**SDG 4 Quality Education**

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**Introduction**

Good morning, everybody. Good afternoon or good evening no matter where you are and this is a lecture of the series that we are producing for the introductory lectures for youth engagement on 2030 Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals.

**Speaker**

Today's we will be addressing the SDG 4 and the speaker with me is Mr. James Bridge Secretary General of the UK National commission for UNESCO

and myself is Lichia Yiu, representing Center for Social Economic Development.

And let me say a few words about James, as I mentioned already he's the Secretary General of UK commission for UNESCO for many years already and he has worked at the Royal College of Nursing, Age Concern, Law Societies and Save the Children International as well as member of the European Parliament and European Commission.

**UNESCO**

Before we get started let me say a few words about UK National Commission for UNESCO. UNESCO is the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization, it was founded in 1945 to help create the conditions for a more peaceful world following the WWII. UNESCO Works to build the defenses of peace in the minds of women and men this is a very important and significant unique mission

and that means building understanding between people organizations and countries in the fields of Education, Science, Culture and Communication.

It is our great pleasure and great honor to have Mr. Bridge to be with us for today's lecture, the lecture as I mentioned already is SDG 4 Quality Education for all. And I think this is a very important difference, progress made since the early days when we talk about education for all here the emphasis in its own quality and I think if there's a moment of opportunity, we're also trying to say what do quality means.

**Lecture Overview**

So I will give the floor to to James now to lead us through today's lecture and it will be taking the form of a interview and these are the key questions that will be addressed during this lecture.

It's a brief description of SDG 4 and why it's important what does it even tell and what are discuss the challenges and the progress made and also suggestion for action for the young people.

**Q1**

So without further elaboration I will pose my first question to James. **What is SDG 4 and why does it matter for achieving this particular goal and as also the agenda 2030 as a whole?**

**SDG 4**

Well thank you it's really wonderful to be here it's my privilege and to be

here as well with the students, teachers, lecturers, young people and it's the young people and all of us, all generations who are going to make a difference.

And you and I here aren't we because we've had Quality Education which is really great way of showing the example around why SDG 4 is important.

So SDG as you know and people you know use these abbreviations it's Sustainable Development Goal 4 which in shorthand is Quality Education and the full version is ensuring inclusive and equitable quality Education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. Because we need to learn throughout all of our lives and we've said haven't we that a big focus in this is going to be quality as well, the quality of education and also the quality of teachers this is really essential in all of this.

Now why is SDG 4 so important in achieving Agenda 2030 that is the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and a huge difference they're going to make to making the world a better place if they're achieved.

Well, education is a **core foundation** for achieving the other Sustainable Development Goals, huge issues around girls’ education, women's education and getting equality of education for people who've had challenges in their lives around wealth challenges, around poverty challenges, around disability and the multiple other things that people face in their lives. It can be as simply having electricity in your primary school which is one of the things that's looked at in this remarkable way of working to get progress agreed by the countries throughout the world and respecting everyone's views.

**The Global Education 2030 Agenda**

So SDG 4 it’s Quality Education and this links then to what's UNESCO’s role in this, why is the U.N body that's there to help develop peace involved in this.

Well it's there as a key coordinator with other partners and this then fits into its remit as the lead and coordinator for the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through the 17 Goals that I mentioned.

And education as I've said is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

And there's an Education 2030 Framework for Action which I encourage people to look up it's all available online and there are references especially starting at the UN SDG site and this provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious SDG for education target and the commitments within it that we're going to come on to in our talk and conversation.

**Q2**

well that's a great start in opening and I think I want to underline the importance of promoting lifelong learning especially in light of the employability of the younger people as well as anticipating the change of the world of work brought along by digitization. So in this context **what does SDG 4 actually spelled out the targets and indicators so that we can measure progress?**

Yes well the idea as well of the targets and indicators is that they are they need to be dynamic don't they because when they were thought of they didn't know that Covid- 19 was coming and all the impacts it has, but we always know that unpredictable things will happen and that is part of what I hope that they cover and I think the chair you are point around lifelong learning.

From cradle all the way through the life course is just so important and that means again that we're all in this together be it people, communities, nations, regions of the world and the UN multilateral bodies which can place such a key role coordinating this. And also with partners organizations, private enterprise as well that's been involved in all this and cooperatives for example.

**SDG 4 “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”**

So here are those targets and indicators and as you can see you have to measure what counts not just what's easy measuring, what counts is essential and that could be quite complicated things so that's where the experts and Educators around the world in the countries have come up with the targets and indicators.

So there are seven outcome orientated targets and again you can get all the detail on this on the UN SDG site that I encourage you to go to and there is the UNESCO site as well plus of terrific partners as well of the education bodies and the education campaign that I'll come to at the end.

Here we go 4.1 under SDG 4 free premium secondary education; 4.2 equal access to quality pre-primary education; 4.3 affordable technical, vocational and higher education and again the technical and vocational education mustn't be underestimated in its extraordinary importance; 4.4 an increased number of people with relevant skills for financial success so that people can enable their families to learn so that they have the means to continue their education; 4.5 elimination of all discrimination in education you heard me speak about that earlier this could be based on gender, it could be based on race, it could be based on disability and multiple other areas of discrimination that we're all working together to overcome to make a better world.

Universal literary and numeracy that's 4.6 and lastly of these education for sustainable development and global citizenship. Again so important for us within the spirit of UNESCO to be working together as people and countries and when we think of things like Sustainable Development we've had the cop 27 conference around climate change and we've had the cop 15 it's just happened in Montreal Canada where there's been the agreement around biodiversity so as you can see this whole thing is linked as part of a world community and family joined up through these UN bodies and action on the ground.

So remembering the big theme here this goal that binds this that is ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning and opportunities for all.

There have to be the means of well how do you achieve the targets and the means of achieving them are, building and upgrading inclusive and safe schools expanding higher education scholarships for developing countries. And here's a big one increasing the supply of qualified teachers in developing countries and again this brings us back doesn't it to the theme of quality education and quality of teaching and teachers and you can see here the reference below to the UN site that we mentioned specific targets and indicators are at <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4> so you can go and look at that in your in your own time and discuss it together.

**Q3**

Yeah that's a very broad things of targets to achieve and I could already envision some of the very serious challenges especially if we attack for everybody leaving no one behind to this particular objective.

So **how much progress have been we've been able to make since 2016** and especially in light of the current challenges or the or the challenges we have been facing in terms of Covid-19 as well as the war in Ukraine.

Yes and well I'll say some of the good things and then some of the more challenging things and we all know that that's always the case in life but the very fact that the world's got together to make these things happen. It's really important to have that optimism backed up though by ideas and action and crucially funding as well.

And as you were saying not only is there Covid-19 but there is there are 17 wars unfortunately around the world at the moment and as you say Ukraine and in other nations sadly and regions throughout the world.

So we should be optimistic there really has been great progress because let's not forget that the world's population has grown to over 8 billion people according to the United Nations. So what that means is that there has been progress in education whilst the population has been increasing I think these are correct that's grounds for great optimism in that sense. But there is so much more to be done and as you've said the targets are quite wide so therefore you have to really dig down to the detail and literally be working with the children, and the teachers and the communities in each of the countries and measuring what counts not just what's simple to measure.

Now one of the things and an example of the kind of targets measured is enrollment in primary education in developing countries has now reached 91% this is certainly grounds for optimism.

Now I'm going to come to some of the more challenging things. Unfortunately, no SDG 4 education targets have been fully met. Now the thing is though the targets are there to stretch us to give something to work towards and what's happened is that the communities, the countries have also prioritized they've looked at this said look what can we do, we have definitely made progress but it really isn't great that they haven't actually been met. And yes we have until 2030 but that's only roughly seven years away as things stand so much more needs to be done; it needs to be accelerated there; needs to be more commitment and there needs to be more just as we're all doing here sharing of the information and determination to make it work

**Q4**

Well yeah I think you have pointed out really the last mile question the poorest the remotest the weakest probably will be the most difficult to reach. As you as you already pointed out optimistically we have made a global commitment to leave no one behind through this 2030 Agenda and that also posed a great sort of opportunity for Innovation for us all. And so in this context maybe you could tell us a little bit more in detail **what are the challenges confronting us that we need to overcome in order to achieve SDG 4?**

Thank you I think your point around leave no one behind is so powerful and it's really inspiring and it's totally within the vision of the UN bodies and what the UN is trying to achieve. So in that context of **leaving no one behind**, it also makes me think of the United Nations and in this case UNESCO’s role of being a convening body that's what we're doing, the SDGs is convening people actually standard setting again the goals are linked to this so this fits with UNESCO. Also being a laboratory of ideas and clearly new ideas are needed and also I think crucially being a global network and again we are in a globe there's a global network of educators and of countries and that's what the multilateral bodies try and help achieve UNESCO as this standard set a UNICEF as a delivery body on the ground along the other UN bodies. But I'm setting out this this positive element of the framework we have and as you said leave no one behind to now move to some of the challenges.

So while there has been progress as you heard me say it's been insufficient and this was even before Covid-19. Progress according to UNESCO and UNICEF in their five-year review of SDG 4 in the Asia Pacific has shown that progress has been uneven this will ought to be to do with levels of wealth but it can also be to do with the government's commitment in those countries to education and also though there are good stories where countries have actually been able to really accelerate who may have not had as much wealth but they have been able to prioritize education which is starting to transform but we have to recognize that there's this varying rate of progress. I think as well we talked about looking into the detail and the chair you spoke about quite rightly, reaching out to the hardest to reach groups those communities they may not have electricity in their primary school. For example they may not have access to Internet even though there's so much innovation in the poorest areas using mobile connections and communities working together with shared a shared system but these subgroups targets have been met but for so many the promise of inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning is not there and you need to ask these people what's happening and measure what's happening. So as you heard me say before acceleration is needed there need to be universal access to pre-primary or secondary education and the provision of high quality is unfortunately high quality education is not yet on track to be met for the majority by 2030. So a new and rig invigorated approach is needed.

We can also see that the shift towards online education actually creates so many opportunities but of course only for those who have access to it. Now the online education can be used though to help some of those educators and others to then reach out to the communities who don't have online access we must remember this opportunity. And there is flexible learning and this is the learning from the great tragedy of Covid-19 but there are some things from that which are allowing us to do things in a new way which I think can be part of the addressing what's required by the urgency and the acceleration to meet SDG 4 by 2030.

So as part of that the digital divide has to be addressed the fact that so many don't have it when we're talking about some people unfortunately not having access to electricity that's their priority. But again you can be innovative and you can find ways of leapfrogging the situation to providing information and education. And these inequalities need to be addressed through alternative and practical modes of learning teaching and training and again I have a reference here to this five-year progress review in the slide on the UNESCO website.

Yeah I'm just going to come to some key facts as well because Lichia you said around the challenges well here are some, 70 of countries allocate less than four percent of their GDP to education. It's pretty clear what needs to be done and if they can reach these targets reach these goals it will make a difference. We understand that in many cases that's to do with addressing poverty but actually if we believe and those countries have signed up to this that education is at the heart of what will make a difference especially women, girls education and as we've heard the pre-primary primary secondary education that is what will make the difference in the medium and long term.

we can see under the challenges, 771 million young people and adults lack basic literacy skills that simply shouldn't be the case in the 21st century.

69 million teachers must be recruited to achieve universal primary and secondary education by 2030. We know that there are issues around gender equality and there needs to be more and better support for women teachers and to support them as they progress through their careers and partly thanks to Covid, 244 million children and Youth are out of school globally these are very serious concerns.

So on the positive, here are some recommendations to help address this, again I refer you back to the report from which this comes.

1 build education systems that embrace relevance and flexibility and have the equity we spoke about and learning at their core; 2 to remove the barriers that hinder equity inclusion and quality and education so often it's these barriers are actually things that are not too expensive to fix and these are the ones around gender, around poverty, around disability, around that can be racism as well amongst other inequalities; 3 ensuring adequate and equitable supply of motivated supported, qualified resourced and empowered teachers and that can include supporting the community for what teachers bring and celebrating what teachers can do to build the quality of teachers and teaching.

4 to increase and ensure that equitable supply of suitable infrastructure physical and digital resources from basic necessities to digital technologies; 5 strengthen monitoring and the use of data on the levels of learning and the conditions for learning that's that thing where we said about measure, what's count what counts don't just measure what's easy we need to do what really makes a difference and there are more and more ways to do this and SDG 4 indicators does allow us to achieve that; 6 increase investment in education and ensure efficient and sustainable resource allocation as well as accountability and expenditures; and 7 strengthen and broaden partnership across all actors in education from parents to caregivers to international organizations and the private sector get everyone involved the whole community and this will start to make a difference

**Q5**

Well that's a very powerful set of recommendations made together by UNESCO and UNICEF and it's very thoughtful for provoking for us or to dig further and deeper in order to see what are the Innovation necessary to achieve or making education, relevant responsive and flexible and also reflecting the needs of the local context. So indeed we I could see that how far we have been progressed progress in terms of making education suitable and meaningful for all.

So this perhaps in this slide you could tell us **what in some examples in terms of implementing SDG 4** despite a lot of countries are underspending their National budget for the education purpose.

And of course the teacher as you rightfully pointed out a few times that is one of the key stumbling blocks for us all especially very poor working conditions and not really attractive as a career option.

Yes I mean it's there are the seven recommendations that digging into the area of teachers isn't it extraordinary where the people who are so key to these Goals are often unresourced and not celebrated and encouraged and developed in the way that they could be so this is a real opportunity and a real way to meet the goal of accelerating towards 2030 with a new spirit and vigor as has been agreed and as you say to leave no one behind.

So teachers need to be at the center of all education reforms they're delivering it on the ground, they're also of course involved in the strategy and advising the government too. This comes from the design phase and they must be adequately supported and resourced to carry out their expected roles and it's crucial that the teaching forces actively allocated and managed to ensure that the most disadvantaged learners are prioritized again that's the only way we will leave no one behind.

So pre Covid-19 significant teacher training reforms and including competency-based education with a stronger focus on skills building digital education and a more student-centered pedagogy were already needed to address the learning crisis and the changing nature of education.

In response to Covid-19, teachers will need additional support to provide adequate remediation and continuity of learning we heard about all the pupils now nearly 250 million have been affected by this.

They'll also need to be supported to play a greater counseling and Communications role in detecting mental health issues providing psychosocial support and communicating with learners and their parents about safety and risk mitigation protocols.

But also we talked didn't we about the opportunities that have come from Covid-19 of new and flexible approaches and for the communities that don't have digital access there often are teachers who have had it and then they can go out and bring that to those communities at the same time trying to address the digital divide and bringing the electricity and those internet learning opportunities where they can to those communities.

So driving global commitments to prioritize the resources that address the chronic under provision of qualified well-trained and well-resolved teachers in low and lower middle income countries paying attention to the diversity of the workforce is including women and people with disabilities these are great ways to unleash talent and make such a difference rapidly.

And also recognizing teacher trade unions as Global Partners in their recruitment the retention of teachers policy making and enhancing the status of the teaching profession will be a key building block. So it's vital to champion investment and support for teachers by mobilizing the G7 and the wider international community to back national governments in their recruitment and training of 1.8 million new teachers by 2026 as a minimum to progress the global education targets that have been endorsed by the group of seven. That's the wealthy countries but remember we've said all along it's about all the countries and what they want but this is a component that should help and overall and above all it's actually delivery on the ground for the people for the communities with the teachers and as part of that it's the need to develop a new clear strategy on a global teacher policy.

**Q6**

Wow this is a this is a very ambitious program sponsored by the G7 and I was just thinking at different levels the challenge will be great and it reminds me some of the experience that I heard in Brazil a couple years ago during President Lula's first term sort of a leadership and maybe there's some other good examples are available in terms of how to accelerate the teacher education. Maybe there's another time we can talk more about this. And so in view of the time we will jump into the next question which is really thinking about our audience the young people who will be hopefully leading the world once they become adults and taking on more responsibilities but **what can they do now in terms of the contributing or help to promote this SDG 4 Agenda?**

Well what's really great about this, there is a sense of the world working together but nothing happened without people on the ground so it's it is the young people throughout the countries of the world those who are able to reach out, those who do have the ability those who I hope are listening to this with their teachers and lecturers who can make a difference but they can do this knowing it's part of the world movement a world family, a world grouping of teachers and countries and people and multilaterals which I hope inspires to leave no one behind and meet the 2030 Goals.

So number one it's get active get active and with your place of learning and your community discuss this with your fellow students friends and family help them see and learn and share their ideas and what they think about how this can really make a difference. And it can really help your own life be better and different by being involved in this because of the relationships you make, the changes you can achieve in your own education and making a difference in your community country and even in the world.

There are also these campaigns that you can link towards so we've said around the multilateral bodies at UNESCO, UNICEF and others get involved in the global campaign for education and you can see a web link here and also there are great case study examples of, for example the “Send My Friend to School” education coalition and this is a really interesting coalition who want to achieve this of getting new people friends to school throughout the world.

You can join the “SDG 4 Youth Network” and again you can see the web link to that where you'll see the ideas of young people driving the leaders of the world future leaders and already becoming leaders now and as I've said to you during this talk with looking at UNESCO and the UN SDG websites at <https://www.unesco.org> as you can see here in the slide below.

Well that's a great set of recommendations

Oh well thank you Lucia I'll pop them back on so people can write them down.

Yes exactly and I like especially this one “Send My Friend to School” straightforward and very clear but also give the picture that we are living in one big planet if I may call it that way and one big village that we could make a difference in different forms. And if we look around we will see some young people or some older people need learning opportunities but that not able to access these opportunities in order to increase their chances in life.

And I think this is what this SDG 4 sort of like really sort of pointed out the fact that we're not only talking about formal education of 12 to 20 years of education but we talked about really continuous opportunities to learn so that we can move with the time, with the progress and continue to find a better place for ourselves for our families also for our communities.

And in that we hopefully that we can solve some of the larger questions that is triggering natural catastrophes, man-made catastrophes and conflict so in this context. I want to thank you James very much for being with us to talk about SDG 4 and also to put a very complex topic in very clear and straightforward languages thank you once again Mr. James Bridge the Secretary General for the UNESCO UK Commission.

Thankful to be here with the young people, the students, the teachers and yourself and thank you to CSENF for making this all possible and it's all about what we're able to do on the ground.

We're all in this together locally, nationally, and globally and with the UN bodies and the charities and others that are making a difference and I just hope that some of this will help achieve that. And we have grounds with hard work and linking up together to create change so I'm feeling optimistic and looking forward to the future on what the young people here will be able to achieve in the future.