

Key Documents & Initiatives from the UN Transforming Education Summit and Related Global/UN Agencies

(Annotated to identify items of interest to a group of Global Educator Organizations and FRESH partners)

1. The UN Transforming Education Summit (TES)

a) The [vision statement on education reform](#) prepared by the UN Sec-Gen for the Summit. This statement is excellent, starting with the premise of inclusion & equity being essential to excellence in schooling.

(The statement reflects many of the points we have made in our joint statement, including a need to rebalance the purposes and functions of schooling to include the social and custodial roles, a whole of government approach, renewing the commitments to the UN 2030 SDGs and linking the elements of system change including vision, commitments, resources, actions and results. The High-Level Steering Committee guiding the UN 2030 goal will be responsible for leading follow up, with a report back to the UN 2024 Summit of the Future.

(Note: The [joint statement](#) and [position paper](#) developed by the group[of global educator organizations has been revised to refer to this vision statement.)

b) National Consultations and Commitments Made at the Summit

The [analysis of country commitment statements](#) done for the Summit show high levels of support from countries in the Summit. However, many of the national commitments reflected the fact that most jurisdictions had just started a process or were already engaged in system reforms. More importantly, the initial analysis done by TES organizers noted the lack of discussion of whole of government strategies which will be necessary for intersectoral coordination to avoid dumping the burden on school systems alone.

See the [map of country statements](#) here. Each written commitment statement is accompanied by a report on their respective national consultations prior to the UN Summit as well as links to country level data such as the UNESCP PEER Policy Database, benchmarks from their monitoring of 2030 goals, education plans and policies from the UNESCO Planopolis database, statements made at the UN Summit by the country's leaders and more.)

A brief review of some of the reports on the national consultations prior to the UN Summit suggest that most included 2-3 meetings with stakeholders, summarizing recent reports and data and making general statements about general priorities/programs for change which likely were already in place. In some (many?) jurisdictions, the national consultations were done by the UNESCO Commission in the country with stakeholders with whom they were already engaged.

In some (many?) the national consultations followed the questions and process suggested in a [Convenors Handbook](#) provided by UNESCO.

That Convenors Handbook included these notable features:

- Referral to a [Futures of Education Briefing Notes](#) document (April 2022) that offered a list of suggested outputs for the national consultations and the Summit. That list of outputs did not include school health, well-being and nutrition programs =, and once again ignored the need for strengthened Health & Life Skills education.) The Handbook did refer Convenors to the [UNESCO Futures of Education report](#) and to the TES web site where they could track down the discussions on the five Action Tracks.
- Four key components of national consultations were suggested for Convenors:
 - Ensuring full recovery from COVID-19 educational disruption
 - Identifying the main strategic transformations and levers for reimagining education for the 21st century and accelerating progress towards shared education goals
 - Reviewing national education targets and benchmarks
 - Ensuring strengthened and more sustainable public financing of education
- Key stakeholders to be invited a broad range of actors including other ministries, NGOs and existing MOE partners
- Three key considerations were suggested for the national consultations:
 - A whole-of-government approach ensuring the involvement of representatives from different government ministries, such as health, labour, environment, social development (or social affairs), information and telecommunications, youth and especially finance
 - Equity, inclusion and gender equality for embracing diversity
 - Focusing on young people as agents of change
- A reporting format based on a suggested agenda and invitees.

c) Global Follow-up to the Summit

Guidance to Countries

Subsequent to the Summit in New York, a [Guidance Note](#) was prepared by the UN High Level Steering Committee to provide strategic, process and content advice on the principles and processes that they can use to follow up and implement their stated commitments and national consultation.

The UN guidance note was released in December 2022 and suggested these strategic directions for countries and UN/global agencies:

- Galvanize a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach
- Focus on addressing inequalities and disparities
- Link the global, the national and the local
- Engage in genuine participation with youth at the centre of transformation
- Strengthen and transform existing mechanisms and structures, do not build parallel ones
- Use evidence to inform policy and practice

The UN guidance note is similar but quite different from the Educators Joint Statement, Position Paper and Summary List of the elements of transforming school & other systems. It uses a “simplified systems change theory” to suggest four paths to overall transformation. They are shared vision, aligning with the conclusions of the UN Summit, engaging stakeholders and creating an effective

governance/accountability structure. (The [educator joint statement](#) suggests using a recognized education change model and has three pathways focused on three challenges: rebuilding from Covid, renewing commitments to inclusion/equity as per the UN 2030 goals and transformations leading towards 2050. The position paper supporting the joint statement as well as the summary/list of the elements of school systems provides key evidence and examples of good practices whereas the guidance document is more of an encouragement)

The guidance document advocates for a whole of government, whole of society approach. It advocates reaching out to other ministries/sectors and within education systems. It includes several generic suggestions about planning, strategy, partnerships and the engagement of stakeholders, especially youth. It refers to countries having a monitoring, evaluation and learning framework (similar to the suggestion in our joint statement that MRE be linked directly to improvement planning & resource allocations).

The guidance document suggests that the five global initiatives identified in the summit (environment, gender, countries in emergencies, digital learning and the foundational learning of reading & writing) be included and leveraged but does not refer directly to the five “action tracks” of the Pre-Summit (Inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools, learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development, teachers, teaching and the teaching profession, digital learning and transformation and financing of education).

The [educators joint statement](#) suggests a lot more specific steps in any reform process such as a commission of inquiry, external reviews and ongoing stakeholder and educator consultative committees to monitor implementation of the transformational, incremental, systems-focused plan. The educator suggestion that there are three significant challenges or processes (rebuilding after Covid, renewing commitments to the UN 2030 goals and transforming school & other systems provides more realistic and detailed descriptions of the challenges that need to be overcome (which are glossed over in the guidance document).

Report from the UN Special Advisor for the Summit

A [report on the TES](#) has been prepared by the Special Advisor to the Summit named by the UN Secretary General. It provides a detailed description of the TES activities and outputs. It calls on UN Member States to address the “triple crisis” of reimagining and transformation of education systems to make them “fit for purpose”, recovering from the “learning losses” of the pandemic and a “surge in the domestic commitment and global solidarity”. It notes that 65 Heads of State attended the Summit, that 133 countries submitted written national commitments, five global initiatives on education in emergencies, the learning crisis, greening education, advancing gender equity and public digital transformation. (The pre-summit Action racks are mentioned but briefly). An “international financing facility” and a youth-led global movement/initiative to transform education seen as the vehicles for the transformation. The report noted that “true impact of TES” will be determined by the effectiveness follow-up at national, regional, and global levels. UN Member States are requested to integrate their statements of commitment into existing socio-economic and education plans, policies, and frameworks. Reports on progress are planned for the 2023 SDG Summit and the 2024 Summit of the Future.

Our brief scan of this lengthy TES report from the perspective of the Joint Statement of global educator organizations notes that:

- The four pillars (learning to learn, to do, to be and to live together) first described in the Delors report and cited in the UN Sec-Gen vision statement were described as “key areas” for transformation
- The “snap-shot” of national commitments reported that 92% aimed to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, 68% focused on rethinking curriculum and pedagogy, 87% recognized the importance of inclusion, 90% highlighted some aspect of digital learning, 35% set goals to maintain or increase domestic funding of education and 40% recognized the importance of accountability and monitoring systems (the earlier analysis showing a lack of commitment to whole of government strategies was not mentioned)
- Most countries (94%) highlighted pre-service training and professional development of teachers but only 32% mentioned working conditions
- Fewer countries aimed to improve the working conditions and social status of teachers (32%), addressing teacher shortage (23%) and the professional needs of the invisible unappointed teacher workforce that often serves the poorest or most marginalized learners (2%)
- The five global initiatives will be led by various UN agencies, donors and NGOs. They include
 - education in crisis situations (UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, ECW, GPE)
 - Foundational Learning - (literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills (UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank, Foreign, Commonwealth, FCDO-UK & USAID)
 - Greening education – promoting ESD (UNESCO)
 - Public digital learning – gateway to free, open access learning resources (UNESCO, UNICEF)
 - Gender equality and women empowerment – (UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Humanitarian Forum, Plan International, Malala Fund, World Bank, UN Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI).
- Other initiatives were “put forward” to establish a Global Commission on the Teaching Profession from Education International and on Disability Inclusion (from several disability organizations)

TES Follow Up Approved by UN Sec-Gen & SDG 4 High Level Steering Committee

A TES Follow up Strategy was developed by the UN Sec-Gen and UNESCO and was approved at the [SDG4 High Level Steering Committee \(HLSC\)](#) at their [December 2022 meeting](#). Annex 4 of the TES Report provides a list of the HLSC decisions at that meeting which include:

- Pillar One Commitments to Action at the Country Level including
 - invites member states to translate their statements into action and provide resources
 - welcomes the TES Statement by Philanthropic Actors Supporting Education
 - calls on Member States to fully involve youth in next steps
 - invites Member States to hold inclusive national dialogues at all levels
- Pillar 2: Ensuring that education transformation is a key component of the Summit of the Future
 - calls on Member States to position education at the SDG Summit and Summit of the Future
- Pillar 3: Global movement for transforming education
 - invites key partners to come together to devise a strategy for the global movement
 - HLSC commits to championing political mobilization and to working with the Global Champions for Education Transformation and the Group of Friends for Education and Lifelong Learning.

- calls on all organizations and countries to support the Global Youth Initiative
- calls on Member States to strengthen their youth and student engagement
- calls on Member States to ensure systematic participation of CSOs and teachers in education policy processes, recognizing their central role
- Pillar 4 Education Financing -
 - encourages Member States to increase domestic funding to education and publish levels
 - calls on development partners to significantly increase their contributions through multilateral funds and financing mechanisms, especially for education in emergencies
- Pillar 5: TES Global Initiatives
 - calls on Member States and other stakeholders to endorse the Calls to Action and to support the TES Global Initiatives.
 - HLSC decides to add indicators for (i) greening education, (ii) digital transformation and (iii) youth and student engagement to the existing SDG4 benchmark indicator framework
 - requests the Global Initiative convenors to curate good practices on the SDG4-Transforming Education Knowledge Hub
- Conclusions: SDG 4 High-Level Steering Committee
 - adopts the proposed decisions with respect to the TES follow-up pillars.
 - calls on all Members States to set national targets for 2025 and 2030 on the SDG 4 benchmark indicators and the new indicators (greening education, digital education, and youth engagement).

(Note: These activities, especially Pillar 3 above may provide an opportunity to promote our Joint statement. The creation of new indicators and monitoring objectives for 2025 and 2030 may provide an opportunity for including health & well-being & Health & Life Skills Education)

The report concludes with this simple statement: “The Summit was an important milestone for education, but only time will tell if it becomes a historical turning point for learners across the world.

2. OECD Declaration and 2030 Education Program

The OECD [Declaration on Building Equitable Societies Through Education](#) was adopted on 8 December 2022. It has been endorsed by 38 OECD member countries and 3 other non-OECD members. The statement calls for:

- a whole-child/person and whole-of-society approach to reimagine education that is fit for the future.
- educational institutions to fulfil their role in support of the cognitive, social and emotional development of learners.
- effective strategies to promote gender equality and support vulnerable groups in education, including persons with disabilities
- Recognizing and addressing the changing roles of education professionals and develop policies that empower them

The OECD has launched a series of webinars on the contents of the Declaration which will be led by the [OECD Future of Education & Skills 2030 Initiative](#).

3. The [2023 UN SDG Summit](#)

The [SDG Summit](#) will be held in New York on 18-19 September 2023. The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), which guides the implementation of the SDGs, meets every year in July under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, bringing high-level representatives of governments and stakeholders together to review progress, examine obstacles, exchange best practices, and recommend new actions to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Countries agreed that every four years, the HLPF will meet under the auspices of the General Assembly at the level of Heads of State and Government. The outcome of the Summit will be a negotiated political declaration.

The revised "[Zero draft](#)" of the political declaration" (8 June 2023) notes that "The achievement of the SDGs is in peril. At the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, we are alarmed that only 12 per cent of the SDGs are on track and 30 per cent remain unchanged or below the 2015 baseline (6)". It also states that "We are concerned about the persistent impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. We must strengthen international cooperation for the poorest and most vulnerable countries to help them recover from the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthen pandemic preparedness, prevention and response (10)". The political declaration continues the UNESCO and UN tradition of treating health and well-being only in regard to the conditions for learning rather than as subjects or goals for student learning (37b).

In preparation for the SDG Summit a [special edition SDG Progress Report](#) and a draft [Global Sustainable Development Report](#) have been published. A call for [transformative actions](#) on the SDGs has been made by the UN Secretary General as a "rescue plan".

One of the several Leaders' Dialogues is on "Strengthening integrated policies and public institutions for achieving the SDGs" with questions posed about the capacities, resources and integrated policies needed to achieve such intersectoral coordination. [Side event proposals](#) were invited on 17 July with a deadline of 4 August.

4. [Dubai Cares/Education Commission/EDC Initiative & Report on Cross Sectoral Coordination](#)

Another post-TES initiative ([Rewiring Education](#)) is being led by the Education Commission/[Education Development Center](#) and [Dubai Cares](#). Their report, based on SDG Goal 17 (intersectoral coordination) "is a call to action to work across sectors, levels, and stakeholders to transform education together with a wider development transformation." It suggests that "This transformation can only happen if we make a deliberate and concerted effort to stop talking about education alone".

5. [The UNESCO Member State Survey/Consultation Monitoring National Education Policies](#)

The UNESCO [1974 consultation/survey](#) of member states which was originally focused on human rights was broadened in 2019 to include coverage of UN education goal targets. However, the [7th round in 2020](#) was unable to collect data from most countries. An extensive consultation on its revision (which was finally to include [Health & Well-Being](#)) led to a draft [global monitoring framework/survey format](#). (This September 2022 draft included some references to health under AIMS (p2) and Guiding Principles (p5.)) However, neither health nor social/emotional development (life skills) were included in the section

on curriculum and pedagogy (p. 8). But that curriculum section but did recommend sports education as part of the core curriculum.

A revised [second draft of the framework](#) was discussed by countries in meetings in [June](#) & [July](#) 2023. The few references to health in the section on Aims and Guiding Principles. were deleted. The statement on self-awareness (p5) was revised to include references to social & emotional learning. No changes to the curriculum section were made to include health or life skills (SEL) although the second draft did include health and well-being as one of the learning domains that “can” be integrated across the curricula and all levels of education (p8, S19). The statement on sports was expanded to include “physical education” in the section on curriculum (p9). The [June](#) and [July](#) working sessions discussed amendments to almost every paragraph in the document. The list of “recommended subjects” in the Curriculum section (pp11-12) includes physical education, history, science, math, geography, reading, languages the arts, media literacy and others. **Health & well-being is not on that list.** This [final text](#) has now been sent to UNESCO Member States for adoption by the [UNESCO General Conference](#) on 7-22 November 2023

An oddly worded statement is included was added in the section on Laws, Policies and Strategies (p10, s 10e) that suggests that “school system’s ability to promote physical and mental health and well-being be strengthened “in order to foster commitments to non-violence and peace. This can be achieved through the provision of school health services, school meals and education for health and well-being of good quality”. *(i.e. Health and well-being are not valued as an independent public good/goal for schools but only as part of peace education. Further, it is not clear if the word education refers to student learning in general or only as part of the information delivered through student health services.)*

As a consequence, education for Health & Well-being (often called [Health & Life Skills education](#) or Personal, Social & Health education) **is the only core subject missing from the list of recommended curricula** that includes subjects such as physical education, history, science, math, geography, reading, languages the arts, media literacy and more. Given that thousands of unnecessary deaths occurred during the Covid 19 pandemic due to vaccine ignorance, poor skills in understanding health information and a misconception that the health of others is not of concern since health is only a personal responsibility/resource.

Another statement was added to the section on Governance, Accountability and Partnerships (p11, s18) that suggests that countries to “support the provision of information and education” “that can help to ensure the health and well-being, physical and mental health of children, young people and families.” *This item is unclear but appears to be focused on child protection, student records and informing parents and others about problems, especially in any online systems.*

The section on teachers and education personnel (pp 14-16) emphasizes ongoing professional development through courses, online learning, professional networks and other means. The different categories of “education personnel”, or specialized educational roles such as counsellors, psychologists, nurses etc. are not described, nor is there any specific reference to educators employed/funded by other ministries, agencies, international development/aid or the voluntary sector, although there is a reference to “all stakeholders”.

The role of teacher education institutions in educating teachers is not discussed. Neither is teacher certification or accreditation of teacher education programs. The section Higher Education (p13) is focused on research and academic freedom.

There is an over-arching statement on the principles that should be followed to “release the full and transformative potential of education”. Paragraph 49 (p16) states that:

“Quality, inclusive, equitable, and relevant primary and secondary education are central to equip learners with the key knowledge, skills, and values, to develop as individuals. Education should promote children's well-being, joy, and health. This means that the relevance of learning and learner retention require as much attention as educational access in order to ensure that all learners complete schooling with the competencies required to lead active, healthy, sustainable and productive lives as autonomous and democratic adults.”

*It is a real shame that these principles and fine words (which include well-being and health several times) **are not reflected in the section on Curriculum**. Indeed, this paragraph is perhaps better placed at the beginning of the document as it defines the key features of high-quality school systems (inclusion and equity) and the full breadth of competencies needed for students to learn to be, to do, to live together and to learn how to learn over the course of their lives. These features and breadth of learning opportunities were first articulated by the UNESCO [Delors Commission](#) and recently re-affirmed in several statements including the [Vision Statement](#) presented by the UN Secretary General to the UN Transforming Education Summit, the UNESCO [Commission on the Futures of Education](#) and the practice-based [joint statement on rebuilding, renewing and transforming school and other systems](#) from the global educator organizations.*

Also, on a more positive note, the statement on Laws, Policies and Strategies (p7) stated that “Member States and all key stakeholders should proactively support education leaders, educational institutions, teachers and education personnel in mainstreaming the above guiding principles in education through a whole-institution and whole-of-society approach.” *(What is missing here, perhaps because it is a framework only for education systems, is the necessary commitment from First Ministers and other Ministries, to provide funding, resources, mandates within other ministries for their respective school-based and school-linked programs.)*

The [final text](#) of the framework as edited in the June & July meetings will now be submitted to the UNESCO General Conference in November. A part of the Recommendation states that Member States shall report to the UNESCO General Conference (i.e., UNESCO) “at such dates and in a manner determined by the GC on the actions taken by them in pursuance of this Recommendation. (In the past, this was done through a survey and provision of policy documents.)

This survey will be the primary device to collect data on country policies moving forward and should reflect balance across all goals of education and meeting the needs of the whole child noted in our joint statement. The health and social/emotional development of young people should not be ignored as a core component of a broad range of learning opportunities that should be provided to all students.

6) [UNESCO Global Education Monitoring 2024/25 Report](#) (Educational Leadership)

UNESCO is seeking to describe the diverse leadership roles of various educators and civil society organizations in the 2024 Global Education Monitoring report. The [Concept Note](#) for the report notes that potential significance of educational leadership “should not be limited to school leaders (administrators): it extends to individuals in positions elsewhere in the education system as well as outside of it. Rather, education change and the achievement of goals at the school, local, national and

global level requires the mobilization of various people in a range of positions. Collaboration within and between their organizations is also required. Moreover, the potential exercise of leadership is conditioned by the administrative, social, cultural and political context of education systems". Three traditional dimensions of school leadership (setting expectations, focusing on learning and fostering collaboration) are joined by another aspect; developing people. The group of educator organizations noted above has welcomed the shared leadership approach as well as the positioning of leadership development within the context of staff and workforce development. These organizations will be organizing a [series of webinars](#) on the roles of several types of educators that will feed into any consultations organized by UNESCO.