

**Committee: Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**

**Issue: Facilitating Access to Higher Education**

**Student Officer: George Papagiannopoulos**

**Position: Chair**

---

## **INTRODUCTION**

Dear Delegates,

My name is George, and I will be serving as the main President of the ECOSOC committee for the 10<sup>th</sup> CGS Model United Nations Conference. My aim is to create an environment, in which you can all be active members of a prolific debate, and most of all, help you get the most out of the whole process. But first, you ought to get a grasp of the true value of education (especially the higher ranks of it), should you not have one already.

The subject which this study guide revolves around, is Facilitating Access to Higher Education. It is a truth universally acknowledged, that in today's world, a degree in at least one field is a prerequisite, if one wishes to work in a highly esteemed field. Yet, there is so much more to be attained via education, other than financial security.

A world void of education, would be a world dominated by superstitions and taboos. It would be a world where man would still live in caves, hunted by animals. A world where man would be unable to prosper.

Knowledge is the moving force behind our evolution, the reason why we no longer live in fear of ghosts, and the link that connects all cultures. Therefore it is safe to assume that open-mindedness, wisdom, and rationality, all share the same origin: education.

Keeping in mind that knowledge makes us "complete" by increasing our mental capacity, we proceed with the definition of key terms.

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### (Higher) Education<sup>1</sup>

Higher education is considered as any form of education provided by institutions beyond high schools, regardless of the form in which they are to be found. Education can be defined in many different ways. Specifically:

1. “The act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life.”
2. “The act or process of imparting or acquiring particular knowledge or skills, as for a profession.”
3. “A degree, level, or kind of schooling”

### Brain Drain<sup>2</sup>

The loss of highly capable personnel to another country or company. In other words, losing the ability to utilize a country’s potential due to the loss of citizens.

### Brain Gain<sup>3</sup>

The idea of migrating to a country in pursuit of a higher pay or better living conditions.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### UN Articles on Education

Facilitating access to higher education for citizens of LEDCs, as well as people in general regardless of gender or race, has been one of the core aims of the UN in the fields of education; second in importance to achieving universal primary education. Its importance can be seen through the missions and goals it has issued, which are divided in 10 different articles, each accompanied by certain sub-articles.

These Articles<sup>4</sup> are categorized as follows:

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/higher+education>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/brain+drain>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/brain+gain>

<sup>4</sup> Please note that the names of the articles are the exact same as those issued by the UN. The source is: <http://www.un-documents.net/wdhe21c.htm>

1. Mission to educate, train, and undertake research
2. Ethical role, autonomy, responsibility and anticipation factor
3. Equity of Access
4. Encouraging Participation and Promoting the Role of Women
5. Advancing Knowledge through research in science, the arts and humanities and the dissemination of its results
6. Long-term orientation based on relevance
7. Strengthening co-operation with the world of work and analyzing and anticipating the societal needs
8. Diversification for enhanced equity of opportunity
9. Innovative education approaches: critical thinking and creativity
10. Higher education personal and students as major actors

The second group of articles has the heading “From Vision to Action” and specializes in ways through which we can turn the 10 first articles into reality, into rules and regulations applicable in the real world, so that we can achieve our aims.

These articles range from article 11 to article 17<sup>5</sup>, and are the following:

1. Qualitative Evaluation<sup>6</sup>
2. The Potential and the Challenge of Technology
3. Strengthening Higher Education Management and Financing
4. Financing of Higher Education as a Public Service
5. Sharing Knowledge and know-how Across Borders and Continents
6. From “Brain-Drain” to “Brain-Gain<sup>7</sup>”
7. Partnership and Alliances

### **Priority Actions**

Finally, there is also an extended list of actions that should be taken for the realization of the idea of equality in education, especially in its higher stages. Named “Priority Actions”, these actions are basically equivalent to the clauses of a resolution, and are aimed at three

---

<sup>5</sup>These articles are also to be found in the above written internet address.

<sup>6</sup>The core concept is that high quality education as well as “trainees” are present, in a worldwide framework.

<sup>7</sup>Albeit the terms used by the UN are informal, the meaning is the exact suspected one.

different levels: National, Institutional, and International. It should be noted that the actions that are on an International level are to be initiated by UNESCO.

### Situation in LEDCs

These actions aim to help address lack of education, thereby helping LEDCs to develop. Development agencies have always attempted to help LEDCs grow economically. A great example of these attempts is Africa as a whole, where at long last 2/3 of the children



*Katawe Primary School. Located in Malawi, it has a total of 686 students enrolled.*

population have access at least to primary education. Unfortunately the quality of education these children receive is at times terrible; research has shown that roughly 80% of students in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade of Sokoto<sup>8</sup> School are in fact incapable of reading a single word. That renders 4/5 of the students invalid candidates for higher education institutions,

not to mention that the figure is in all probability

higher. In addition, the number of female students is inexplicably small compared to that of male ones, and the learning conditions are by all means abysmal. In accordance with reports, the average number of students per class is 50,

out of which not even half have textbooks, and the teacher being absent is not a rare sight. Due to these conditions, the children are not armed with the prerequisite knowledge to

enroll in an institution. Keeping that in mind, one could go as far as to say that our approach towards the problem is wrong, especially considering that in certain areas the number of illiteracy is rising. According to the Learning Barometer, 61 million children that are now in primary school age, will reach adolescence being unable to read, write and perform basic numerical acts. That is more-or-less one in every two children in Africa as a whole.



*A school found in Central Africa. According to "Girls Changing Africa" the situation this school is found in is considerably better than that of most schools.*

### The Economy and its Role

This lack of education has been heavily attributed to the weak economy that these countries suffer from. Keeping in mind how big part of the populous serves in the field of agriculture, those who consider education pointless are not few. This mindset, along with the financial

---

<sup>8</sup>Region of Savanna

incapacity that many families face, take a heavy toll on the children's academic pursuits. Basically, since the vast majority of children are to inherit their parents' occupation, to their legal guardians' eyes, even basic education is of no importance.

Summarizing, while honest attempts are being made so that everyone can have equal access to higher education institutions, lack of background knowledge remains a vital problem. Due to the fact that our actions have proven ineffective, we are unable to create citizens capable of entering into a university, and therefore the number of applicants remains low (and hence the productivity rate is also low). Yet it should be noted that Africa is indeed the continent faced with the worst scenario.

LEDCs in other continents have showcased a notable raise in the amount of higher educates and students in primary and secondary education facilities.

## **MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED**

### **UNESCO**

UNESCO (United Nations' Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) has always tried to combat issues such as sex and race inequality in LEDCs, and has as its core aim to ensure that everyone has access to at least the most basic form of education. Thus most actions undertaken by the UN are done so with UNESCO being in charge. As has been the case with past treaties, member countries are often expected to make their progress known to UNESCO, so that it can plan its actions accordingly.

### **DAAD**

DAAD is a German Academic Exchange Service, mostly known for providing people who they deem worthy with scholarships, giving them a chance to fulfill their education. Yet, its actions do not stop there; they have participated in a reasonable amount of conferences (especially on Eastern Africa) on the subject of Higher Education in LEDCs, and their latest action is the discussion of the DIES program, and how it should be implemented. Its support comes mainly via the supply of the different technical means required.

### **CAMES, AAU, ADEA, AFRIQAN and African universities**

These economic communities support financially the actions undertaken by the authorities in charge of implementing UNESCO's measures. Their help, while essential, is not in the form of clauses or ideas, but with the means to achieve the end.

### European Union

The European Union is mainly focused on the creation of new educational systems, where the student is going to obtain more than simple knowledge. Yet, their “contribution” is clearly indirect, since their actions are limited within Europe. But, that does not mean that what they come up with, is not applicable to the rest of the world.

### Schools for Africa

An organization supported mainly by UNICEF, the Nelson Mandela Foundation, and the Peter KrämerStiftung, Schools for Africa is responsible for raising the funds required so that education in Africa can be on par with that of the whole world. It is also trying to actively inform the world of the current situation, and how it can be altered. Inspired by Nelson Mandela, it has raised the stunning amount of over 200 million US dollars since its creation in 2005.

### UNICEF

The United Nations Children Fund is one of the main United Nations’ programmes, and its main aim is to aid children in LEDCs so that they can have equal opportunities in the future, just like children that grew up in more economically developed countries. Their aid comes in the form of financial support, and its actions are mainly of a humanitarian nature.

### TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Below is a timeline of key events regarding the subject of access to higher education, and certain actions that have rendered said entrance easier. Please keep in mind that these events are primarily focused on the USA timeline. Furthermore, the following list of events revolves purely around higher education, and not education in general.

1636	The foundation of the first Higher Education Institution (Harvard)
1816	Foundation of the University of Virginia (UVA)
1819	Increase diversity in access to higher education, via the means of the Dartmouth College Case

1828	The study of ancient languages such as Latin and Greek is being attempted by the Yale Report
1833	First female students accepted into the Oberlin College
1835	“People of colour” are being accepted as students by Oberlin College
1861	The Yale University awards the first PhD
1862	Education for people in the agricultural fields is made easier and more feasible through the Morrill Act
1863	The Emancipation Proclamation. Since slavery was abolished in the U.S. , more free people were now able to attend higher education institutions
1869	An increase in the array of fields available for study, thanks to the Elective Principle
1869	The Cornell-First American University is the first University to accept any and all applicants deemed worthy, regardless of their sex, race and economic/social status
1876	The John-Hopkins University specializes on research and graduate training
1890-1915	The fact that women deserve a place in higher education appears to be slowly integrated into the people’s mindset
1900	The standards regarding the PhD candidates are being set
1901	College entrance examination boards are being used
1920	Harvard University awards the first EdD
1926	The first SAT exam is sat by higher education applicants
1945	The Harvard Report provides students

	greater freedom in their studies, the old curriculum is disbanded, and cultures other than the western one receive a more notable amount of appreciation
1954	The Brown V Board Supreme Court decision. This results in the mandatory separation of students depending on race
1959	The foundation of the ACT program, with the aim of giving students a more general idea of what college is about, and whether or not they are ready to attend such an institution
1964	The Civil Rights Act. Efforts are being made so that everyone is given the same amount of rights
1965	The Higher Education Act, which controls the aid students are being given. It should be noted that every five years it needs to be re-authorised
1978	Bakke vs The University of California. In this incident, the Supreme Court ruled the admission of 16% of then Med School students unconstitutional
1980	The Bayh-Dole Act. Thanks to this act, Universities are allowed to keep the title as well as the rights of their inventions, thereby encouraging research

## UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

Over the past 20 years, the UN has noticed “an unprecedented demand for and a great diversification in higher education, as well as an increased awareness of its vital importance for sociocultural and economic development”<sup>9</sup> and has acknowledged the importance of

<sup>9</sup><http://www.un-documents.net/wdhe21c.htm>



Higher Education when it comes to building a future for younger generations. Therefore, it is only natural that the UN decided to invest in higher education. Whilst this was not a Millennium Development Goal (as facilitating access to primary education was), attempts have been made, so that higher education is not something unattainable for people residing in LEDCs.

The UN has stated that it has certain aims when it comes to everyone having equal access to education of any form, and has even issued a detailed guide<sup>10</sup> on how it is possible to achieve that.

While all the treaties signed apply to different areas of the globe and have been signed by different individuals, the propositions made are roughly the same. Thus far the conventions made are the:

- African States- RRC<sup>11</sup> (1981)
- Arab States- RRC (1978)
- Asia and the Pacific- RRC (1983)
- European Region- RRC (1979)
- European Regional Convention- Lisbon Recognition Convention
- Latin America and the Caribbean- RRC (1974)
- Mediterranean Region- IRRC<sup>12</sup> (1974)

The main themes of these conventions are as follows:

- **African States Convention**

A higher education degree has to be accepted by the responsible authorities regardless of the region it was acquired in, so as to successfully put an end to the division of African states. Furthermore, one of the core aims was to make entrance into Higher Education institutions as accessible as possible, along with helping those who have to travel back or to such institutions. These changes affect all countries that were present on the date of the convention. A re-evaluation of the testing methods was also in the list with the convention's "aims".

---

<sup>10</sup>The full guide can be found in the Further Reading Section in the end of the Study Guide

<sup>11</sup>Regional Recognition Convention

<sup>12</sup>Inter-Regional

- **Arab States Convention**

Its first aim was to harmonize the wide array of different diplomas given to one by different institutions, so that there can be a sense of unity both amongst member countries, and in how the different diplomas can be approved and accepted by other countries. It also placed a lot of focus on how admission to later ranks of education can be attained and agreed to keep in mind both the already existing level of education along with real life experience. Last but not least, it also encouraged the promotion of those deemed highly capable in order to avoid “brain drain”, and help the member states’ development.

- **Asia and the Pacific Convention:**

Having aims pretty similar to that of the Arab State convention, it has also added the region’s desire for easier entrance into higher education institutions, as well as a heavier emphasis into the field of research. Other than that, the aims were the exact same.

- **European Region:**

As with all the above mentioned conventions, the main aim was to ensure that everyone has access to any form of education that they desire to attain. Furthermore, it is a priority to diminish the prejudice with which many foreign applicants are treated (in many of the working fields as well), so that via the means of assessment, people will be given the positions they deserve.

- **Latin America Convention:**

According to this, foreign diplomas and experience will be recognized by the authorities, so as to increase production, reduce brain-drain, create an environment where co-operation between different fields is possible, and attain new knowledge via the means of research. Exchange of information and immediate -when possible- recognition of one’s studies, are also main points of this convention.

- **Mediterranean Convention:**

Deeper consideration and broader recognition where the first points to be addressed, as well as strongly urging the countries members of this convention to participate in other conventions on similar matters as well. The rest of the

convention revolves around this “Recommendation” and suggests that UNESCO is to be kept informed of the progress made on a regular basis, in addition to finding other means via which this recommendation can be achieved.

Alongside with these conventions, the “People’s Sustainability Treaty on Higher Education” which aims to transform the sector of higher education to one more applicable for today’s standards, appears to be of paramount importance. The transformation according to the above mentioned treaty, has certain characteristics.

More specifically:

- It is complex and mainly focused on the long run. The first step is analyzing the agenda, and recognizing as well as correcting our past errors. Such corrections will include changes in the curriculum and “reorientation of pedagogy” ; in other words a change in the aim of education.
- It is important that a clear plan is created, so that we can follow it all the way through to our goal. Organization is vital, so that we do not lose sight of what we wish to achieve, and so that education can turn into something that belongs in the world of today.
- Knowledge needs to be restructured into something new, so that new and more “holistic and realistic” challenges may arise for universities or other Higher Education Facilities. The basic idea is that co-creation, co-design and co-production are required.
- Deeper understanding and embracing of other cultures and ideas are both vital. Intercultural dialogue and interaction are major parts of today’s world, so it’s only sensible that it needs to be promoted. If such globalization is indeed achieved, then individuals born and raised in LEDCs are given a chance to affect the world in a positive manner.
- The way of life many people lead needs to undergo certain changes<sup>13</sup>.
- This so-called “evolution” in the field of education in general (not limited to higher education), requires a capable committee to be in charge of the changes. This committee is to consist of people from different backgrounds, and their introduction is to be based solely on their skills.
- Last but not least, innovation and new ideas need to be brought to the table, so that progress is possible.

---

<sup>13</sup>We will not go into detail since this change is concerned mainly with sustainable development

As it has been made obvious, the core concept of this treaty is to turn higher education into something desirable, so that more people will opt to enroll to such establishments.

Summarizing, while the above mentioned conventions wish to end discrimination in the enrollment of people into Higher Education, the sustainable development treaty desires to turn HE<sup>14</sup> into something that can provide knowledge and skills more applicable to the world we live in.

Finally, one must not forget the (arguably) most important one; UNESCO's declaration on higher education. A 17-article declaration, it provides guidelines and modifications about modern education of a higher nature.

Out of the 17 articles, for this subject we are mainly interested in articles 3, 4 and to a lesser degree 8. These articles are:

- Article 3: Equity of Access
- Article 4: Encouraging Participation and Promoting the Role of Women
- Article 8: Equity of Opportunity<sup>15</sup>

Each of these articles has its own points. These points are

- Equity of Access:
  - In accordance to the article 26.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, one attains entrance to a university or any other institution of that sort, solely based on his own abilities and efforts (according to the declaration the criteria are "merit, capacity, efforts, perseverance and devotion"). Notions such as religion, race, nationality, language and sex can't and will not deny them entrance. The same applies to social, economic or cultural status.
  - Enrollment is possible at any age, as long as they have completed their secondary education, since the foundation is formed during the secondary education phase. Lack of such a foundation, would make attending a university class redundant.
  - Due to the rapid increase of admissions, HE institutions are strongly urged to accept only those who have the above mentioned (3a) attributes, regardless of their financial or social status.

---

<sup>14</sup>Higher Education

<sup>15</sup>Referring to creating a career after one has finished their tuition

- Furthermore, people with disabilities or disadvantages (economic or social) should also be given equal chances of acceptance, since it is not unlikely that they will bring things to the table important for the development of the country they are stationed in.
- Enchasing Participation and Promoting the Role of Women:
  - It should be noted that while reasonable progress has been made, there are still certain socio-economic, as well as cultural barriers preventing us from completely realizing this aim.
  - It is of outmost importance that we do away with stereotypes degrading the female sex as a whole, especially those involving inabilities, so that women can be given a more active role in today's society.
  - Promotion of the gender studies is also necessary, since they can prove of great importance when it comes to the transformation of Higher Education into something more relevant to the society we inhabit
  - Efforts should and are being made to combat the barriers preventing women from realizing their fullest potential.

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

As with most matters, there two different ways of approaching an issue; we can either focus on the whole picture and try to combat the issue in a holistic manner, or try to do away with the reasons that have caused the issue to arise.

### **Giving an Incentive**

Basically, as long as teachers have a reason to teach, and students have a reason to learn, it is most likely that the results will be satisfactory. This can be achieved via the means of a yearly exam; in the end of the year, an examination will take place, where the best students are rewarded either with a certain amount of money, or a form of partial scholarship. On the other hand, the students who fail to get the appropriate results, are not given the option of proceeding to the next class. When it comes to teachers, those with a high percentage of failing students will be made redundant, while those with class of high level, will be given a raise in their salary. This could also apply to primary and secondary education, where the basics are being taught, so that the students have the prerequisite knowledge to proceed with their studies on a higher level.

### **Free Entrance to Primary Schools**

While not a new idea, people have displayed uncertainty when it comes to its implementation; this is mainly a result of the poor condition that most primary schools are found in. It has already been attempted once, but to no avail. Yet, many support that the outcome would be different, if the schools and institutions were given the (financial) support that they should have.

### **Institutes Provide for their Students**

Supposing that the correct foundations have been set, institutes such as Universities (or even “lower” schools, such as primary schools) could provide students with something along the lines as the important school supplies, or meals during the day. For many parents who live with an inexplicably low income, having one less mouth to feed is something rather intriguing, and it’s not unlikely that in hope of them having at least a decent meal, the kids will be sent to school.

### **Notable Research Being Made**

If higher education institutes conduct notable research, then it will be considerably easier to be given extra funding by scientific organisations. While of course major part of this founding should be spent so that the research can continue, part of it can also be spent so that people have easier access to these institutions; that can achieved via the means of a scholarship system.

## **FURTHER READING**

This section exists in case you require any more information in any of the above mentioned subjects. Specifically:

The UN treaty on Higher Education, and what it defines Higher Education as:

<http://www.un-documents.net/wdhe21c.htm>

The List with Conferences Mentioned in this Study Guide:

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/higher-education/conventions-and-recommendations/>

A .pdf file which perfectly describes the situation in Africa, as far as Education as a whole is concerned:

<http://ent.arp.harvard.edu/AfricaHigherEducation/Reports/BloomAndCanning.pdf>

The Home page of “Schools for Africa”, an organization that should serve as a template for the rest of the organizations trying to help countries with a less developed teaching system:

<http://www.schoolsforafrica.org/>

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/higher+education>

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/education?s=t>

<https://www3.nd.edu/~rbarger/www7/morrill.html>

<http://www.act.org/products/k-12-act-test/>

<http://www.tgslc.org/policy/hea.cfm>

<http://www.timetoast.com/timelines/history-of-education--98>

<http://www.un-documents.net/wdhe21c.htm>

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/higher-education/conventions-and-recommendations/>

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/brain+drain>

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/brain+gain>

<http://sustainabilitytreaties.org/draft-treaties/higher-education/>

[http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/wche/declaration\\_eng.htm](http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/wche/declaration_eng.htm)

<http://ent.arp.harvard.edu/AfricaHigherEducation/Reports/BloomAndCanning.pdf>

<http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2013/01/16-africa-learning-watkins>

<http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/pdf/Atlas-education-gender-equality1.pdf>

<http://www.usnews.com/news/college-of-tomorrow/articles/2014/12/17/op-ed-the-state-of-higher-education-in-the-middle-east>

[http://www.unesco.org/new/en/dakar/about-this-office/single-view/news/two new initiatives to promote quality assurance in african higher education#.VafTHfntlBc](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/dakar/about-this-office/single-view/news/two_new_initiatives_to_promote_quality_assurance_in_african_higher_education#.VafTHfntlBc)

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/index_en.htm)

<http://www.schoolsforafrica.org/>