

# 4. ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL



The United Nations developed 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): specific targets for 2030 which guide the world towards a better and more sustainable future (1). SDG 4 focuses on improving global education.



**258 MILLION**

children and youth were still out of school in 2018 (2)



**24%**

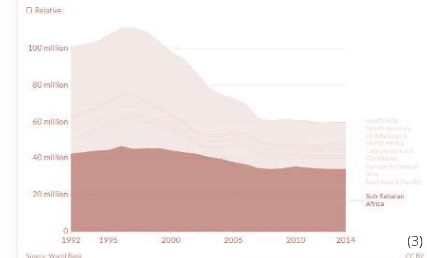
of sub-Saharan upper secondary schools have access to the internet (2)



**5.5 MILLION**

more girls than boys of primary school age were out of school in 2018 (2)

Out-of-school children of primary school age by world region



## TRENDS

- There is a decrease in the **out-of-school rate** in the past 20 years, mainly in Asia, however there is inertia present in Sub-Saharan Africa (4)
- 103 million children lack basic **literacy skills**, more than 60% of them are girls (5)
- **Gender inequality** in education is decreasing but is still high in countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, e.g. in Chad the rate is 0.78 which means for every 100 boys, 78 girls attend school (6)
- In West and Central Africa almost 10,000 schools were closed due to rising insecurity and increase in conflicts which made the **schools unsafe** for children and teachers (7)

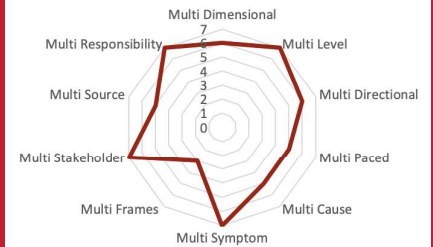
## WICKEDNESS

With a score of 58, Quality Education is a high multi-responsibility, multi-level, multi-symptom and multi-stakeholder wicked problem. Wicked problems are those that are complex and interconnected. They often lack clear definition and demand holistic solutions (8). Quality education is considered to be a wicked problem because it's characterized by a high level of structural, and generative complexity. Its impact manifests into every part of the society and affects economic, political, social, technological, legal and environmental aspects, making it both multi-level and multi-symptom. It also offers a high level of societal complexity because it affects various stakeholders and demands for every party involved to take responsibility. Moreover, access to education is an ambiguous goal, as going to school does not always lead to the desired standard of education.

Education is the foundation of today's society (2), which can be seen in its connection to other SDGs. The **wickedness of the issue manifests itself by its systemic nature and the nexus challenge: the SDGs are closely connected goals** (8).



## WICKEDNESS SCALE



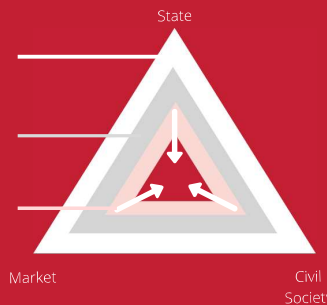
## SOCIETAL TRIANGULATION

SDG 4 is defined by three societal sectors: state, markets and civil society. They can intervene on different levels of responsibility, but looking at the societal complexity to address this problem, collective action (level 4) is needed, represented by the middle section of the triangle (8). The Education Commission (9) recommends that "governments undertake and encourage joint planning, investment and implementation across sectors to tackle the most prevalent learning barriers". This section focuses on the societal complexity of Sub-Saharan Africa in particular, as most change is needed in that region (2).

**Level 1 Failure :** With almost 60% of youth between 12 and 14 being out of school, Sub-Saharan Africa has one of the highest rates of education exclusion. This is caused by a lack of investments, efficiency in education from a governmental aspect, and a failure to deliver fair distribution of assets and to develop its knowledge capital (10, 11, 12).

**Level 2 Negative Externalities :** A huge number of out-of-school children in Sub-Saharan regions are child laborers, who work out of poverty. This negative externality is also influenced by missing subsidies of the government to ensure sufficient education for the children (13).

**Level 3 Positive externalities :** Many volunteering programs, private investments and civil society movements in Sub-Saharan Africa are taking up responsibilities beyond their own interest. For example, The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) influences governments to take action (14). However, in many settings civil society remains marginalized from decision making processes (15).



## PARTNERING CHALLENGES

Because of the wicked nature of the problem, partnerships at the fourth tier of the triangle are necessary to effectively address the challenge (8). While these cross-sector partnerships are a requisite for reaching SDG 4, they are characterized by sectoral problems (16). Examples of these partnering challenges at the different levels are:



Whereas a lot of partnerships are emerging (17), organizations need to first approach the problem at the first three levels before moving onto the fourth (8).

## CORPORATE SOLUTIONS

Firms across the world have entered into partnerships trying to reach SDG 4.



**HP** aims to improve quality learning and digital literacy for 100 million people by 2025. In a 'Profit non-Profit' Partnership with the UN, the firm introduced HP Learning Studios (18). These studios offer technological education for refugees and displaced populations across the world to enhance their employment opportunities.

- + Provides underprivileged people with relevant and future-oriented skills
- Does not address people without access to the studios or internet



**The Rio Tinto Group** supports the literacy development in 250,000 Australian families by investing in aboriginal education, scientific education and indigenous scholarships (19). The company collaborates with 80 indigenous owned businesses.

- + Advances literacy by providing resources to groups with high illiteracy rates
- Focuses on adults and omits children



The apparel company, **Sseko Designs** helps young women in Uganda to receive a college education. The company employs the young women between their high school and college education and tops up their salary with scholarships afterwards (20). Sseko Designs collaborates with the Fair Trade Federation in a 'Profit non-Profit' Partnership.

- + Supports female tertiary education in a developing country
- Does not reach girls who have to do household work

## FRONTRUNNER



**Pearson**

Quality education is in direct alignment with Pearson's missions, capabilities and commitments to improve future generations. Because of this Pearson is less likely to be a bystander. The higher level of education outside and within the firm, increases the firms overall market potential.

Pearson (21) sees SDG 4 as an 'underpinning' to achieve the 16 others. They work to reach the goal in several ways. Specifically targeting subgoals 4.2-4.7. The first way is through their non-profit called *Comfed*, which focuses on sending underprivileged African girls to school. Another way Pearson strives to reach SDG 4 is by their *AcceleratED Pathways* program, which aims to further educate their employees. They have started the 'Bug Club' which approaches the illiteracy problem by helping children to read. Further, they partner with "Save the Children" to create the 'Every Child Learning' to educate Syrian children.

**Strengths:** SDG's classified as wicked need multiple stakeholder involvement (8). Pearson does this by working with potential customers, non-profit organisations and people within the corporation to create lifelong learning.

By targeting the socially marginalised disadvantaged and various age groups, they are making more of the workforce able to combat the other SDGs (8). Which in turn, makes them focused on doing good.

**Weaknesses:** Most of their projects are focused on the US (21). As seen from the trend graph above, the majority of the education problems stem from destitute countries. Their goals of sponsoring their employees' learning makes them come across as if they are investing only into their own business, as opposed to benefit of the world (21).