



Education International  
Internationale de l'Éducation  
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Bildungsinternationale

## Off Track

Four years ago, governments adopted an ambitious agenda for a better world: the Sustainable Development Goals. However, there are no mechanisms to bind governments to the agenda.






In 2019, as governments self-report on their progress towards SDG 4, Education International reports on progress towards the goal from the perspective of teachers and education support personnel.

Assessing SDG 4 on quality education, teachers and education support personnel conclude that ***the world is severely off track to achieve SDG 4 by 2030***. Not enough governments have taken the necessary steps to implement SDG 4, and some have implemented policies that actively undermine the agenda.

Fortunately, it is still possible to change course, make up lost time, and ensure quality education for all by 2030 if ***governments take urgent action now***.

Educators urge governments to take their commitment to SDG 4 seriously. This requires critically reviewing existing education policies to ensure that they contribute to and do not undermine SDG 4. It requires national strategic plans for full SDG 4 implementation. Most importantly, it requires adequately financing SDG 4's implementation by ***investing in education***.

Informed by a survey of Education International's members, educators identify **5 key obstacles** that are currently hindering the achievement of SDG 4

Educator's diagnosis	Solution
Teachers have low status and poor employment and working conditions, making teaching an unattractive profession.	 <p><b>Make education free from exploitation and precarious work!</b> Raise the status of teachers and guarantee decent working and employment conditions</p>
Human and trade union rights are still being violated and educators are inadequately involved in policy development	 <p><b>Make education free from human and trade union rights violations!</b> Guarantee educators' trade union rights and strengthen social and policy dialogue with education unions</p>
Public systems are under-funded and education privatisation is expanding and intensifying	 <p><b>Make education free from profiteering and commercialisation!</b> Strengthen public systems and stop education privatisation</p>
Inequitable education systems exclude and discriminate against minorities and the vulnerable	 <p><b>Make education free from discrimination and exclusion!</b> Make education systems non-discriminatory and inclusive of the most vulnerable</p>
Education for sustainable development, including climate change, is marginalised	 <p><b>Make education free from climate change denial!</b> Ensure a holistic and broad curriculum and make education for sustainable development including climate change universal.</p>

read the full report here:

[https://issuu.com/educationinternational/docs/off\\_track\\_educators\\_assess\\_sdg\\_4\\_p](https://issuu.com/educationinternational/docs/off_track_educators_assess_sdg_4_p)





Make education free  
from **exploitation**  
and **precarious work!**



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## Off Track

To get back on track to achieve SDG 4 by 2030:

### Make education free from exploitation and precarious work!

#### Educators' diagnosis

Poor employment and working conditions exacerbate the global shortage of teachers, yet some teachers still live in poverty, precarious contract work for teacher is widespread, teacher workloads are high, and too many teachers, especially women, are not safe at work.

Ensuring quality education for all requires trained and qualified teachers, yet too many teachers receive poor quality initial training and either no free professional development or one that is irrelevant to their needs.

**EXAMPLE!** In Morocco, 55,000 teachers (almost 30%) of the teaching workforce are now employed on precarious contracts and can be fired for "making a mistake" without notice, compensation or recourse. These contract teachers do not enjoy the same benefits for healthcare or pensions as teachers employed as permanent public employees, and lack basic labour rights.

**FACT!** In Mexico, 55% of teachers in middle and upper schools work on a per-hour basis and are forced to take on extra jobs.

#### Educators' solution

1. Ensure that every student is taught by a trained and qualified teacher. To this end, governments must **increase the attractiveness and status of the profession** and recruit sufficient numbers of new teachers into quality, free initial training.
2. **Invest in teachers.** Ensure that they have salaries comparable with those of similarly qualified professionals, are paid in a timely manner and can access their salaries easily. No teacher should live in poverty.
3. Provide teachers with **decent working conditions**, ensuring that all educational institutions are safe and secure places to work. Reduce teachers' workload and support teacher wellbeing.
4. Ensure **fair and transparent recruitment, employment and deployment processes, and adequate career progression opportunities.**
5. Stop the use of contract teachers and **ensure no teachers are employed under precarious employment conditions**, neither in the public or private sector.
6. **Ensure equal pay for work of equal value**, and address the increase in insecure, fixed and/or short-term employment, which disproportionately affects female teachers and education support personnel.
7. Define **professional standards** with educators and their unions.
8. **Recognise the crucial role of education support personnel for quality education** – ensure they have decent working and employment conditions.
9. Provide **free, quality professional development and training** and ensure their relevance to teachers' needs by consulting teachers through their unions.
10. Fully **implement the 1966 UNESCO-ILO Recommendation on the Status of Teachers** as well as the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of Higher Education Personnel and the UN International Labour Organisation (ILO) guidelines on the promotion of decent work for ECE personnel.



Make education free  
from **human rights**  
**violations!**



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## Off Track

To get back on track to achieve SDG 4 by 2030:

**Make education free from human and trade union rights violations!**

### **Educators' diagnosis:**

In far too many countries, professional autonomy and trade union rights are under attack. The right to academic freedom is violated and poor employment conditions, casualisation and precarious contracts inhibit teachers, academics and researchers' freedom to speak out against government or institutional policies.

The Incheon Declaration's commitment to ensuring that teachers are empowered is yet to be fulfilled. Teachers are too seldom included in decision making processes at institutional and system levels and in many countries institutionalised and meaningful social and policy dialogue are inadequate.

**EXAMPLE!** In Turkey, academics lack academic freedom and their right to freedom of expression has been violated - thousands are embroiled in court cases and are being sentenced to prison for speaking out against government policy. Trade unions are being repressed and union members targeted and unfairly dismissed.

**FACT!** 32 countries have not ratified International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise (of these, New Zealand, Oman, Palau and Tonga are submitting Voluntary National Reviews in 2019).

### **Educators' solution:**

1. **Guarantee educators' right to unionise, strike and engage in collective bargaining.** Strengthen mechanisms for social dialogue with education unions so that social dialogue is regular, institutionalised and constructive. Involve teachers and education support personnel in education policy development.
2. Fully **implement the 1966 UNESCO-ILO Recommendation on the Status of Teachers** as well as the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of Higher Education Personnel and the UN International Labour Organisation (ILO) guidelines on the promotion of decent work for ECE personnel.
3. **Strengthen mechanisms for social dialogue** with unions and ensure teachers' meaningful involvement in policy decisions.
4. Respect teachers' **professional expertise and autonomy.**
5. Ensure **academic freedom** and stop political interference with education.
6. **Drastically improve employment conditions for higher education personnel.** Eliminate zero-hour contracts and ensure that all educators receive decent salaries and working conditions no less than those of professionals with similar qualifications.



## Off Track

To get back on track to achieve SDG 4 by 2030:

**Make education free from profiteering and commercialization!**

### **Educators' diagnosis:**

Funding for education is insufficient – not enough countries abide by the commitments made in the Incheon Declaration and some have reduced investment in education since 2015. Meanwhile, international public finance for education is stagnating and the international education financing architecture is fragmenting as new players emerge.

Direct and indirect costs to public education remain a barrier to access, and the increasing proliferation of private providers threaten the right to free, quality public education. Early childhood education remains highly privatised, prohibiting access to education in the early years. Privatisation in and of primary, secondary, TVET and higher education impedes quality as well as equitable and inclusive access.

**EXAMPLE!** In Argentina, privatisation in and of education has intensified since 2015 with the conservative turn in government. The government invests in private sector actors – in 2015, 17.5% of the education budget went on government subsidies to private education and there is a growing presence of corporations, non-governmental organisations and philanthropic organisations in public education and policy decisions. Meanwhile, there has been a decrease in public funding of key areas necessary for quality education, such as teacher training

**FACT!** To achieve SDG4 4, global spending on education must rise annually from \$1.2 trillion per year to \$3 trillion by 2030

### **Educators' solution:**

1. **Substantially increase public investment in education and allocate at least 6 % of GDP and/or at least 20 % of the national budget to education.** States should take all necessary measures to ensure they have sufficient revenue to fund their public education systems. This includes closing tax havens, combatting tax minimisation, avoidance and evasion, and ensuring companies pay their fair share of tax.
2. Donor countries should honour their commitment to **allocate at least 0.7% of gross national income on foreign aid.** The aid allocation to the education sector should be increased and prioritised as education enables the achievement of all other SDGs.
3. **Abolish all direct and indirect costs of education.**
4. **Protect education from for-profit commercial education providers** and strengthen regulations for quality assurance of private providers
5. **Make educational materials more accessible by ensuring that educational use is an exception within copy right laws.** Ensure increasing access to teaching, learning and research materials by promoting the development of open educational resources and open access research, as well as adequate copyright exceptions and limitations for education and research – at national level and at WIPO.





## Off Track

To get back on track to achieve SDG 4 by 2030:

### **Make education free from discrimination and exclusion!**

#### **Educators' diagnosis:**

Some governments have taken action to enhance gender equality in education since the adoption of the SDGs but obstacles to gender equality in education are pervasive and gender-based violence in schools remains rampant.

We have a long way to go to provide inclusive education for all. Numerous marginalised groups remain excluded from quality education, heightened by the increased marketisation and commercialisation of education which increases segregation and inequities. For instance, persons with disabilities are denied the right to education, teachers are not adequately trained and supported to provide migrants, refugees and internally displaced peoples with quality education, indigenous teachers face discrimination, impeding the provision of culturally responsive quality education for indigenous children and young people, and LGBTI people are not adequately protected at schools.

**EXAMPLE!** In the Philippines, indigenous community schools (Lumad schools) have been militarised, and students and teachers attacked. Indigenous children have had their right to education violated.

**FACT!** According to the Global Partnership of Education (GPE), only 25 of 42 Education Sector Plans from GPE countries were gender-sensitive.

#### **Educators' solution:**

1. **Build strong public education system;** this is the best way to guarantee equitable and inclusive education systems.
2. **Gather disaggregated data** on education access, participation, completion and outcomes in order to shine a light on educational inequalities and identify where targeted support is necessary.
3. Take urgent action to make education free at all levels and to **abolish all indirect costs of education**, such as those for books, materials, uniforms, school meals and transport.
4. **Target additional funding for disadvantaged areas, communities and groups**, including rural areas in many countries.
5. **Finance the development of gender-sensitive curricula, tools and materials, and training** for teachers and support personnel.
6. Take action to **make education more inclusive of and responsive to multiple forms of diversity**. Develop relevant curricula and provide resources to support disadvantaged or vulnerable students including the poor, refugee and immigrant students, indigenous students, and LGBTI students.
7. Schools must be safe spaces for teaching and learning. **Ensure that all education institutions have access to single sex sanitation facilities and basic handwashing facilities, adapted infrastructure for students with disabilities and basic drinking water.**



Make education free  
from climate  
change denial!



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## Off Track

To get back on track to achieve SDG 4 by 2030:

**Make education free from climate change denial!**

### **Educators' diagnosis:**

Some countries are reforming their curricula to include education for sustainable development (ESD), but few countries have created clear, costed strategies for ESD implementation across all education institutions and ESD is currently insufficiently mainstreamed in education systems. Educators do not feel adequately supported by the curriculum, the availability of suitable teaching and learning materials and education systems to promote ESD sufficiently.

ESD is widely neglected in favour of literacy and numeracy or other so-called "core" subjects. Where implemented, ESD is too often understood narrowly rather than encompassing all aspects included in target 4.7, as political and cultural barriers can lead to parts of the 4.7 target being neglected. Educators suggest that, of all the aspects, there are most barriers to teaching sexuality education.

**EXAMPLE!** In the United States, teachers feel unsupported to provide students with the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to promote tolerance and respect of diversity when government policies discriminate against and violate the rights of immigrant children. Children have been detained at the Mexican border and there has been a spike in aggressive federal immigration law enforcement activities in and around public schools.

**FACT!** In Germany, research shows that implementing education for sustainable development in all schools in the country will cost an estimated €13.7 billion, requiring a 3.6% increase in national education spending.

### **Educators' solution:**

1. **Education for sustainable development and especially climate change education must urgently be mainstreamed** across education systems, including in curricula, teaching and learning materials, and assessment.
2. Education for sustainable development must be **included in teacher training and professional development**.
3. **Teachers must have the professional autonomy, support and freedom from political interference** to teach about climate change, as well as topics such as human rights, sexuality, racism, gender equality, peace, tolerance and diversity.
4. **Education for sustainable development must be understood broadly**, including human rights, global citizenship, gender equality, peace and non-violence, alongside environmental and climate change education.
5. Education for sustainable development **must not be limited to its cognitive dimension** but include behavioural as well as social and emotional learning.
6. **Policies should be put in place to encourage education institutions to model sustainable practices**. Education institutions should be environmentally friendly (reducing waste, using renewable energies etc.) and schools should champion civil rights.
7. Ensure that the national curriculum **does not focus disproportionately on numeracy and literacy** at the expense of a holistic and broad education, including education for sustainable development.