



Global Student Forum Policy Recommendations Transforming Education Summit

On the 24th of August 2022, student union delegations from more than 60 countries convened for the United Nations Transforming Education Summit Student Consultation on the Five Thematic Action Tracks hosted by the Global Student Forum. The event plenary was opened by TES Special Advisor to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Professor Leonardo Garnier, before delegates were divided into parallel sessions for regional consultations on the Action Tracks.

An outcome document was synthesized and subsequently went through another written consultation, involving all delegations present in the meeting before being adopted by the Global Student Forum Steering Committee as the formal recommendation of the international student movement towards the Transforming Education Summit Secretariat and as a reference point for student union advocacy on the national, regional and global level.

Nothing about us, without us!



Action Track 1: Inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools.

- Publicly funded, free quality education must be accessible to everyone regardless of disability, race, gender, sexual orientation or religious beliefs. Special consideration must be taken to eliminate barriers for marginalized students and learners with special educational needs.
- A rights-based approach is necessary to minimise discrimination and inequity in education, to equip and support vulnerable groups including political, or religious minorities, women, disabled persons, migrant or refugee communities, ethnic minorities, and indigenous and First Nations peoples.
- Affirmative action through quotas, targeted subsidies and benefits must be conducted to promote and widen access to educational pathways for minorities, marginalized communities and individuals from less privileged societal groups.
- Education systems need to be decolonised and indigenised to include local sensitivities, traditions, cultures and world views in order to connect more with local communities.
- Refugees need to be proactively enabled to participate in education and to continue their learning paths through fair recognition of prior qualifications and additional support services such as language and entry courses.
- Gender equality must be recognised as crucial in furthering inclusivity in education, requiring international organizations, states and education stakeholders to support the implementation of policies that speak to girls and young women in educational institutions. Schools should furthermore provide sanitary equipment for girls and women free of charge.
- All educational institutions should develop Gender Equality Strategies to be rapidly implemented in the form of creating gender parity margins, as well as zero-tolerance sexual harassment and gender-based violence policies with effective accountability procedures in place.
- Educational institutions must ensure systemic transformation by creating policies that speak specifically to the LGBTQIA+ community, and implement justice and safe spaces for those suffering from discrimination by other individuals within the education community, may it be other students or teaching staff.
- More attention must be paid to the psychological well being of students and teachers. Regular dissemination of information on the importance of mental well being and psychological health should be prioritized via different means such as social media, one-on-one conversations, and school counseling programs
- .The quantity, quality and accessibility of mental health counseling services needs to be strengthened, enabling more students facing difficulties to seek professional help, combating the persisting stigma associated with mental health issues.

- The meaningful involvement of students in educational policy and governance within schools should be recognised as an imperative for furthering educational quality, institutional democracy and civic participation. Student participation can only be regarded as meaningful if it creates a tangible impact on the outcomes of decision making processes in educational institutions.
- A collegial approach to education must take the concerns and aspirations of all stakeholders into account, and facilitate access to relevant spaces for legitimate representation from every group within the educational community.
- More responsive models of educational governance and targeted support systems that accommodate diverse student participation are needed to foster a quality culture of representation and meaningful engagement.
- Educational institutions and relevant public authorities need to put in place ethics committees and ethics guidelines to monitor inclusion and non-discrimination as well as considerations pertaining to sustainability and environmental impact of educational institutions.
- Increased investments need to be made to create student centered learning environments in educational institutions that cater for disabled students through inclusive education and barrier free classrooms.
- Teaching staff needs to be trained to handle security issues and classroom emergencies.
- School canteens and cafeterias should provide free, healthy and locally sourced food for their students.
- The freedom of discussion for students to voice controversial or unpopular opinions, and to express opinions about their educational institution or system in which they function must be guaranteed.

Action Track 2: Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development

- Schools and universities should uphold local, national, regional, and global sustainability in teaching, research and all their operations in order to fulfill their obligation towards creating more sustainable societies.
- Education for sustainable development is a central aspect of quality education and students as well as teachers must be equipped to address the climate crisis and shape democratic, inclusive, and socially sustainable societies.

The Global Student Forum (GSF) is the umbrella organisation of the international student movement and was founded in 2020 by the All-Africa Students Union (AASU), Commonwealth Students' Association (CSA), European Students Union (ESU), Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) and the Latin-American and Caribbean Continental Student Organisation (OCLAE). The GSF represents the interest of 202 member unions and student organisations from 122 countries and territories towards the decision making bodies of the international community.

- Students should not only achieve climate literacy once they complete their education, they should also be supported to carry out sustainability initiatives throughout their educational journey.
- The sustainable involvement of stakeholders in actions targeting climate change, and the implementation of quality climate education as a crosscutting priority throughout higher education, need to be ensured to combat the climate crisis.
- Educational institutions have a responsibility to promote investments aimed at reducing the ecological footprint, for instance by incentivising the usage of durable and/or biodegradable materials, promoting a circular economy approach and studying ways of self-producing energy through renewable resources.
- All educational institutions should make concrete action plans for reducing their greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero, with a goal of climate neutrality by 2030 in developed countries and by 2040 in developing countries.
- Educational institutions managing assets in funds must ensure that these funds are fossil-fuel free and live up to the UN Principles for Responsible Investment and respect human rights. Sustainability should be a decisive factor in ethical guidelines and procurement deals within educational institutions and they shall not make deals with oil, gas and coal companies that involve financing of petroleum and coal research, clearly incompatible with the commitments to reach the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Education systems should be created in line with the needs of communities and means of a country to solve long term development problems and other challenges.
- Partnerships between educational institutions, social movements, non-governmental organizations and the private sector should be fostered to better meet the needs of educational systems.
- Active global citizenship education should be strengthened throughout all levels and sectors of education to create responsible citizens that are equipped with the knowledge, skills and attitude necessary to shape democratic and inclusive societies.
- Lifelong learning should be recognized as a fundamental value within the educational community, allowing learners of all ages to access and complete educational pathways.

Action Track 3: Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession

- The status and attractiveness of the teaching profession should be enhanced through granting higher salaries and better working conditions to teachers and education workers alongside the adoption of public policies that increase the overall attractiveness of the profession.
- Democratic, independent and representative teacher unions need to be strengthened and supported. In the spirit of a collegial approach to education, their voices need to be heard throughout all levels of educational policy making and governance.
- Background checks on educators should be implemented before entering the professional pathway to as much as possible eliminate potential perpetrators of violence in learning spaces, with special focus on gender based violence and sexual harassment.
- High quality training and continuous professional development opportunities need to be made available for teachers and education workers.
- In light of the ongoing digital transformation of teaching and learning, digital literacy training for teachers and education workers should be made available to strengthen education quality.
- Teachers and education workers should furthermore be trained to teach in multicultural classrooms and support students with special educational needs.
- Student centered learning and interactive methods of teaching should be prioritized in teacher education.
- Teachers' mental health and well being should be prioritized and counseling services made available for those educators who are in need of mental health support.

Action Track 4: Digital learning and transformation

- The digital transformation of teaching and learning needs to partner with the development and implementation of teacher training programs and interactive learning strategies that engage students, while making it easier for students to use various educational softwares and adapt to the digital learning environment.
- Flipped classroom style approaches, appropriate funding for digital learning tools, public and democratic governance, open platforms and control of the presence of private providers should be prioritized.

- Asynchronous and blended learning systems consisting of both physical and online lectures need to ensure that information is clearly transmitted and interactive sessions developed, thereby encouraging students to take an active part in the learning process.
- Digital learning tools and mobile internet devices to ensure connectivity should be freely provided to students to enable the development of technological skills and knowledge necessary to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, both in the immediate coping phase and in the period of economic recovery.
- Large scale investment needs to be made by governments to ensure country wide connectivity that encompasses remote areas and provides free access to the internet for marginalized communities and learners at large.
- Existing digital learning environments and online training systems need to be redesigned and improved to cover more advanced technology, contributing to skills learning and the professional development of digital users.
- Student data needs to be protected and banned from being commercially used by HEIs and educational authorities. Privacy invasive software tools for distance education need to be prohibited.
- Digital learning tools and learning resources such as e-books, articles, online courses and other learning materials should be available to learners free of charge.
- Digital learning environments should be student friendly and designed as barrier free spaces that encompass as much as possible the needs of learners with disabilities.

Action Track 5: Financing of education

- Publicly funded, free quality education for all needs to be accessible to learners throughout all levels and sectors of education.
- Long-term economic planning with meaningful and sustainable public investments in education in accordance with the *2021 Paris Declaration* - which urged all governments to fulfill without delay the commitments that states agreed upon at the 2021 World Education Forum, the 2015 Incheon Conference, and the 2018/2020 Global Education Meetings, - needs to be ensured.

- States need to allocate at least 4-6% of GDP and/or at least 15-20% of total public expenditure to education, and devote an adequate share of national stimulus packages to education, particularly towards targeted support for marginalized learners', school (re-)enrolment, learning recovery, and socio-emotional well-being, as well as skills development for employment.
- States should increase the volume, predictability, and effectiveness of international aid to education by meeting the benchmark of 0.7% of donor gross national income for official development assistance (ODA) to developing countries.
- An increased share of ODA to education as a percentage of total ODA is needed, to ensure that international aid to education is aligned with national education plans and consistent with aid effectiveness principles.
- Sufficient public funding should guarantee stability and sustainability in the development of general education and HE, encouraging state decision-making to be based on wider goals, not solely on short-sighted financial benefits, and allow the participation and completion of education by students from a diverse range of socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Mindful of steadily growing commodification and privatization, the management of private sector funding should be carried out transparently by democratic bodies, either on an institutional or governmental level, or by a publicly mandated, accountable and independent body, involving the main stakeholder groups of the educational community.
- Profit making by private education providers should be regulated by governments, ensuring that the education sector does not transform into yet another line of business for multinational corporations and financial institutions.
- Student and teacher unions need to be involved in the decision-making process for education funding at local, national, regional, and global levels, to ensure participation, transparency and accountability in budgets and in any decision-making process of educational institutions, paying special attention to externally funded projects to avoid conflicts of interest and corporate influence on research outcomes especially in the field of higher education.
- Specific funding programmes supporting basic needs infrastructure, particularly around sanitation and hygiene, in eco-sustainable and digitally connected buildings should be prioritized.

- Students' mental health needs should be addressed through specific funding tools, providing concrete, accessible services on well-being.
- Psychosocial interventions by educators and counselors on site and through online programs that can prevent depression, aggressive behaviors and substance abuse among students should be available and adequately financed.
- Stable contracts and adequate salaries need to be provided to researchers, teachers and staff to ensure the dignity and attractiveness of the profession, and to cater for the social recognition of education workers based on healthy labor conditions and fair wages relevant to the local, national, regional and global contexts.
- Public and private investments must be effective and always subject to a process of public review, social balance sheet, transparency and accountability; agents of government ministries and international organizations must always be allowed to investigate, especially in the case of private or jointly-owned foundations, the final purposes of the investments; safeguarding the independence of funding must protect education as an area of freedom against possible retaliation by political coercion and, at the same time, serve as a protection for public opinion against speculation and private interests.
- Considering the general post-COVID-19 macro-economic framework, austerity policies need to be stopped and replaced with ambitious targets for tax reforms, using progressive taxation, especially on wealth and corporations, to ensure and fund major public investments in education.