

**The critical role of Faculties of Education in the**  
**THE GLOBAL AGENDA FOR QUALITY EDUCATION**

A Position Paper of the Global Network of Deans of Education (GNDE)



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## **The Critical Role of Education Faculties in the Global Agenda for Quality Education\***

### Preface

Agenda 2030 is a universal commitment towards sustainable development that includes various global goals to improve quality education, good health and wellbeing, gender equality, economic growth, climate action, life on land and below water, clean water and clean energy, innovation, the eradication of poverty and hunger, the reduction of inequality as well as peace, justice and strong institutions. The 17<sup>th</sup> sustainable development goal (SDG) presents the goal of ‘partnerships for the goals’. This paper seeks to reflect the views of the recently established Global Network of Deans of Education (GNDE) as an exemplar for crafting new partnerships to support the attainment of SDG4 that focuses on Quality Education. The notion of ‘coherence’ is utilized as a conceptual marker to present the emerging network. Four drivers, i.e. focus, collaboration, learning, accountability, are applied to illuminate the potential of a global deans network to address educational challenges and optimize opportunities to support learning. The chapter opens up discussions on the critical role of education in addressing the global goals and it elevates the role of faculties of education beyond its national boundaries.

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## **Introduction**

The realization of shared global vision for Education for All is an ongoing quest for success in the eradication of poverty. Initiated in Jomtien (1990), reiterated in Dakar (2000) and most recently reaffirmed in Incheon (2015) influencers around the world continue to collaborate for the sole purpose of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Over the past thirty years, the impact of these efforts has been described as mixed (UNESCO, 2015). If we want to see a different outcome in 2030, then now is the time to revisit global collations approach education reform on a global scale. While the authors of the Incheon declaration call for strong global collaboration, cooperation, coordination and monitoring of the implementation there are those who suggest an alternative set of drivers achieving better measurable results for students. In this chapter we position the concept of ‘Coherence’ (Fullan and Quinn 2015) as an alternative approach for achieving a different outcome for those seeking to achieve Education for All by 2030. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the drivers required for a coherence informed reform. These drivers are then applied to the case of the Global Network of Deans of Education (GNDE), a group established to facilitate cooperation and exchanges of information among national and regional associations of deans of education working to realize the vision of education for all by 2030. We conclude the chapter with some recommendations of how Deans of Education can work with their faculty to advance progress towards education for all by 2030.

## **Coherence: A Theory of Action for Global Reform**

Education for All by 2030 requires the right groups applying the right strategies to achieve a level of reform on a global scale that achieves nothing less than success for all. During this section of the chapter we will draw on the work of Fullan and Quinn (2015) to outline an approach for an ordinary group to extraordinary outcomes on a global scale. They identify focus, collaboration, learning and accountability as the four drivers ordinary educational systems can use to achieve remarkable things.

Focusing the direction of a group involves the creation of a meaningful purpose, relevant goals, a clear strategy and a plan for change leadership. A common and meaningful focus for all motivates every member to achieve common goals. The integration of relevance within these common goals increases the effectiveness of group actions and activities. The presence of a clear strategy and a common language can minimize fragmentation among group members by equipping them to ‘talk the walk’ as they monitor the progress they are making with their change agenda. In the early stages of this agenda feelings of uncertainty can be an issue. In these instances change leaders using short cycles of innovation can create the conditions for early wins that will contribute to the culture of trust required when “Leading for an unknown future” (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p.32).

Leading for an unknown future at a global scale requires a level of coherence that is only possible through high levels of collaboration among group members committed to learning through innovation. Leaders of this type of learning must establish collaborative cultures

for talented members to work and learn together as they implement their change agenda. They should support members as they learn and use data to identify progress and prioritize future learning needs. Effective lead learners sharpen the focus of the group and develop a ‘common capacity set’ (Fullan & Quinn, 2015, p.15) among group members making unique contributions to the achievement of a common goal. The effectiveness of their leadership will be reflected in the learnings of group members as they shift their practices in ways that result in improved practice for an individual and improved outcomes for the group as a whole.

Influencing change at a global scale requires knowledge building partnerships for developing a deeper understanding of the process of change and how we can influence it (Fullan & Quinn, 2015, p. 108). The key activities in knowledge building partnerships include developing clear learning goals, integrating pedagogies accelerated by digital learning and shifting practices through capacity building. Clarifying learning goals will assist efforts to coordinate actions and shift practices, however, this requires spending time clarifying the goals, identify learning strategies to promote goal achievement and establish effective ways to measure achievement. As leaders of learning the group members should leverage digital learning tools to provide others outside the group with opportunities for deep learning, which includes feedback avenues for access to new learning challenges. The combination of access to new challenges and access to plans and capacity-building resources to support a shift to a deeper understanding of the process of learning should result in the desired shift in practices.

Implementing change through deeper understanding and learning requires leaders who are capable of creating conditions for deeper understanding and learning. These conditions includes establishing internal and external accountability among group members. Internal accountability occurs when both groups and individuals share a limited number of beliefs and goals and assume responsibility for continuous progress towards these goals (Fullan & Quinn, 2015, p. 109). External accountability occurs when the learning leaders use data to inform and reassure key stakeholders that their group is meeting accepted performance standards. Learning leaders aiming to maximize performance should aim to build internal accountability first, before focusing on external accountability, achieves greater success and should be the priority of the learning leaders as achieving higher levels of local responsibility will motivate members to collaborate within their and beyond their groups (Fullan & Quinn, 2015, p.119).

As such, this chapter presents four key drivers to contribute to the emerging theory of action for global reform in education. The chapter draws on the Position paper of the Global Network of Deans of Education (GNDE) that is being developed at the time of writing. It also presents the GNDE as an exemplar of how the four drivers can be bridled together to support the global agenda on quality education:

### **1. Focus**

All countries have recognized this as a transformative time and have articulated a broad set of sustainable development goals for all countries to achieve by 2030. Quality Education

(SDG4) is one of these 17 goals and is seen by senior UN leaders as the centre-piece or backbone for achieving all these goals.

## **2. Collaboration**

Human interaction is the core of the art and science of teaching and learning. Consequently, initial teacher education and ongoing professional development should be based on a humanistic approach built by professional, socialization activities such as collegial university teaching, research, service and subsequent coaching and mentoring in their teaching, support and leadership practices.

## **3. Learning**

Governments, universities, schools and faculties of education and donors should work together to develop and maintain systems-based, capacity-building approaches to teacher education to address the current and future challenges in education, teaching and learning in contextually relevant, sustainable ways.

## **4. Accountability**

Teacher education and development should be based on career-long, carefully staged and structured opportunities for teachers to develop as autonomous, accountable professionals in response to the needs of students, their respective education systems and their own professional goals.

## **The Global Network of Deans of Education (GNDE)**

Akin to the way that the 17 sustainable development goals rest on education, education in turn rests on teachers. The overwhelming majority of teachers are recruited, educated and subsequently accredited in all education systems by publicly funded and accountable faculties and schools of education. The purpose of initial and on-going teacher education and development is to prepare qualified professionals, with relevant content expertise in their assignments matched by attributes and skills in managing students and proven as well as innovative pedagogy and teaching/learning strategies. Faculties or schools of education provide initial teacher education and play a leading role in ongoing professional development while also conducting research to improve policy, programs and practices as well as serving local, regional or international communities.

The teacher is the single most important element of the learning process at the school level that can be most easily and effectively supported through public and professional investments. The local school district and education authority, employer of teachers and other education personnel, is the most vital agency responsible for hiring teachers and providing positive work environments and opportunities for ongoing professional development in cooperation with their local teacher unions. State or national education ministries create and maintain long-term teacher and workforce development policies and programs that establish or delegate teacher certification requirements, provide funding for teacher salaries and teaching and learning conditions and define the core goals and curricula to be delivered in their schools. Other ministries and agencies define the roles and

provide the training and support for other personnel that work with teachers to support learning and teaching.

Faculties or schools of education are the single most important element of the workforce development process that creates a pool of qualified, effective and dedicated teachers for local education authorities and education systems. Initial teacher education programs recruit candidates into the profession, provide and certify their initial training and additional qualifications, help to induct and retain teachers in the system, provide timely and relevant research on teaching and learning to guide curriculum development and implementation as well as other school and professional practices. Education faculties offer career pathways for recruiting prospective teachers from or to serve minority, isolated and disadvantaged communities or for upgrading the skills and capacities of those assigned to teach without adequate preparation due to ad-hoc or short-term strategies responding to emergency or other circumstances.

Deans of faculties of education guide and support students, staff and faculty members in their learning, teaching, research and service to others (Clift, 2015). The Dean is often a mentor, initiator and conduit to the many different parts and people within the faculty as well as an inspiration and leader in maintaining an effective learning organization. For those seeking to improve the quality of education and teaching, the Deans of education are an essential partner and access point to their faculties, staff and students.

## Purposes

The goal of the first Position paper by the GNDE, titled ‘Teacher Education & Development for 2030 - The Essential Role of Education Faculties in Serving their Students, Communities, States, Countries and the Global Community’, is to create a framework and touchstone for institutional, state, national and global discussions about the key roles that education faculties play in supporting education systems and teacher education and development at the community, regional, state, national and global levels. The position paper has been developed through consultations with regional and state associations representing Deans of Education, many individual institutions and international organizations representing experts in teacher education, educational foundations, educational equity and education researchers. This chapter briefly describes these teaching, research and community service roles, discusses some of the urgent and important challenges facing education systems today, in the future, and documents the organizational and system capacities needed in different contexts.

Some attempts have been made to separate and view SDG 4 from micro-, meso- and macro-level perspectives (Boeren, 2019). Separating SDG 4 on these levels posits the notion that ‘the SDG 4 targets is a responsibility shared among individuals, education and training institutions, and regulating governments’ (Boeren, 2019, p. 277). The GNDE position paper aligns with this view, in its strong focus on the roles of faculties and schools of education within the broader education system. Supporting SDG4 is indeed a shared responsibility.

## **Vision & Values that Should Drive the Education of Teachers & Education Faculties**

The social, economic, technological and political challenges that will confront student futures and educational systems are evident. One inescapable conclusion (Godwin & Bellinger, 2019; Naylor, Jones & Boateng, 2019) when examining these challenges is that education systems must offer a broad range of educational opportunities and pathways to increasingly diverse student populations as well as ensure that the needs of the whole child are met throughout their life-long education. This breadth is reflected in the UN Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 and should be a cornerstone of all national, state education systems and the education faculties that are part of those systems.

This means that governments and post-secondary education leaders should ensure that faculties and schools of education can and do offer a wide range of education and development programs, within a coherent and planned workforce development strategy, to serve the wide variety of educational positions and careers. These include early childhood education, primary school, secondary school specialists, indigenous and immigrant programs, guidance counsellors, school administrators, senior school leaders and several types of specialists in psychology, technology, and other disciplines.

The breadth of educational opportunities for primary and secondary students depicted below should be supported by teacher education and development programs as well as educator-driven research and community-based programs in each faculty of education to

the fullest degree possible or offered through a systems-based plan where these diverse needs are met somewhere within the overall post-secondary system of education faculties.

### **Values**

All students have the right to be taught, counseled and supported by skilled professionals who truly make a difference in their learning and overall development. The selection, preparation and guidance of teachers and other educators through their initial teacher education and subsequent stages of development is crucial (OECD, 2004). Long-term national and state education work force development planning and investments in strong, diverse and responsive post-secondary institutions to facilitate evidence-based, data-driven and experience-tested strategies and programs to recruit, educate, induct, develop, certify additional qualifications and nurture post-graduate scholars is essential.

The student-teacher relationship is at the centre of the learning process. The local school, working in concert with their students, parents and local community agencies, is the place where the whole child develops intellectually and academically, acquires healthy social, ethical and personal values, learns about work and potential careers and begins to act as a citizen in their community, society and the world.

It is essential that decisions about teaching and learning be made at the local level as much as possible within the frameworks, policies and guidelines established by national and state governments as well as by local educational authorities and schools. However, as global environmental, economic and social trends and forces have demonstrated, we are all

connected (Owen, 2016). It is increasingly evident that international cooperation through global organizations and UN agencies concerned with education has become easier and more effective through a variety of information and communications technologies.

The voice and contributions of Deans of Education should be part of the many global initiatives that will have an impact on education and education faculties. GNDE will work with relevant UN agencies and other global initiatives to inform education Deans about these initiatives, how to provide input and to shape their discussions to take into account the views and value of initial teacher education, graduate studies, community service and research provided by faculties of education.

### **Background and rationale for a Global Network of Deans of Education**

The art and science of teaching and learning is being scrutinized even more than ever as technologies redefine our economies, our access to information and knowledge and our personal, group and cultural interactions, as climate change threatens our planet and as social, economic and political changes alter our ways of living together in families, communities, countries and at the global level. These challenges include, but are not limited to (United Nations, 2019):

- education systems simply not having the right professionals in the right places performing effectively, thereby consistently reinforcing inequality
- education systems that are not designed to adequately support the workforce to provide relevant, inclusive and Quality education

- the education workforce is not supported to keep pace with change

In addition, the symbiosis between the education system and a changing world, means that education is affected by (United Nations, 2019):

- demographic shifts and evolving attitudes toward family structures and gender diversity
- the growth of inequality
- environmental change impacts the sustainability of and skills needed for our societies and economies
- growth and technological innovation spark the need for a wider range of skills
- key trends in education are changing our understanding of what learning looks like

These environmental, technological, economic and cultural changes are leading to significant migrations, both voluntary and involuntary, to urban centres and across national borders. Teachers are among the most mobile of professions. A diverse teacher workforce offers both a wider range of skills and knowledge to school systems as well as an innate and powerful force for social cohesion. These opportunities bring the challenge of ensuring quality and integration in teacher recruitment and education.

As stated earlier, all countries have recognized this as a transformative time and within this *zeitgeist* the 17 SDGs present key pivots within which transformation can be articulated.

Amongst the SDGs, education presents a powerful lever to accelerate progress and achieve social cohesion.

Several reports and global initiatives have been launched or revised by UN agencies, donor organizations and even multi-national companies. These include the Incheon Declaration/Framework for Action (2016), the OECD Future of Education Skills, Education 2030 position paper (2018), the World Bank Invest in Education Early, Smartly and for All Synthesis report (2020), several PISA technical reports, and assessment and analytic frameworks (PISA, 2018). The UNESCO Teacher Task Force has also published Global Education Monitoring reports that focuses on education for people and the planet, accountability in education and migration, displacement and education (Unesco, 2016, 2017/18, 2019). Within these constellations of education reports, the role of scholars and researchers in education are critical in order to enunciate the complexities of systems change and the vital role of education. It is in this regard that the GNDE will provide a platform for critical engagement with key directives in education change initiatives. Teachers and sustainable teacher education and development programs must be at the heart of these discussions.

### **Social, Economic, Cultural, Environmental Challenges**

We live in transformative and tumultuous times (Leal Filho *et al*, 2016; Schratz, 2003). There are new and continuing environmental, social, economic and technological trends, challenges to and opportunities in education, teaching and learning. They include:

- An impending climate and environmental crisis leading to dramatic shortages of water, food and habitats necessary for life as we know it. Huge voluntary and

involuntary migrations and dislocation of people across countries and regions as well as urbanization within countries place new demands on public and private services. Education for sustainable development, both in the environmental or ecological sense as well as in the equitable distribution of scarce resources, including between generations must be embedded in all aspects of schooling.

- Technology as a transformation in our daily and work lives, as new medium for learning and living as well as a strategy for dramatically different ways to teach, learn and administer schools. Aspects of this transformation include artificial intelligence, virtual environments, de-coupling learning from school systems, greater opportunities to interact and form communities across geographical and cultural barriers, depersonalization, moral disengagement and invasions of privacy.
- Gross and growing inequalities in many societies and across the regions and countries of the world. Equity in terms of access, processes and the educational success and outputs of school systems has never been more urgent and a goal that is not solved only by increasing economic outputs or leveling educational opportunity.
- Gender equity and stereotypical gender-based role models (including girls/females as an equity issue and boys/males as a socially disruptive factor).
- Challenges to social cohesion within societies, countries and across countries and regions of the world are numerous, with open conflicts, discrimination, hate, indifference, alienation, isolation, moral and civic disengagement erupting world-wide. Once marginal political parties and movements seeking to exclude different groups have become mainstream in many parts of the world. Personal,

social and moral development are a critical need at the same time that the social fabric once supported by strong families, charitable and respectful faith-based institutions, responsible mainstream media and stable communities have become contested spaces.

- Challenges to physical and mental health are reducing life expectancy in many HR countries while still limiting life chances in LR and conflict or disaster-affected countries (hunger, disease, stress, obesity/overweight, etc.).

Many countries are introducing reforms and innovations into their education systems in response to these trends, challenges and opportunities. Several UN and global organizations are responding with policy and other guidance, including UNESCO, OECD, the World Bank, the Education Commission on Education Financing, the Global Partnership for Education and others. However, as pointed out by Fullan (2016) ‘wrong’ policy drivers like testing and evaluation can make improvement at the systems level very difficult, suggesting rather that “changing the culture of schools and their relationship to the infrastructure of policies and regulation” (Fullan, 2016, p. 538) may lead to success. The extent of and distance between government agencies and civil society organizations working for systems improvement in education also requires deliberation. Education expertise is widely distributed, necessitating “looser coupling” (Bush, 2016) between education role players in order to contribute to successful policy formation and implementation. Demands on schools and education systems are constant. Many of these new and continuing demands on

education systems are reflected in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, primarily through Goal #4 (Education). We suggest that:

1. Curriculum transformation and need for a new coherent paradigm for teaching and learning be based on offering a wide breadth of learning opportunities that truly serves the needs of the whole child. Otherwise private-sector interests and narrow employment driven, competitive views on education may take away from the intellectual development and socialization role of schools. New cross-curricular competencies are being defined but are often disconnected from the prevailing and still valuable curricula and subjects that build knowledge, skills and attitudes and beliefs in proper scope and sequence within established disciplines and domains that exist and govern the world outside and after schooling.
2. Coherent, revised and improved long-term strategies to teacher education and development with the faculties and schools of education as a key partner and delivery system are essential. The roles, requirements and resources provided to faculties and schools of education should be allocated within a systems-focused work force development strategy.

## **The Roles of Faculties of Education**

Faculties and schools of education in both the public and private sectors are essential in the professional education and development of current and future teachers. The roles of education faculties may include:

- Recruiting prospective educators into the education sector
- Preparing a wide variety of teachers and other educators for current and predicted teaching/working assignments
- Cooperating with other faculties to prepare non-education professionals to work with and within schools (nurses, social workers, psychologists, learning specialists, teaching aides, police officers, security personnel, community and youth workers, sports/recreation professionals and others)
- Certifying professionals for different teaching and other educational assignments or working with governments or professional associations to do so
- Providing practicum and induction programs to encourage new teacher readiness, relevance and retention
- Offering additional certificates and qualifications as part of long-term strategies for career advancement and diversification with individual careers
- Encouraging and conducting open-ended and policy/practice driven research into teaching and learning
- Advising governments on curriculum and program design, maintenance, sustainability

- Working with local school districts/education authorities to improve education and teacher/school administrator effectiveness in cooperation with their respective professional associations and unions

### **The Capacities of Faculties of Education**

The need for capacity-building in teacher education is evident (Murray et al, 2009). Yet, critical analysis of the existing capacities of institutions at the local, national and global levels are often fluid and not always connected to the targets formulated under SDG 4. The systemic, organizational and professional capacities needed for the roles of the teachers are needed to address the educational challenges noted above. The GNDE is distinctively positioned to contribute to knowledge bases of organizational and system capacities in teacher education and development. Such knowledge bases could focus on education faculties, but it could also examine the roles and support provided by education ministries and local education authorities around the globe.

Critical aspects to ensure adequate planning for teacher capacity include:

- Ministries of Education publishing regular predictions on estimated teacher staffing levels and their related work force development plans. This include policy and curriculum changes that estimate changes or new requirements for teacher qualification or staffing when deciding on policies and programs.

- Basic levels of staffing and human resources are provided as part of the base funding provided to universities that offer initial teacher education programs. Realistic and documented staffing levels are provided.
- Careful consideration of the instructional/student learning time available in initial teacher education programs (4/5-year programs, one year programs, recruiting/catching up for minority/disadvantaged students etc.).
- Regular, visible support for long-term teacher education and development strategies from government ministers and senior Ministry of Education officials.
- Regular consideration of long-term work force development strategies geared to local, national or state needs and educational plans.
- Funding and staffing are required for education faculties to reach out and recruit from a diverse set of sectors and communities to attract potential teachers and educators into teaching careers. These include indigenous, minority and disadvantaged communities, specialists in second language learning, in learning disabilities and other disciplines, students completing or contemplating their undergraduate studies as well as others who have been in other sectors of the workforce and wish to share their knowledge and experience.
- Staffing assigned to encourage inter-disciplinary cooperation in teaching and research within the education faculty and with other faculties about school-related professionals.
- Publications, faculty/staff events and joint professional development activities on the latest research about teaching, learning and education.

- Ongoing work force development and knowledge exchange among faculty and staff.
- Visible and tangible support for post-graduate student research.
- Visible and tangible support for local community-service projects involving faculty and students.
- Regular global, national, and institutional reporting on the number of teachers in initial training, teacher retained, their qualifications and experience related to various categories and types of teaching and educational assignments.
- Institutional capacity for designing and encouraging research should be funded as part of the package for faculty funding

### **Public Reporting, Accreditation and Improvement Planning**

Fair and proven methods of institutional accreditation, public reporting on teacher education and development and capacity or self-directed and accountable improvement planning within faculties of education will remain crucial. This may include regular public reporting on evidence-based and experience-tested performance criteria. The accreditation process should be open, transparent and credible and conducted within national Qualification frameworks. As stated by Stephen Adam in the General Rapporteur report of the Qualification Structures in European Higher Education (2003:6), “*A national qualifications framework is simply a systematic description of an education system’s qualifications where all learning achievements are measured and related to each other. A European qualifications framework would amount to an agreement about a common structure or **architecture** [own emphasis] within which different national qualifications*

*could be located. It is essential to stress that this should not entail the creation of identical qualifications in terms of delivery, content or approach”*. The same frame of reference will be applicable to the way teacher qualifications are viewed in order to retain contextual sensitivity and regional relevance. To support this, basic funding to faculties of education should include funds to support faculty and staff to identify specific annual improvement objectives as part of their regular program planning processes. The national, state or provincial education planning should also include specific objectives and criteria for teacher education and development as well as institutional and organizational capacity within education faculties.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter elucidates the importance of new, systemic strategies to support education outcomes and targets for SDG 4 and related quality education initiatives by accentuating current global complexities and challenges. It specifically intimates the need for comprehensive applications of systems-based, capacity-building approaches in teacher education. It positions the Global Network of Deans of Education as one vehicle to impact capacities for teacher education, as well as the capacity of such a network to resonate with and influence concurrent discourses about quality education around the world. In this regard, four key drivers - focus, collaboration, learning and accountability - are proposed as a cohesive dynamism to support sustainable development in education.

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End Notes