomic factors, cultural factors, political motivation and policy formulation, existence of schools and trained

teachers, quality of the education being received, choice and access to opportunity, and community and citizen involvement.

Issues affecting access are complex in nature and in breadth. Those discussed included: physical access, including availability and distance travelled to school; barriers such as conflict and violence and expectations based on cultural norms; and, safety (including access to safe water, and environments free from harassment).

Considerations for equitable and improved access

Contributors raised various key aspects to improving equitability and access in education, highlighting the need for a holistic approach to improved access. Contributors discussed considerations related to cost, pedagogy, quality, forms of access (e.g. classroom-based/distance/online), and lifelong and alternative learning.

Participant considerations included the following:

- Availability of learning institutions/classrooms, both physical and remote/online.
- Demand for education – including stakeholder mobilisation and capacity-building to increase demand.
- Addressing cultural and language barriers which adversely affect participation in education – including the use of legislation and sensitisation programmes and campaigns, and development of culturally- and linguistically-sensitive curricula and teaching methods to address these barriers.
- Addressing issues which disproportionately affect disadvantaged and marginalised peoples and communities to improve equitability in access.
- Effective and responsive regulation and administration, and transparency in accountability and governance.
- Access to cost-free education, including added costs, such as supplementary tutoring and uniforms.
- Participation in quality early childhood education to support success and inclusion in later education.
- Use of technology.
- Increasing access through adult and non-formal education (provision, scheduling and affordability).
- Availability of and ease of transference between different modes of study (e.g. credit transfer, part-time study, distance learning, independent study).
- Sharing of research and knowledge for innovation and capacity building. It was suggested that the Commonwealth Secretariat and similar agencies can play a role in coordinating such sharing.
- Investment in and access to teacher training and development.

Population growth and access

Various participants also raised the issue of population growth, and the centrality of addressing this issue to contribute to improved educational access. A number of participants also raised population growth as a significant and growing pressure on access to quality education, which is particularly demanding within constricted financial environments. Addressing population growth (including through community outreach and access to contraceptives) would ease the volume of learners over time.

Stakeholder roles & support

As Ms. Winsome Gordon articulated, "education is everybody's business." Everyone needs to work together to deal with the challenges affecting access and to improve access to education. A wide range

of stakeholders are involved in supporting increased access to quality education, including schools, granting agencies, companies, communities, parents and students themselves. Various stakeholder roles and responsibilities were discussed in relation to provision, administration/regulation and demand for access to quality education, including:

- The role of stakeholders in increasing and verbalising the demand for the government to supply, quality education. As stated by Okwach Abagi, "mobilisation and capacity building targeting different stakeholders (*e.g.* parents, communities, and politicians) is critical to increase demand and supply of education."
- The need for education institutions to ensure teachers are assigned to appropriate classes based on experience, need, etc., and to deal with teacher absenteeism issues.
- Community-level support in addressing teacher absenteeism, which can aid in reporting absenteeism to authorities.
- The need for schools and government to equip teachers with the resources and skills to provide quality education.
- The need for teachers to take remedial measures to address drop-outs, and of schools and education systems to support teachers' abilities and capacities to do so.
- The potential of museums as an extension of the classroom.
- The various stakeholder roles in promoting the use of technology.

Informing policy

Effective policies require a holistic, multi-sectoral approach to formulation, development and assessment. Education policymakers should not work in a vacuum, but rather with stakeholders and other sectors and policymakers to identify and address challenges and interlinkages for the development of robust, holistic policies and cross-cutting activities. It was stressed that governments must understand education as not just formal education, but also as informal, non-formal, open learning, etc.

Evidence-based policy development, monitoring and evaluation was at the centre of policy discussions. This included the need for credible and comprehensive data to inform policy decision-making, consideration of lessons learned (especially from the Millennium Development Goals), and setting of quality benchmarks and regular assessments.

Participants suggested that policies consider the use of technology in formal and non-formal education. Policies need to be underpinned by holistic approaches (emphasise cross-cutting activities, without losing focus on demonstrating success in areas that are of interest to specific organisations/communities/companies), and a good balance between agency and structure for implementation.

Commonwealth & other Case Studies

Cell-Ed (*from Vis Naidoo, Canada*)

> *"Cell-Ed focuses on six learning priorities: (1) learn anywhere, anytime; (2) learn what you need, when you need it; (3) deliver adult and youth education at scale; (4) communicate more effectively; (5) use learning tools that are widely available; and, (6) train for the real world context."* www.celled.org

Related Resources

From Jim Wynn, United Kingdom
- Education Fast Forward, Debate: Innovation and Quality: Two sides of the same coin?, www.effdebate.org/eff17

From Chimaechi Allan, United Kingdom

- Allan, C., & Cooper-Davies, A., 2015, *The Wedding Week*.

Lady Sue Dale Tunnicliffe and Margaret Lenton, United Kingdom

- 18th Annual Commonwealth Lecture, 25 February 2016, given by Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO. Viewable: https://www.thecommonwealth-educationhub.net/2016-commonwealth-lecture/

From Brenda Gourley, United Kingdom
- Sugata Mitra's TED talks, accessible at https://www.ted.com/speakers/sugata_mitra

From Vis Naidoo, Canada

- *Ksoll, C., Aker, J.C., Miller, D., Perez, K. and Smalley, S.L. July 2014. Learning without Teachers? Evidence from a Randomized Experiment of a Mobile Phone-Based Adult Education Program in Los Angeles.*
- *http://www.statista.com/statistics/274774/forecast-of-mobile-phone-users-worldwide/*

Discussion Question

Subject: [edu-hub] DISCUSSION: Access to Education – Discussion ends 25 March 2016

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 2030 agenda highlights the need for access to education for all. Access goes beyond the physical infrastructure, to ensuring equitable and equal access to quality education.

While significant access-related progress has been made across the Commonwealth and beyond, a backlog still exists in the provision of education to all sectors of society, including:

- Approximately 17 million primary-aged children and 16.4 million youths out of school across the Commonwealth;
- The impact of conflict and health crises on school attendance;
- Disproportionately lower engagement of marginalised populations and peoples in the education system (e.g. rural populations, differently abled children, indigenous peoples); and,
- Engagement in early childhood education, and drop-out between the transition from primary and secondary education; and,
- Approximately 3% more boys than girls enrolled in primary schools across Commonwealth countries.

Given some of the challenges outlined above, what can different stakeholders do to overcome access-related challenges to education by 2030? In particular:

1. What are the key aspects that need to be implemented to ensure equitable and fair access to education?
2. What is needed by policy-makers to better inform them during the policy-drafting cycle in their response to the SDGs?
3. What can institutions, granting agencies, companies, communities, parents and students do to support increased access to quality education?

When responding, please indicate if you are responding to question 1, 2, or 3.

The discussion will close on Friday, 25 March 2016, after which we will consolidate a synthesis of the discussion which will be published on the Education Hub portal (https://www.thecommonwealth-educationhub.net/).

To input to the discussion simply reply to this email or email eduhub@commonwealth.int.

We look forward to a productive discussion.

With best regards,

The Facilitation Team
The Commonwealth Education Hub
Email: edu-hub@groups.thecommonwealth.info

Full Responses

Participant responses:

1. Okwach Abagi, Kenya
2. Jim Wynn, United Kingdom
3. Prof Ved Goel, United Kingdom
4. Chimaechi Allan, United Kingdom
5. Sir John Daniel, Canada
6. Catherine C. Cole, Canada
7. The Lady Sue Dale Tunnicliffe and Margaret Lenton, United Kingdom
8. Prof Ved Goel, United Kingdom (2nd response)
9. Prof Emmanuel Ademola, United Kingdom
10. Anja Nielsen, United Kingdom
11. Prof Ved Goel, United Kingdom (3rd response)
12. George Maeltoka, Vanuatu
13. Winsome Gordon, Jamaica
14. Sanjaya Mishra, Commonwealth of Learning
15. Prof. Emmanuel Ademola, United Kingdom (2nd response)
16. Hugh Knight, South Africa
17. Winsome Gordon, Jamaica (2nd response)
18. Kousik Chattaraj, India
19. Bala Chandra, United Kingdom
20. Brenda Gourley, United Kingdom
21. Vis Naidoo, Canada
22. Peter Williams, United Kingdom
23. Aslam Sobratee, Mauritius

Okwach Abagi, Kenya

Dear Facilitator,

Q1. Building more learning institutions /classrooms, boarding schools in particular, especially in arid and semiarid areas. In Kenya, like in many SSA countries, distance to school due to ltd ECDE and primary schools negatively affect access and school participation in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Mobilization and capacity building targeting different stakeholders including parents, communities, politicians, and policy makers critical to increase demand and supply of education. Mobilization, sensitization and out-lawing outdated/repugnant cultural practices like FGM and child marriages and heavily punishing perpetrators.

Q2. Credible comprehensive education data. Technical support from education expert and researchers.

Q3. Reward and expand innovations that have positive impact (social impact investment). Set up education trust fund and framework for access and utilization.

Thank you

Jim Wynn, United Kingdom

Response to Question 1

Are mobile devices part of the answer? Can mobile devices tackle Access, Quality or Reform?

UNESCO are holding their annual Mobile Learning Week starting on March 7th. My charity, Education Fast Forward will be holding a debate as part of the conference. We will debating the role mobile technology can bring in improving access to learning and how it holds a promise to improve the quality of learning and the potential to bring about reform. Anyone can watch the debate live via an internet TV feed at http://www.effdebate.org/debates/the-next-debate/

The debate starts at 6pm UK time and will consist of a panel of experts in the field of mobile learning who will not only join the debate live in Paris but also from many locations around the world by video conference. Those watching the live stream can tweet their views and a team of people will monitor the tweets and feed the issues that are trending, live, into the main debate. The hashtag is #EFF17 (There have been 16 previous debates)

I hope #EFF17 can contribute to this debate.

Prof Ved Goel, United Kingdom

Assignment of Teachers:

In schools generally good teachers are assigned to senior classes who have to appear for the end of School Examination since authorities and head teachers are concerned about the result. As a result, less experienced teachers are assigned to the formative years of schooling. As a result of this, such teachers are not able to generate much interest of children in school and they drop out. To arrest the situation, good and experienced teachers must be assigned to class/grade 1 and 2 who could generate interest in school amongst kids.

Teacher Absenteeism:

This is another problem in schools in rural and remote areas which are hardly supervised. Due to absence of teachers students and parents loose interest in school and parents withdraw children from School. It is therefore required that Village level Committees must be constituted and authorized to supervise schools and report absenteeism to authorities.

Chimaechi Allan, United Kingdom

I appreciate the responses made so far and I would like respectfully to add:

Q1. A curriculum that includes local culture and language, as well as an international focus, will reflect a true commitment to accessible education. A curriculum that increases and promotes literacy in indigenous tongues

alongside the lingua franca will promote a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity, particularly in linguistically diverse nations such as Nigeria (SDG 4.7). Indigenous learners who speak only a mother tongue at home will find primary education accessible to and rewarding for them (SDG 4.5). Primary learners and educators in the Nigerian private education sector responded very positively when they saw themselves and their experiences reflected in educational resources. It gave them a new confidence and promoted dialogue. One exemplary digital and print resource is an illustrated story called The Wedding Week: A Journey through Wedding Traditions around the World. Written in the country's largest local languages and displayed alongside English, it shows the similarities (rather than differences) between cultures through celebration, and reflects the educational value of local traditions. (Excerpts here: http://amzn.to/21Rchpl)

Resource such as this teach primary readers phonics with a local accent taken into account. Most phonics resources assume a Southern English or American accent, suggesting that academic success is inaccessible for readers with any other accent.

In the long term, a curriculum that values local culture and language will lead to effective learning outcomes relevant to the local economy and tourism. (SDG 4.1).

Sir John Daniel, Canada

Sustainable Development Begins with Education

My aim in this posting is to share perceptions of UNESCO's role in the great global drive towards education for all: both celebrating the successes and exploring the challenges.

The commitment to 'full and equal opportunities for education for all' goes back to UNESCO's constitution. However, for today's discussion we shall take as our starting point the Conference on Education for All that convened in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. I will take you from there to the middle of the last decade. Then my colleagues Jean-Yves and Sabine will bring you up to date by looking ahead to 2030. This is the target date for the Sustainable Development Goals that were agreed at the UN in September 2015. Goal 4 focuses on Education, based on the targets set by the Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action, adopted in May last year. I wrote about the progress of the EFA campaign up to about 2009 in my book Mega-Schools, Technology and Teachers: Achieving Education for All that was published in 2010. I shall draw on that narrative but my approach is more personal.

I begin with just two comments about the importance of achieving education for all. First, I quote Nelson Mandela, who once said: 'there can be no contentment for any of us when there are children, millions of children, who do not receive an education that provides them with dignity and honour and allows them to lead their lives to the full'. The second is to note the strongest direct link between education and sustainable development, which is secondary education for girls. Women with secondary education have, on average, 1.5 fewer children than those with only primary schooling. Even a one-child difference per woman represents 3 billion more or fewer people on the planet by the middle of the century. Limiting population growth is the most promising way of limiting climate change.

There are, of course, many other reasons why sustainable development depends on education, but I will focus now on progress towards EFA in the two decades after Jomtien. The Jomtien conference was convened because in 1985 some 105 million children aged between six and eleven, the majority of them girls, were not in school. Forecasts suggested that this number could double to 200 million by 2000. The purpose of the Jomtien conference was to stimulate a new and broader vision of basic education. It led to the adoption, by 155 governments, 33 intergovernmental bodies and 125 NGOs, of a set of six targets to be reached by 2000.

These targets were not achieved. Indeed, in absolute terms the world went backwards. In 1990 100 million children were not in school and by 2000 this had grown to 125 million. We can go into the reasons for this failure in discussion later. The 1990s were a turbulent decade and several factors moved the goalposts out of reach. Accordingly a new conference on Education for All was convened in Dakar in 2000. It also set six goals, this time with the target of 2015. Abhimanyu Singh from India, who subsequently played a key role in supporting UNESCO's follow-up to Dakar, was the rapporteur.

The World Bank's background documents for the Dakar conference showed that it expected be designated as the lead body for the implementation of the Dakar Framework for Action. In the event, however, thanks to some fast

footwork by incoming Director-General Matsuura, this role was given to UNESCO. There was, however, an important consolation prize for the Bank, which was given the coordinating role for pursuing the Millennium Development Goals, the MDGs that were approved at the big UN Millennium Summit later that same year. I joined UNESCO a few months later and was charged with fulfilling the mandate we had been given in Dakar. In those days relationships between the major agencies, UNESCO, World Bank, UNICEF and so on, were pretty poisonous, full of petty rivalries and backbiting. But it was clear that we would all have to work together and I set off down that path.

Ronald Reagan once said that you can achieve anything provided you don't care who takes the credit, and I operated on that principle. It was very helpful that the new head of Education at the World Bank, Ruth Kagia from Kenya, happened to be at a meeting at UNESCO on March 1, 2001, her first day on the job. We got on well and vowed that the Bank and UNESCO would collaborate closely.

The MDGs included shorter versions of two of the six Dakar goals, achieving Universal Primary Education and eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education. Naturally the World Bank focused its efforts and funds on them. At first we at UNESCO regretted that the other four Dakar goals had been effectively set to one side, but we quickly realised that if we were to improve on the world's performance after Jomtien we needed to be pragmatic and concentrate on the essentials. One manifestation of this focus was the Fast-Track Initiative, launched at the Development Committee of the World Bank in 2002 with the aim of providing concentrated support to complete the task of achieving the quantifiable EFA goals in countries where conditions were judged to be propitious. This led to some very productive and convivial meetings. I well remember Minister Jeffries from Guyana remarking that to use the word 'fast' in connection with anything involving the World Bank was an oxymoron.

In fact the alliance between the Bank and UNESCO worked well. The Bank had the money but the developing countries regarded UNESCO as 'their' agency, which gave credibility to our joint decisions. It was also enormously helpful that UNESCO was given the funds to publish the annual Global Monitoring Reports on EFA. There's a saying that 'if you can't measure it, you can't manage it'. Having this intellectually powerful group hold a mirror up to our efforts added to the sense of purpose that developed over the decade.

I will conclude my remarks there. UNESCO can be proud that the EFA campaign made much faster progress in the 2000's than it had in the 1990's. There was still a large unfinished agenda. For example, the 2009 Global Monitoring Report commented: 'progress towards the EFA goals is being undermined by the failure of governments to tackle persistent inequalities based on income, location, gender, ethnicity, language, disability and other markers of disadvantage'. This provides a good lead in to the contributions of my colleagues. Inequality is now a headline issue everywhere. The Incheon Education 2030 Declaration is picking this up, as well as the Dakar Goals that were left on the side table during our work in the 2000's.

[Adapted from a presentation made to the Memory & Future Club, Association of Former UNESCO Staff Members]

Catherine C. Cole, Canada

In response to #3, we should not overlook the important role that museums can and do play in education. Museums can improve the quality of education by being considered an extension of the classroom. Depending on the subjects covered by the museum – art, history, natural history, etc. – museums develop curriculum-based educational programs that support the work of teachers, and provide resources such as artefacts, specimens and works of art that can reinforce ideas. Some museums offer special programs where teachers can come into the museum for a week at a time and teach all of their classes using museum resources. The possibilities are endless. Unfortunately, not all museum workers have had access to a quality education themselves, or to professional development, so programs like the Commonwealth Association of Museums' distance learning program are important means for museum workers to learn about how they can address the SDGs.

The Lady Sue Dale Tunnicliffe and Margaret Lenton, United Kingdom

Dear Facilitator

I draw your attention and that of colleagues to the recent lecture given in London. I include below, our summary written by the Commonwealth Association for Science, Technology and Mathematics Educators (CASTME)

Secretary who attended. There is increasing awareness that communities and the pre-school learning of children form families, community and their own observations is the key to later educational success.

18th Annual Commonwealth Lecture held at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre on 25th February 2016

The annual lecture was given by Irina Bokova the Director General of UNESCO with the theme of 'Educating for inclusion, dialogue and peace'.

Ms Bokova talked about the need for a quality education for all and gender equality. These aims are shared by the Commonwealth. They are so important not least in confronting extremism, which was seen as the major challenge to global society and this issue permeated the whole address. In Syria, 2.1 million are outside school as are 50% of the refugees. Education cannot wait and there is no stronger foundation for peace and security.

Ms Bokova discussed the fact that the world is getting younger and it is a concern that so many young people are out of school or unemployed. The Crown Prince of Jordan had said there was a race to invest in the capabilities of youth. There are, in addition, other issues to be addressed such as forced marriage. Education could break the cycle of poverty and there was a need to promote life-long learning. Teacher Training was crucial. Important was critical thinking in what was a struggle for 'hearts and minds'. Isis used new methods such as twitter to attract support and the Internet.

Ms Bokova spoke at length about the aim of gender equality which had yet to be realised. Girls were more likely to be excluded from Education although pioneer programmes were running Pakistan and Bangladesh. Australia and New Zealand were doing work in the Island States. The importance of technical, vocational and STEM education was stressed. Nelson Mandela said 'education is the most powerful weapon to change the world'.

Questions dwelt on the importance of adult education and illiteracy. Sadly 250 million people who had been through formal education could neither read nor write to an acceptable level. Quality education was essential and there should be a second chance of education at different stages. What was being said entirely accords with what CASTME stands for and intends to promote, particularly as our foci are STEM subjects and in the UK working with mothers and young children to stress the importance of Science.

Prof Ved Goel, United Kingdom

You have made some vital observations to facilitate discussion on the topic. You have observed that can we overcome the barriers that prevent a person from learning from historical, artistic and scientific experiences. Yes it is possible: this requires that subject experts should provide writing from these fields in literary style in the form of children stories rather than fighting the turf was of precision and accuracy. It is necessary since at primary level focus gas be on developing interest of the learners in school and learning rather than learning of subjects which can be taken care of in upper primary/middle school. I agree that visit to science, history and art museums will complement the literature.

On the issue of what governments need at the planning level. I believe the importance of real data which is gender segregated and segregated in terms of different communities is vital. I am saying real data because I know that data can be manipulated. For example in terms of enrolment there. Are three kinds of figures. a. Students enrolled in the register b. Students marked present in the register on a particular day and. c. Actual number of students sitting in the class. Which is a real enrolment?

Prof Emmanuel O. Ademola, United Kingdom

I've accessed the Commonwealth website on the issue concerning access to education. At this time, my take on how to overcome access-related challenges to education by 2030 will be premised on the following 7 points:

- Urbanisation of both literacy and numeracy agenda through infrastructural strengthen of new approaches. Critical mass, marketisation of tested and working ideas of diverse kinds of training and service delivery.
- Domestication of the outcomes of various Research Agenda on improving Access, Equity and Mobility. It's increasingly innovative with the dual positive effect of globalisation and technology advancement.

- Government institutions to develop strong growth-attitude towards boosting household income. Research have shown that, the higher the household income, the better the expected outcome of improving Access, Equity and Transition.
- Creating networks of Research Agenda across the Commonwealth of Nations. Develop strategic input feed to Creativeness and Innovation through partnerships and capacity building-block of approaches within various networks.
- Adoption of birth control by third-world Commonwealth countries can contribute to greater educational access. For example, in some low-income families in Africa, particularly where there are a large number of children, a child's education may be cut short even though the child is doing well. Therefore, reducing the number children down through all social strata may have a considerable accessible effect on real educational opportunity.
- Mode of study, such as modular courses and credit transfer, part-time mode, distance learning and independent study can increase access to education for those with slender means and/or time constraint.
- Strengthening the institutions of adult and non-formal education can engender adult education opportunities, thereby increasing access to education in terms of provision of relevant courses, appropriate scheduling and affordable fee levels.

Remarkably, all the points are valid; they have the potential of widening access to education if they don't get caught in the shadow of inertia between the ideal and real and between strategy and implementation.

Anja Nielsen, United Kingdom

What are the key aspects that need to be implemented to ensure equitable and fair access to education?

One of the key aspects, and one that must not be lost, is the importance of a cost-free education to the child and their family. Any form of tuition fees, whether charged by private or state providers, or taken in the form of necessary supplementary tutoring, immediately marginalises the poorest members of a society. Furthermore, it forces guardians into a situation of prioritising education amongst other costs (such as insurance, healthcare provision, etc.) or amongst their children. This will, and does, see the poorest families choose within their families those for whom they will pay for education. This further disadvantages traditionally marginalised groups, such as girls and children with disabilities, who may not be prioritised in a fee-paying system. Therefore, in order to ensure equitable and fair access quality education must be free to all.

There are of course other key elements to ensuring equitable and fair access to education, including culturally sensitive curricula, physical access, safe travel and location, and WASH. Practical considerations, as well as pedagogical ones, must be considered in addition to the cost-free nature of education to ensure equitable and fair access.

Prof Ved Goel, United Kingdom

I wish to suggest that our institutions especially schools are not equipped to understand and take remedial measures for drop out. To me it appears that symptoms such as truancy and day dreaming, etc. in the class are some of the early signs of school dropout. Therefore our schools, especially teachers must be equipped with the techniques of detecting early signs of drop out and taking remedial measures to overcome them.

It is equally important to recognize that social skills including communication, vocabulary, information processing and coping skills of poor children are not as well developed as of those from well to do families so they are unable to fully engage in school activities fail to take full advantage of them. Poor children thus find it difficult to answer questions of teachers and also perform poorly in tests and exams and ultimately dropout of the school rather than facing continuous humiliation. Thus sincere efforts have to be made by Governments to tackle poverty to ensure equitable and fair access to education.

George Maeltoka, Vanuatu

I am particularly interested on the topic of access with regards to early engagement in early childhood education but drop-outs at the end of basic education for Vanuatu is still very high.

In Vanuatu, although education is not compulsory, the ministry of education and training is imposing 4 and 5 years old to enroll in Kindy and enroll Year 1 at the age of 6.

This policy, when strictly applied on a society such as Vanuatu where most population live in rural communities and engage primarily on domestic practices and beliefs, it is obvious to have children categorized as over-aged throughout infant cohorts of formal schooling.

I would like to suggest that Commonwealth system of education should adapt social cohesion theory on children enrollment whereby there is a balance between enrollment at early childhood education and children leaving formal schooling at Year 8, 10 or 12 in higher number against enrollment rate.

Therefore, would it be unfair or unjust to enroll at the age of 7 to Year 1 so that if a child drops out of formal school at Year 10 he or she would reach an age of 16 or 17...

Winsome Gordon, Jamaica

Overcoming access and quality related challenges to sustainable education by 2030.

My overall comment is to de-school society and educate the students. As outrageous as this may sound, schooling has evolved a fixed set of activities - classrooms, curriculum, examinations and trained or untrained teachers, in which the children must fit. It has become an instrument for structuring society and placing persons in various categories of the society. What if the focus is on a journey from early childhood to sustainable livelihoods. In this context schooling becomes more realistic and meaningful to the learners because each learner is able to know and understand the purpose and meaning of education in the context of realizing his or her own potential.

Question 1. What are the key aspects that need to be implemented to ensure equitable and fair access to education?

First of all there is need to identify the disadvantages of the excluded learners (including under achievers). The language of school is a disadvantage for many. Some experiments have shown that children learn better in their mother tongue which may be different from the official language. Using the mother tongue approach has advantages and disadvantages, particularly for children in poor circumstances. However, it is a fact that a young child will learn any language to which it is exposed so why not teach the official language in the early childhood programmes so that children become at least bilingual.

The other concern is for behaviour that is consistent with progress in school. Again this can be taught (cultivated) in the early years.

The teaching profession should be well governed, qualified and accountable.

Other deficiencies are physical and can be addressed.

Question 2. What is needed by policy-makers to better inform them during the policy-drafting cycle in their response to the SDGs?

Policy makers need to build a culture of monitoring and evaluation. Teacher Management Information Systems should be in place and policies should be data driven – both quantitative and qualitative. They need to interpret SDGs in their respective national contexts and set attainable goals.

Question 3. What can institutions, granting agencies, companies, communities, parents and students do to support increased access to quality education?

Education is everybody's business. Each sector must play its respective role. Grant agencies are positioned to share successful experiences, assist countries to analyse their problems and find "home grown" solutions that are participatory and inclusive. Parenting Commission is one way to formally organize and regulate parental involvement in their children's education. Private sector participation can bring meaningfulness and relevance to the education system through its emphasis on targeted, productive outcomes.

Sanjaya Mishra, Commonwealth of Learning

I have been reading some very important points made in this discussion so far. From focussing on local language and culture (Chimaechi Allan) to early detection of dropouts (Ved Goel), role of museums (Catherine C. Coles) and de-schooling (Winsome Gordon). Sir John Daniel highlighted the importance of measuring impact and the role of international development agencies in this context, and gave an overview of the challenges. I would like to submit humbly some of my personal views based on experiences from the Commonwealth of Learning and elsewhere to address the three questions.

Access to education is a function of poverty, governmental policy and citizen involvement. We can improve access to quality education for all, if these three issues are taken care of. Poverty prohibits children to reach school or to dropout from school. It is not sufficient to have mid-day meal scheme, but necessary to have schemes to remove poverty of a family to provide access to education to the children. Every family has aspirations that their children get educated – they do not have means to do so! This leads to the second point in my view. Having relevant and appropriate policies in place are absolute necessary to promote access to education. Again this is not sufficient, and therefore, we are not able to achieve the targets on time. What is needed are policies that 'talk to each other' to provide decent livelihood to every family. How can we provide skills to the unskilled adults and assist them to earn a decent life? And, the third point in my argument is about citizen involvement. The democratic process has the power to bring development faster. Governments can only do so much. But, unless there is an empowered and enlighten citizen, the results would not be as expected. Monitoring and evaluation should be left to the local citizens, and they should be involved in the developmental process to decide how the resources should be distributed. How much resources be allocated to provide access to education for all in the community?

Having said this, now let me focus to the provided questions:

1. What are the key aspects that need to be implemented to ensure equitable and fair access to education?
   - Special efforts to include girls: at the Commonwealth of Learning, this is a major focus while working with partners locally. Currently, there is also a programme on Women & Girls to increase their participation in education and improve livelihoods.
   - Use technology to provide access: Technology is not a panacea for all ills in education. But, certainly it has proved to improve access to education. Especially the use of open, distance and online learning has enabled access to quality education at low cost. Leveraging appropriate technology is still an important aspect that need to be focussed. In many developing countries of the Commonwealth, open and distance learning (ODL) is still considered a second option. At COL, we continue to provide advice on ODL solutions to improve access in different contexts.
   - Funding support: on one side, there is low investment for education in most countries, and on the other there is more focus on creating brick and mortar institutions. Having policies that support alternative schooling, schooling in the communities, and technology-mediated education would help focus on creating a lifelong learning culture. All initiatives need funding and what is adequate is a matter of what is priority.

2. What is needed by policy-makers to better inform them during the policy-drafting cycle in their response to the SDGs?
   - Evidence-based action research: Policy needs hard data on the ground that can be generalised or at least can be generalised to a particular community.
   - Involve citizens in decision-making and drafting policies: Policy drafting in ministries need to involve citizens on the ground, and their involvement should be continuous and not ad hoc.
   - Ensure monitoring and evaluation: Policy development should be backed up by an implementation plan that covers a systematic monitoring and evaluation plan. It also means that policy needs appropriate level of funding support. Technology will also help here to improve access, to predict dropouts, and provide remedial measures to improve learning.

3. What can institutions, granting agencies, companies, communities, parents and students do to support increased access to quality education?
   - Focus on quality of learning outcomes: Access to quality education is the key to sustainable development. And, quality is amorphous, it is ambiguous, means different things to different people. Therefore, it is important to have a common approach to quality by focusing on learning outcomes that lead to sustainable livelihoods.
   - Set quality benchmarks, and assess the same regularly: While the current fashion for comparing students across countries is definitely a benchmark, it may not be suitable for the developing Commonwealth countries. What is important is to develop benchmarks on the basis of PPP cost investments. In country benchmarks are more useful for monitoring and evaluation.
   - Focus on teacher quality and teaching quality in class: It is important to note that quality of teacher education neither results in teacher quality nor learning quality. Quality teaching and learning is more than just quality teacher preparation. A qualified teacher needs appropriate environment in the school to teach, and the learner need to study what he/ she prefers.

Access to education is also about freedom to choose and study what a learner aspires to be. In our approach to provide livelihoods and skill, it is important not to profile learner ability at very early stage and segregate them. We must ensure that access is also about freedom and aspirations of the people.

Prof. Emmanuel Ademola, United Kingdom

Understandably, a structure means the way and manner in which parts of an idea, agenda, contribution, system or object are arranged or organised. If that is agreed, the already identified 7-point agenda can be structured as follows:

1. Introduction – This section should give an overview of: (1) an access to education, i.e., removal of barriers preventing access to learning, as well as provision of education, compulsory, further and higher, and for those who might not have previously perceived education as having any significance or value in their lives; (2) order of arrangement of other sections and what they relate; (3) what to be achieved and to whom the achievement relates; and (4) the likely conclusion.
2. Perspectives and Frameworks – This section should be filled with the analyses of the identified 7-point agenda, namely, (i) Urbanisation of both literacy and numeracy agenda; (ii) Domestication of the outcomes of various Research Agenda from other jurisdictions; (iii) Development of strong growth-attitude by government institutions; (iv)Creation of networks of Research Agenda across the Commonwealth of Nations; (v) Adoption of birth control practices down through all social strata; (vi) Workable models for flexible delivery of educational programmes; and (vii) Strengthening the institutions of adult and non-formal (e.g., vocational) education.
3. Initiatives/Plans Operating Procedures – This section should explain in detail the strategic initiative plans and procedures for implementing the 7-point agenda analysed in section 2.
4. Case Studies – This section should first identify various case studies concerning the 7-point agenda (see section 2), and then explain how they have resulted in greater access to education at (a) micro-level (schools and communities), (b) meso-level (educational systems and external agency support services), and (c) macro-level (national/international policy and national legislation).
5. Prospects for improving access to education in the Commonwealth countries' schools – This section should explore various steps that have to be taken by the Commonwealth counties to achieve greater access to education, given the success stories of the case studies examined in section 4. The steps may touch on issues relating to the following: New applications of technology; Culturally relevant project-based learning; Innovative professional development models, Ideas for private-sector collaboration. Setting up more equitable young and adult learning programmes; Ensuring the quality of adult learning programmes; Development of systems for the recognition and validation of adult learning outcomes; Investment in education and training for young and older people. Promote research and analysis in relation to adult learning activities.
6. Conclusions and Recommendations – This section will offer some conclusions and recommendations for the adoption and implementation of the 7-point agenda in section 2 by the Commonwealth countries.

Hugh Knight, South Africa

"Education is not the filling of a bucket but the lighting of a fire."- W. B. Yeats

Winsome Gordon, Jamaica

This dialogue is very interesting and well needed. The issue of access to education is age old. In 2016, we need to answer the fundamental question of access to what kind of education. An agency such as the Commonwealth Secretariat with its 53 member states is ideally positioned to undertake a global research on the value of educational outcomes in its member states and to provide new knowledge on how to reposition education to prepare all for sustainable livelihoods. Too many graduates are seeing education as a wasted investment. Our boys drop out of school because they cannot see a link between education and a sustainable future. Maybe they are right. A scientific research is urgently needed. This could well lead to a repositioning and redesign of all levels of education.

We need to be scientifically informed in the early stages of our journey to 2030.

Kousik Chattaraj, India

To ensure equitable and fair access to education to achieve the SDGs and agenda 2030 following aspects should be considered:-

> 1) Sensitization of the community regarding educational opportunities in Commonwealth countries.

> 2) Awareness services to be provided to spread fair mass education through educational extension / outreach programmes.

> 3) The cost of education should be marginalised in commonwealth countries, like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and it should be more or less same. For example, the cost of B.Ed degree(Two-yrs.), recognised by the NCTE in India, is presently too high (i.e. total Rs.1,50,000/- in private colleges) to obtain among 60%- 70% Graduates who wants to come in Teaching profession. The no. of Govt. colleges in India is too low to cater the need where cost of B.Ed is around total Rs.20,000/-. There is fixed or universal rate among different states in India.

> 4) Teachers' recruitment process should be fair and according to the merit, experience, teaching skill. But unfortunately in a country like India, it is a matter of idealism. The real scenario is - full of corruption, huge money-transactions, political influences in the selection of teachers prevailing at different states in India.

> 5) The policy-making Govt. authorities / non-govt agencies for Education should look that whether the fund is properly utilized or not for the beneficiaries to ensure fair equitable access to education. In most of the cases huge amount of fund allotted/ sanctioned from the apex bodies but it will not reach to the beneficiaries due to malpractices and ultimately they are deprived.

> 6) The Sustainable Development in Education should ensure that the Values, Morality, Culture, Ethics, Humanity and as a whole the Educational ideals will transmit generation after generation. If it comes truly in reality, then only equitable and fair access to education can be achieved.

Bala Chandra, United Kingdom

Question 2:

What is needed by policy-makers to better inform them during the policy-drafting cycle in their response to the SDGs?

1. Policy makers have to undertake an honest evaluation (by themselves or by neutral/third parties) of the success or otherwise of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in their own countries/regions. So, learning lessons from the past is the first step.

2. Policy makers need to take into consideration differences in external environment between 2000 and 2015 -- in funding commitments as well as the emergence of new regional/trading blocs that impact on movement of goods and services, but also people and recognition of educational experience/qualifications.

3. Policies need to be underpinned by holistic approaches (emphasise cross-cutting activities, without losing focus on demonstrating success in areas that are of interest to specific organisations/communities/companies), and a good balance between agency and structure for implementation.

Brenda Gourley, United Kingdom

It seems to me that we would benefit from a link to the Commonwealth of Learning website. There are many excellent examples of access being widened - and we could both learn from them and copy them.

This discussion should be heavily influenced by the "youth bulge" that is being experienced in many parts of the world. There is no way that education as we know it now can be provided to this huge increase in young people. Business as usual not an option - not at school nor any other level. Unaffordable. Various forms of 'distance education' or 'supported open learning' has to be a large part of the solution - and community and collaborative learning very important. Sugata Mitra's experiments very instructive here (see his TED talks).

In this world broadband becomes an educational imperative. The gap between those that have access to broadband and those that do not the new divide, reinforcing those divides that already exist and even strengthening them.

Vis Naidoo, Canada

It will be useful to remind ourselves of SDG 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The Goal expands the focus beyond schooling and includes lifelong learning, consisting of early childhood development, adult learning, skills, non-formal education. This is a difficult ask of governments and societies that are struggling to get their school systems to be functional and providing all children with quality education. Other comments made during this discussion notes the need to develop holistic approaches that need to address causes of poverty, getting the right policy mix, ensuring teacher development, strong public involvement and so forth.

The use of technology has also been noted, but in a limited way. Looking at the opportunities that technology offers to any lifelong learning system is useful as we address the three questions raised. Technology offers increased access to learning and can address issues of equity if this is deliberately integrated into the intervention and system. There are many good examples of how technology is being used to support access to learning - for schools, post schooling education, non-formal education and adult education. Mobile phones are particularly useful here given the widespread availability, costs that are becoming increasingly affordable and using entry level, feature and smart phones to access learning.

An example of this is Cell-Ed (www.celled.org) that focuses on six learning priorities:

- Learn anywhere, anytime
- Learn what you need, when you need it
- Deliver adult and youth education at scale
- Communicate more effectively
- Use learning tools that are widely available
- Train for the real world context

Cell-Ed addresses the global challenge of adult illiteracy (currently estimated that 755 million people globally lack basic literacy) and the larger number of the world population that is functionally illiterate. This depressing data get worse when you consider that two thirds of illiterates are women. The implications of this lack of literacy and functional literacy affect individual and family health, earning and ability to function in increasingly complex and modernizing societies.

It is estimated that by 2017, there will be 4.77 billion mobile phone users. This offers a unique opportunity to reach the unreached, the illiterate and functionally illiterate, students that cannot get to schools and address issues of equity, social and economic development. The ubiquitous reach of mobile phones also enables a learning environment that is self-paced, allows for practice within a real world context using audio, text, interactivity and multimedia (with smartphones). The Cell-Ed programmes have shown what can be done in the context of adult learning and how the education community can address Sustainable Development Goal 4.

It is here that policy-makers can start to revisit policies that consider the use of technology in their formal and non-formal education system and see how this approach can start to build a lifelong learning system. Institutions, agencies and companies can support developing models that use technology to address components of the lifelong learning system and work with government to identify how these can be scaled up to address backlogs and equity challenges.

References:

Ksoll, C., Aker, J.C., Miller, D., Perez, K. and Smalley, S.L. July 2014. Learning without Teachers? Evidence from a Randomized Experiment of a Mobile Phone-Based Adult Education Program in Los Angeles.

http://www.statista.com/statistics/274774/forecast-of-mobile-phone-users-worldwide/

Peter Williams, United Kingdom

I have read the contributions to this discussion with interest and profit and regret that my own input comes too late to benefit from the observations that previous participants would be able to offer. A wide range of factors contributing to wider access have been identified and addressed, and as Sir John Daniel and others have pointed out, considerable progress has been achieved at global (and Commonwealth) levels in widening education participation.

The world community would have made still more progress towards universal primary schooling if the 'demographics' were under control. But of course they are not, with population in some countries still growing at 3% p.a. (so doubling every 23 years) - many of the fastest growing are in Commonwealth sub-Saharan Africa which is one reason why Commonwealth member states are prominent in the ranks of those farthest from universal primary schooling even though these same countries are also amongst those showing the highest enrolment growth.

A few very obvious points need to be made about the terms of this debate.

Terminology

A. Education is not the same as schooling. Several contributors have pointed to the importance of extending opportunities to learn throughout life and that the discussion should not be confined to access to formal primary school. In the Commonwealth we have great traditions of personal enablement through informal, part-time and open learning and we are fortunate to have a dedicated institution to promote these in the Commonwealth of Learning.

B. Equity and equality should not be used interchangeably as if they are synonymous concepts. Equity (fairness) may require that we make differential investments in unequally situated individuals and groups to help them realise their potential as citizens and human beings. In any case we need to distinguish between equity/equality in terms of education inputs/resources; educational processes and learning experiences; or outputs/results.

C. When we use the term 'quality education' are we referring to lots of expensive inputs (graduate teachers, beautiful campuses, plentiful books and equipment)? Or to a rich curriculum and enjoyable learning experiences bringing out the best in students and aiding their personal development? Or to good test results? 'Quality education' means different things to different people and I wish we could avoid using the term altogether, just as - to me - the term 'world-class education', so beloved of politicians, is meaningless and abhorrent.

A basic contradiction

Very often the assumption in debates about fair access to education is that we are all on the side of the angels in regarding the common good of the whole community, and inclusiveness, as the highest consideration. But this flies in the face of the reality of the incentive systems working on the side of both demand and supply in education systems. Parents and families look to achieve competitive advantage for their children in choice of schools or universities, and individual school managers, private or public, increasingly find that their own financial interests (profit, pay) are best served by attracting the brightest students and excluding the less able. In the formal education world of schools and colleges the pursuit of equitable access to education is made a whole lot more difficult in many Commonwealth countries by:

- fragmentation of education systems into public and private sectors and the institutionalisation of separateness in provision and management of institutions - different categories of schools (grant-maintained, voluntary-aided, academies, charter schools, trust schools, community schools, charitable foundation schools etc.) and a variety of faith groups operating establishments within the public system.
- deliberate encouragement of competition between schools and assessing them in terms of examination achievements and the compilation of 'league tables' so incentivising managers and teachers to deny admission to more disadvantaged learners for fear of losing custom and revenue, or being 'put in special measures'.
- the elevation of financial considerations/analysis to become a prime consideration in decisions about education provision - the profit motive in private schools, and the increasing tendency to link the pay of teachers and other education personnel to 'measured results'.

So my own single-sentence responses to our three questions would be:

1. **What are the key aspects that need to be implemented to ensure equitable and fair access to education?** Reverse the fragmentation of education systems and adjust incentive systems that discourage education providers from actively pursuing inclusion.
2. **What is needed by policy-makers to better inform them during the policy-drafting cycle in their response to the SDGs?** More comprehensive and effective registration systems - of actual and potential demand by young and old learners for whom education provision is needed; and of education supply in its huge variety (including especially charting more effectively the private and independent sector, much of which is 'below the radar' in many of our countries.
3. **What can institutions, granting agencies, companies, communities, parents and students do to support increased access to quality education?** Recognise the overriding common community interest in inclusion in education and engage in monitoring public policies to ensure this receives due priority.

Aslam Sobratee, Mauritius

Question 1: Responses are made in conjunction with SDG GOAL 4 on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Target 4.1 and 4.2

By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes)

By 2030, ensure 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

- In Mauritius there is free access to pre-primary, primary and secondary education and there is a law that makes schooling compulsory up to the age of 16 years.
- A nine-year schooling system is in the pipeline for implementation as from 2017 to provide all-inclusive education to all young people.
- At these levels there is a choice of free government regional schools, government funded private secondary schools and private fee paying schools.

Target 4.3

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

At tertiary level, there are a number of public and private institutions offering full time courses, open and distance modes and lifelong learning. There is also recognition of prior learning.

- The Open University of Mauritius aims at delivering quality education to learners who are unable to be physically present on campus. With flexible study options, its prospective learners can study from home, work, or anywhere in the world, at a time that suits them and their lifestyle at affordable cost.
- At tertiary level, female enrolment exceeds that for males for all study modes.

Target 4.4

By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

- Some universities have included modules of entrepreneurship in some programmes to create entrepreneurial thinkers at an early stage. Youth do not only develop the capacity to start a business but also to think creatively and ambitiously. Entrepreneurship education also forms part of the lower secondary school curriculum.
- A number of training and employment schemes have been instituted such as Youth Employment Programme, Graduate Training for Employment Scheme, Back to Work programme, Dual Training programme, etc.

Question 2

- The tertiary sector has already benefitted from consultancies at tertiary level regarding quality assurance, tertiary education strategic plan and legislation. Inputs have been received from the World Bank concerning aspects such as funding.
- Discussions are currently under way concerning the model of polytechnics to be introduced in Mauritius.
- Furthermore, Mauritius is party to a number of global development agendas such as Post 2015 Development Agenda, 2030 Agenda for SDGs, Africa Agenda 2063, which it seeks to implement.

Question 3

<u>Target 4.5 of SDG Goal 4</u>

By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations

- There are schemes to increase access and equity such as scholarships for children from vulnerable families. This scholarship scheme is aimed at the citizens of the Republic of Mauritius including the outer islands. The scheme is accessible for undergraduate courses, professional courses and for technical and vocational Education training (TVET) courses. The scholarship covers the costs of all appropriate fees payable to the university/training institution and a monthly stipend not exceeding Rs 3,000. The total scholarship is to a maximum of Rs 100,000 per academic year.
- There is access to TVET education including entrepreneurial skills and the development of polytechnics is in the pipeline.
- Following publication of the results of the Certificate of Primary Education, there are a number of people, bodies and companies that sponsor students from deprived social backgrounds. A Special Education Needs unit provides support services and capacity building for children with auditive and other difficulties.

Target 4.a

Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

- Institutions have ramps for the physically disabled and some have special toilet facilities.

Target 4.b

By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, Small Island Developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries

- Mauritius already has the Mauritius-Africa Scholarship Scheme which is targeted at African Union countries. This scheme is for tertiary level studies in all fields.

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- Higher Education is one of the key elements of growth and social development in Africa. As part of its commitment to promote capacity-building at high level across the continent, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research on behalf of the Government of Mauritius, is awarding scholarships to deserving students who are resident citizens of member states of the African Union. The Scholarship supports successful candidates in meeting tuition fees and contribute to their living expenses during their studies in Mauritius. The scholarship is for full-time on-campus undergraduate studies at any public Tertiary Education Institution in Mauritius.

Target 4.c

By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and Small Island Developing States.

- Lecturers are given the opportunity to go on academic exchange programmes to share their knowledge, skills and experiences and also to help them fill curricular gaps.
- Professional development includes training for lecturers help them to improve their teaching quality and their students' learning. The Mauritius institute of Education (MIE) provides a number of teacher training courses to enable them to handle the needs of children with difficulties.
- The Mauritius –Africa Scholarship Scheme also applies to degree courses delivered by the MIE.

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