

W20, Y20 & B20 Joint Statement

**EDUCATION:  
THE TRUE ENABLER OF  
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**



We, the Women, Youth and Business engagement groups of the G20 countries (W20, Y20 & B20) recognize the importance of leading the way into more fair and inclusive societies and cooperative discussions to find consensus recommendations, best practices and action plans for development and growth.

Education is at the core of all strategies.

We acknowledge and that the 2017 G20 Leaders' Declaration was an important step forward in recognizing the importance of education, digital literacy and lifelong learning as part of the main goals to be targeted by 2025. Yet, concrete steps into implementing these commitments must be taken

Seventy years have passed since the United Nations Assembly proclaimed free, compulsory and accessible education as a fundamental human right. Action to ensure this right has provided equal opportunities, and has taken thousands out of poverty.

Still, disparities among and within countries remain high, and the reduction tendency of children's enrollment at all levels of education has been almost stagnant since 2008. Additionally, world aggregates show that more girls than boys are out of school at all education levels.<sup>1</sup> To ensure that education is provided effectively, and that boys and girls have the same opportunities to learn, governments should ensure that all learners, parents and stakeholders eliminate biases, especially those related to gender and its impact on career choices. This can be achieved if G20 countries guarantee that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education.

Moreover, gaps in basic skills, such as numeracy and literacy remain persistent issues. Worldwide, hundreds of millions of children who end primary school do not master basic competencies. In fact, more than 60 percent of primary school children in developing countries still fail to achieve minimum proficiency thresholds in core competencies.<sup>2</sup> Thus, educational deficiencies rely not only on the scope and reach in terms of quantity but in fact, call for smart strategies in terms of quality.

Further efforts need to be accomplished in order to erase these disparities and meet Goal number 4 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We call our leaders to strengthen education systems that ensure no child is in an unfavorable situation based on gender, socio-economic or geographical conditions. Education must be the engine of inclusion, instead of being the first trigger of inequalities within societies.

Learning shortfalls of basic skills during the school years turn into an impediment for employability in the workforce, and although the skills needed

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank Data. 2018. UNESCO Institute for Statistics. Children out of school, male (% of male primary school age). Accessed August, 2018. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.UNER.MA.ZS?view=chart>  
<sup>2</sup> WDR 2018 team, using "A Global Data Set on Education Quality" (2017), made available to the team by Nadir Altinok, Noam Angrist, and Harry Anthony Patrinos. Data at [http://bit.do/WDR2018-Fig\\_O-5](http://bit.do/WDR2018-Fig_O-5).

in labor markets are becoming more multidimensional, no student can afford to bypass foundational skills such as reading comprehension, active listening, writing, oral expression as well as process skills like critical thinking and active learning.

In addition, while technology innovation accelerates and brings along exciting new opportunities, everyone needs to be prepared to constantly adapt. Consequently, on the one hand, digital skills are now being considered as *the* foundational skills to be promoted from early childhood education, and on the other, “learning to learn” strategies in a lifelong learning model is fundamental to help people stay constantly updated and open to the future. In this respect, it is crucial that G20 leaders incentivize apprentices’ programs by implementing past commitments.

What is more, given that entrepreneurship and innovation are key drivers for job creation and economic growth in the formal economy, G20 leaders should promote an enabling environment by fostering practical entrepreneurial education, focusing on skills such as creativity, critical thinking, flexibility, and interpersonal dynamics.

Lastly, it is of utmost importance that, within education curricula, G20 leaders prioritize fostering a culture of integrity and respect for the rule of law as well as fundamental citizen values and environmental awareness.

Regarding the strategies to address present and future labor market demands in terms of content and educational methodologies, current trends show that the pace of change is accelerating the demand for knowledge-based, interdisciplinary, project-solving and team-based work, which in turn boosts the requirement for continued education. In addition, current shortages in developing countries reinforce the urgency of action to achieve SDG 4 in order to increase the enrollment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programs. Therefore, we highlight the necessity of strengthening smart investments in innovative teaching methodologies in order to enhance students’ core competencies, particularly in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) with a special focus in gender equality. G20 countries must take action to encourage young and adult women to pursue and continue tertiary studies in areas of advanced technology and in those key subjects that are driving the digital transformation, in order to avoid missing opportunities and increasing exclusion. Arts is another conducive subject to be considered in educational curricula as it is unique to humans and complements all human endeavors.

Educators also need to adapt to the exciting new realities. Revamping teachers’ professional development, improving how teachers are recruited, paid, rewarded, incentivized, assessed, and trained is key to succeed. Leaders need to build implementation and management capacity to better organize

education systems and schools, targeting the quality of education outcomes and facilitating the use of metrics to guide improvements in the education system performance. It is also crucial to incorporate active learning techniques such as project-based learning and team-based learning activities as a formal part of curricula from an early age to nurture socio-emotional, interpersonal, empathy and creative skills.

Additionally, educational policies need to leverage the opportunities digitalization brings in terms of inclusiveness. Thus, G20 leaders should invest in appropriate digital infrastructure as it is a prerequisite to allow broad-based access to digital learning solutions and to integrate them into the physical teaching environment. Digitalization is also an opportunity for women to improve their skills and income, and to increase their participation in the labor market. With the right policies in place, the digital economy could boost opportunities and reduce inequalities faced not only by women, but also by youth and other vulnerable groups.

Finally, in order to avoid skills mismatches in the labor market, close cooperation between businesses and relevant government agencies and institutions is key to ensure that the curricula of training systems are in line with labor market needs. Optimizing the use of and access to labor market information, and harmonizing approaches to labor market data collection and treatment across the G20 is fundamental to track employment and education trends and to set out consistent educational policy plans.

The future of education will have to be coupled with transformation and innovation processes that must be backed with the strengthening of international policies for financing education. At the Hamburg Summit, G20 leaders agreed to examine the UN Secretary-General's proposal to establish an International Finance Facility for education considering other existing initiatives, such as the Global Partnership for Education and Education Cannot Wait. Adequate follow up is highly important.

The gender gap needs to be particularly addressed. We believe that girls and young women, especially those living in rural or vulnerable areas, should be encouraged to remain in the educational system through Inclusion and Educational Permanence Support Policies and scholarships. Moreover, child care systems that are articulated with the educational system will help young mothers and fathers to remain in education and pursue a better future.

Social Dialogue is key to reach timely, targeted yet smooth transitions into new education environments. Partnerships, particularly constructive engagement between social partners, are important to address these challenges and grasp the opportunities the future of work offers. We remain committed to cooperate with G20 authorities to pave the way for a better and more inclusive future of education.