

Can Education Meet the Sustainability Challenge?

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Drawing on a well-tested model and twelve reports produced since 2002, the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report has a new mandate for the next 15 years to monitor progress towards the fourth Sustainable Development Goal on education.

The first in a new series, and written over an 18 month period, the 2016 GEM Report will be launched in early September of this year and will examine the multiple and interconnected links between education and key aspects of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It builds compelling arguments, drawing on the latest evidence from experts around the world, showing that how and what we are taught in schools and education programs not only influences our knowledge, skills, attitudes and worldviews but also our choices for investment and research, and our mutual respect for each other. Specifically, the GEM Report shows how much and which types of education are vital for achieving the goals of poverty reduction, hunger eradication, improved health, gender equality and empowerment, sustainable agriculture, resilient cities, and more peaceful, equal and inclusive societies. It underscores the principle that we must transform education with people and planet in mind.

Of specific interest to this conference, the 2016 GEM Report examines the way that education can create a stronger relationship between expanding sustainable economic activities and social inclusion.

Education of good quality which is distributed equitably can contribute to prosperity that is conceived in a way that leaves no one behind. For starters, making primary and secondary education of good quality widely accessible can enable large numbers of individuals and their families to augment their incomes above and beyond the poverty line. Among lower income countries, the achievement of basic education particularly benefits the poorest, and is associated with increased earnings and consumption among rural and informal sector workers and their families. Higher levels of education reduce the likelihood that households experience long periods of chronic poverty or transmit poverty between generations.

Similarly, education reduces poverty through increasing chances of finding decent work and improved earnings, reducing job insecurity, and helping close wage gaps due to gender, socio-economic status and other bases of discrimination.

The Report also examines instances where education systems have resulted in increased social inequalities. It shows in which circumstances, and why, expansion in

education systems can divide, rather than unite. Symptoms such as job polarization and the rise of the services sector in the context of continued globalisation are discussed.

Circumstances outside of education's control, including the shape of future labour demands, make education a vital equalising mechanism, but not the sole solution to inequality.