Session V: Arab Region and Education Post 2015 - Regional Perspective on the Post-2015 Education Agenda (goal and targets)

Theme/s: Skills and Competences for Life and Work in a Lifelong Learning Perspective – Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED)

Guidance Note for Participants

Overall Purpose of the Session
The purpose of this session is to formulate regional recommendations on global strategies and mechanisms to support the implementation of the post 2015 education agenda. Participants are invited to discuss achievements, enabling factors and constraints associated with issues on: skills and competencies for lifelong learning / education for sustainable development and global citizenship education in the Arab region. The session will address the question of which skills/competencies are needed as we look towards 2030 and examine how best GCE and ESD can be operationalized in education systems within the existing regional trends and emerging issues in this regard. Participants are encouraged to reflect on their national priority areas in order to outline concrete regional strategic recommendations taking into account of developmental changes, trends and emerging challenges. The discussion will focus on the following skills through the following lenses:

- Skills for work
- Non-cognitive/TVET
- Global Citizenship Education
- Intercultural Dialogue
- Tertiary education
- Adult learning
- Sustainable Development
- Conflict resolution
- Human rights
- Peace education
- Health education
- Cultural Diversity

Grounded in a lifelong learning perspective, this session will discuss themes that target all learners of all ages – children, youth and adults.

Introduction
Education aims to equip learners with the ability to gain knowledge, find decent work and contribute meaningfully to both local and global society. This implies that it must: a) nurture the development of relevant skills and competencies; and b) foster global citizenship and sustainable development knowledge, values and skills. As we look towards 2030, we can consider three broad categories that learners will have to acquire as skills/competencies: a) for knowing (“foundational skills”), including literacy and numeracy; b) for doing (“specialized skills”), including occupation-specific and generic skills/competencies; and c) for being and for living together (“transferable or transversal skills”), including intra-personal and inter-personal skills/competencies. Equally important in this session, two key components will be devoted for discussing: Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). GCED aims to equip learners with values, knowledge, skills and attitudes that are based on and instill respect for human rights, social justice, diversity, gender equality and environmental sustainability and that
empower learners to be responsible global citizens\textsuperscript{1}. ESD means including key sustainable development issues into teaching and learning; for example, climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, poverty reduction, and sustainable consumption\textsuperscript{2}.

**Global Progress**

A. **About Skills and Competencies for Life and Work**: Globally, many adolescents lack necessary skills and competencies gained through education. Some 774 million adults (aged 15 and over), of whom two-thirds are women, are reported to be unable to read and write. Low literacy skills are a concern globally, including in middle and high income countries\textsuperscript{3}. For example, in Europe, an estimated 20\% of adults lack the literacy skills they need to function fully in society. Adults with poor literacy skills are more likely to be unemployed, and those who are employed receive lower wages. They also find it more difficult to participate in society and exercise their rights. They are more likely to be in poor health.

B. **About Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Education**: in the last couple of years, the international education community became increasingly concerned with if and what children are learning, and if their learning is going to make the world more peaceful and sustainable. In this context, GCED and ESD have come to the fore, reflecting a paradigm shift around the purpose and content of the education we need and want to protect our world and transform our societies. Global challenges in this area include lack of clear policies and objectives, a lack of instructional time, curricula which are already dense and overloaded, a bias towards academic subjects and the so-called ‘cognitive’ aspects of learning and potential dissonance over which aspects of GCED and ESD should be integrated within curricula.

**Arab Region Progress**

A. **About Skills and Competencies for Life and Work**: The long-term effect of neglecting education in the region left a huge skills deficit among young people. One in five young people in the Arab States have never completed primary school, and so struggle to find well-paid, secure work. This is equivalent to 10.5 million young people. Even if young people have the opportunity to attend secondary school, many leave without having acquired relevant skills needed for life and the workplace. Poverty remains a barrier for many young people acquiring competencies and skills for life and work. They are therefore trapped in work that pays below the poverty line with little hope for the future. Of all socio-economic groups, young women are the most likely to lack foundation skills.

B. **About Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship Education**: Despite wide variations in the region among and within countries especially between public and quality private schools, the context of GCED and ESD in most Arab public schools does not support the development of necessary knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. The school climate is generally authoritarian and repressive. Good governance, particularly accountability and transparency, is rare. Learning methods and practices are largely limited to rote instruction. Lessons tend to be didactic and teacher-directed rather than student-centered. Arab countries have diverse priorities in their education policies. ESD and GCED are not among them. There are six main challenges: (1) shortcomings of education systems (weak governance and poor preparation of teachers both academically and pedagogically); (2) domestic context

\textsuperscript{1} http://www.unesco.org/new/en/global-citizenship-education

\textsuperscript{2} Introduction to the Special Section: Education Imperatives of the Rio Conventions\textsuperscript{1}, Journal of Education for Sustainable Development, 2012.

\textsuperscript{3} http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002273/227336E.pdf
(resistance from some social and cultural groups); (3) international context (shortcomings in Western foreign policies regarding Arabs); (4) political and social commitment; (5) funding, and (6) conflict between the national and global dimensions of citizenship identity.

**Link to the Proposed Outcome Targets**

In the framework of the post 2015 education global agenda and in light of global and regional progress and challenges, a set of five outcome targets have been identified through extensive consultations. To respond to the discussion of this session the following three overall targets are proposed. Each of the targets must be translated into specific measurable, achievable, and relevant indicators for the Arab Region.

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<th>Target 3: By 2030, all youth and at least x% of adults reach a proficiency level in literacy and numeracy sufficient to participate in society, with particular attention to girls and women, and the most marginalized</th>
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| **Rationale:** The development benefits of literacy, in particular for women, are well-documented and include, among others, higher participation in the labour market, delayed marriage and improved child and family health and nutrition; these, in turn, contribute to poverty reduction, greater life opportunities for girls and women, and a positive impact on learning, among other benefits. Consequently, it is key to ensure that all youth (15–24 years) and adults across the world acquire relevant and recognized functional literacy and numeracy skill and continue as lifelong learners. In addition, ICTs can play an important role in supporting and sustaining literacy learning.  

Target 4: By 2030, at least x% of youth and y% of adults will have the knowledge and skills for decent work and lives through technical and vocational education and training, upper secondary education, and tertiary education |
| **Rationale:** This target aims at ensuring that all young people and adults have equitable opportunities to access and complete formal and non-formal technical and vocational education and training relevant to the world of work, as well as lifelong learning opportunities that enable learners to acquire diverse and relevant knowledge and skills that foster their professional and personal development. |

Target 5: By 2030, all learners acquire knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to establish sustainable and peaceful societies, including through global citizenship education and education for sustainable development. |
| **Rationale:** Responsible citizenship and sustainable development, health, respect for cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue deserves a central place in the post-2015 education agenda. This target aims at promoting the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required by citizens to take informed decisions and assume active roles both locally and globally in facing and resolving global challenges can be acquired through global citizenship education (GCED) and education for sustainable development (ESD). |

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4 Muhammad Faour. "Global Citizenship Education: framework for the Arab States", UNESCO Beirut 2014


Questions for Discussion

- What are the values, skills and competencies which learners need in the Arab region in order to effectively progress to higher levels of education, the world of work and/or their role as active global citizens and members of society through GCED and ESD?
- What are the overall trends, issues and challenges in the region in terms of achievement of these values and skills?