



Equality Rights Alliance

Women's Voices for Gender Equality



National Plan on Gender Equality

Education and Training

Key Information

Recent OECD figures show a decline in Australia's status as a high achiever in education.

There are no current overarching national policies that focus on gender in education in Australia.

Early Childhood Education is of considerable concern to women, both those working and those not currently in the workforce. Quality accessible care can make the difference between women being able to return to work or not.

Women are more likely than men to participate in adult and community education. The 2011 national survey of Neighbourhood Houses and Centres (NH&Cs) indicates that women are the predominant users of NH&Cs, with those aged between the ages of 45-64, most highly represented.

17% of young Australians leave secondary school without basic educational skills which undermines their capacity to undertake further education or secure decent employment (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015).

In 2017, 86.6% of girls remained at school in the non-compulsory years compared with 80.1% of boys (ACARA, 2017), but educational gains made by girls at school do not translate into improved employment outcomes after they leave school (COAG, 2013).

73.2% of Year 12 boys were enrolled in at least one maths subject compared with 68.8% of girls (ACARA, 2016) limiting girls' ability to undertake further study in a wide range of areas.

At present the majority of undergraduate (58%) and postgraduate students (48.6%) are women (Department of Education and Training, 2016).

Public expenditure on education in Australia is already well below the OECD average of 11% and falling; spending on all non-tertiary education sectors has decreased from 73%-66% (OECD, 2018b).

University fees will increase by 1.8% each year starting in 2018, rising to a 7.5% increase by 2021. This translates to fee increases ranging from \$2,000 to \$3,600 for a four-year degree, and an increase in students' share of fees from 42% to 46%.

Higher Education Participation and Partnerships program (HEPP) funding, which supports outreach programs and support programs for students from low SES and CALD backgrounds, has been cut. While there is no gender-disaggregated data, given the majority of students are women, then the majority who are impacted by cuts to HEPP programs are also likely to be women.

Changes to the repayment threshold of HELP debts discriminate against female graduates who, in general are paid less than male graduates (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

Funding for vocational education and training in 2015/16 was 4.7% below its level in 2005-06, according to the Mitchell Institute (2017).

There is no recognition by the Federal Government of the need for funding for specific strategies to support women and girls in either many of the current male dominated trades or in those industries where there is a need for more highly skilled workers, such as aged care.

Background

“ The combination of talent and technology will determine how the Fourth Industrial Revolution can drive sustainable economic growth and other benefits to society. However, if half the world's talent – women – are denied full economic, political and social participation, these great opportunities will be missed. There is also a basic moral case for empowering women. Why should women not have equal access to health, education, earning power and political representation? ” (World Economic Forum, 2018)

Domestic and international context

Education in Australia encompasses a number of inter-related sectors: early childhood/preschool education (ECE), compulsory schooling (R-12), Tertiary Education (universities, vocational education & training), and adult and community education (ACE). This complexity is enhanced as education is also a shared responsibility between a variety of federal and state/territory ministers and departments, populated by a mix of public and private providers and operating under marketised and competitive funding models. In this paper, we separate the classification 'Tertiary Education' into 2 sections: universities (HE) & vocational education & training (VET).

Australia is perceived nationally and internationally as a high achiever in education, with adult literacy scores in Australia among the highest in the OECD (OECD, 2018a). However, recent OECD figures show a decline in education status for Australia (OECD, 2018b). This decline is accompanied by steadily deteriorating results for Australia in PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment). Given that the increase in numbers of girls finishing Year 12 and women enrolled in university study exceeds that of boys and men, little or no attention has been directed to gender issues in education across all sectors since early 2000's. However, for example, as advised by OECD (2018a) despite increasing overall attainment, 'socioeconomic status still has a big impact on learning, which in turn affects people's earnings and lifestyle'. The over-reliance on broad-based statistics with little if any attention to disaggregated data obscures both inequities and the many gender issues that are prevalent in education in contemporary Australia, in each and all sectors.

Although Australia was once a leader internationally in gendered education policy, there are no current overarching national policies that focus on gender in education in Australia. Policies have become selective, such as the current focus on STEM, without deeper consideration of longer-term implications. The lack of interest in education policies for women and girls impacts not only on policy *per se* but also impacts negatively on research, including research funding.

Gender equality in education relies on much more than parity of access. Public policy has the capacity to either perpetuate or eliminate disadvantage, discrimination and gender inequality, while schools, other learning environments and education systems usually mirror the inequities of the broader society. Education policy which focuses on outcomes for women is urgently needed if we are to meet the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. A gender lens on education and a focus on gender disaggregated data is required to highlight and address issues associated with intersectionality that confront girls and women in all their diversity. For example, the paucity of research & data available for education in relation to women and girls with disability continues to render them all but invisible. Efforts in support of gender equality and addressing disability discrimination must include specific, targeted actions to address both gender *and* disability-based discrimination across all education

sectors including links between education and decent work to redress gender bias in education, employment and the labour market (WWDA, n/d; 2015).

Research by Biddle et al (2016) illustrates the complexity of differences in educational expectations and outcomes for Indigenous males and females, with complexities amplified within the Indigenous population that exacerbates 'pre-existing tensions between gender and education'. The authors also note a lack of gender-focussed research in this area, concluding that 'closing [the] gap will be made easier when policy makers realise that differences exist between the educational outcomes of Indigenous men and women, and that these need to be catered for through targeted policy programs.'

Further, given the close connections between education and employment outcomes, gender centered research and policy is of increasing significance in a time of growing inequality, radically changing labour markets and increasing debate about the future of work. Equipping citizens with the knowledge, attitudes and skills which are essential not only for the present but for their futures will enhance transitions between education and work, and is seen as a critical priority by the OECD (2018a).

Australia has made significant public commitments to implementing gendered education policy. Australia is a signatory to the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which provide a framework for the world to address poverty through an approach of sustainability and inclusion (*Agenda 2030*). The entire *Agenda 2030* is applicable nationally in Australia, as well as globally.

SDG 4 aims to: '[e]nsure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (United Nations 2019). In the context of education policy, the relevant goals are SDG 4 (Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and, in the context of post school education and the links between education and work, SDG 8 (Decent Work). The *Agenda 2030* vision for education is elaborated in *Education 2030: Incheon Declaration & Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Education 2030)* (UNESCO, 2015). The Preamble of *Education 2030* states:

***Inclusion and equity** in and through education is the cornerstone of a transformation education agenda, and we therefore commit to addressing all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes. No education target should be considered met unless met by all. We therefore commit to making the necessary changes in education policies and focusing our efforts on the most disadvantaged, especially those with disabilities, to ensure that no-one is left behind.*

*We recognize the importance of **gender equality** in achieving the right to education for all. We are therefore committed to supporting gender-sensitive policies, planning and learning environments; mainstreaming gender issues in teacher training and curricula; and eliminating gender-based discrimination and violence in schools.*

We commit to promoting quality lifelong learning opportunities for all, in all settings and at all levels of education. This includes equitable and increased access to quality technical and vocational education and training and higher education and research, with due attention to quality assurance. In addition, the provision of flexible learning pathways, as well as the recognition, validation and accreditation of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through non-formal and informal education, is important.

We further commit to ensuring that all youth and adults, especially girls and women, achieve relevant and recognized functional literacy and numeracy proficiency levels and acquire life skills, and that they are provided with adult learning, education and training opportunities. We are also committed to strengthening science, technology and innovation. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) must be harnessed to strengthen education systems, knowledge dissemination, information access, quality and effective learning, and more effective service provision.

As confirmed in the 2018 global GEM Gender Review (UNESCO 2018), the *Education 2030 Framework for Action*:

explicitly recognizes gender equality as a guiding principle linked to the realisation of the right to education. It states clearly that girls and boys, women and men, must be equally empowered in and through education.

In the same way that SDG5 (“Achieve gender equality and empower all women & girls”) is recognised as a cross cutting SDG, it is acknowledged that “(e)ducation is central to the agenda, in particular SDG 4, which aims to ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (Department of Education, 2019a).

Following Agenda 2030 and the Incheon Declaration, UNESCO (the body charged with responsibility for SDG4) consulted on a forward looking strategy that focused on TVET¹ that has been formalised as *UNESCO Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) 2016-2021* (UNESCO 2016). Like Agenda 2030 and the Incheon Declaration, this Strategy focuses on “[p]romoting gender equity and gender equality, in its 3 Pillars of Priority Areas.”²

As a signatory to *Agenda 2030*, Australia is obliged to implement and action appropriate national policy frameworks with an overarching and cross cutting gender analysis, as it does through overseas development assistance (ODA) activities. Indeed, DFAT’s gender policies, frameworks, actions and outcomes provide a guiding example for what is urgently required in national domestic policy. As SDG4 is due for global review and report on progress under the auspices of UN’s High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2019, it is timely that Australia step up in relation to gender policies for education and training.

Early Childhood Education (ECE)

Early Childhood Education must be recognised as an integral part of the formal education sector, as it is the foundation upon which education is built. ECE builds the skills and confidence required for future learning and provides an opportunity for early support and intervention where needed. ECE, like the VET sector, has been subjected to marketisation and lack of regulation, resulting in variable access to and quality of pre-school education. It is important that every child, irrespective of their parents’ work circumstances receive access to at least two days (24 hours) of subsidised early learning a week.

The Mitchell Institute (2017) identifies the following challenges in the sector:

- The complexities of a mixed market
- Current funding mechanisms are not aligned to need and opportunity for impact
- Low wages and difficult working conditions
- Coordinating pre-service education and training programs

The Mitchell Institute report goes on to say that while the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Education (Department of Education, 2019b) has driven significant rises in preschool participation in the year before full time school, Australia still lags behind comparable OECD countries in the participation of younger children – particularly three-year olds. It also highlights the persistent correlation between socioeconomic status and early childhood outcomes in Australia.

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1 TVET (Technical and Vocational Education & Training) is the international acronym that corresponds to Australia’s abbreviated acronym - VET.
2 The other 2 of TVET 3 Pillars of Priority Areas that accompany gender are: Fostering youth employment & entrepreneurship and Facilitating transition to green economies and sustainable societies.

Early Childhood Education is of considerable concern to women, both those working and those not currently in the workforce, and quality accessible care can make the difference between women being able to return to work or not.

Australia's lack of investment in the development and ongoing professional support of the early childhood workforce, largely female, continues to be of considerable concern in terms of the quality of education programs delivered for children and the need to put the early childhood education workforce on par with primary school education in terms of pay and conditions.

School Education

One of the difficulties in assessing Australia's achievements in education is the lack of accurate, comprehensive disaggregated data across the entire field. While it is clear that Australian schools provide high quality education overall with an apparent retention rate in years 7-12 of 84.4%, there are persistent inequalities in the system. The most worrying figure is that 17% of young Australians leave secondary school without basic educational skills undermining their capacity to undertake further education or secure decent employment (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015). This figure is not disaggregated by gender or other relevant factors; however some inferences can be made using other data. The disparity between completion rates among non-Indigenous (86.0%) and Indigenous students (64.4%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017) seems likely to contribute to this figure.

Of further concern is the 2018 finding that, based on PISA data, more Australian students feel like outsiders at school than their OECD peers, highlighting the groups of concern as Australian 'students who are Indigenous, female, Australian-born, from low SES backgrounds and country areas' (OECD 2018c, Thompson, 2018; De Bortoli, 2018).

The 2018 Regional, Rural and Remote (RRR) review confirmed that 'achievements of RRR students have in the main lagged behind urban students for decades' (Halsey, 2018, p4). While the Government has accepted all 11 recommendations of this review, unfortunately this wide-ranging and significant report is gender blind. The cost of accessing education and training is higher for rural women and girls than their urban counterparts – distance, time, funds, transport costs, lack of educational and childcare facilities, and cultural expectations that rural women will make significant unpaid contributions to rural communities, families and family businesses pose significant barriers. Education and training must be at the forefront of any strategy to revitalise rural Australia, including a plan for educating young women in all their diversity. Such a plan also needs to link to communities, families, and local decision-making on transport, youth and disadvantage, along with access to communication and information technology services and infrastructure.

Hanushek & Woessmann (2015) noted that Australia is making good progress in achieving gender equity in enrolment (addressing SDGs 4 and 5). Girls are outperforming boys at school in terms of completion rates – in 2017 86.6% of girls remained at school in the non-compulsory years compared with 80.1% of boys (ACARA, 2017). Nevertheless, subject selection continues to be biased – 73.2% of Year 12 boys were enrolled in at least one maths subject compared with 68.8% of girls (ACARA, 2016) limiting their ability to undertake further study in a wide range of areas. Even more worrying is the finding that educational gains made by girls at school do not translate into improved employment outcomes after they leave school (COAG, 2013).

Persistent gender bias continues to shape assumptions about learning and career choices with a detrimental effect on young women, preventing them from realising their full potential. Some families continue to assume that investing in the education of daughters is less productive/ valuable than investing in the education of sons; given the gender pay gap, there is some pragmatic validity in this perspective (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Nor are schools and teachers free as yet from biases that direct girls away from the 'hard' sciences and IT, reinforced by lack of forward-looking gender-informed career counselling, with long-term implications.

Recent NAPLAN and PISA results indicate that socioeconomic status (SES) remains the principal cause of unequal student performance in basic literacy and numeracy which underlies the other aspects of inequality already mentioned. Unequal student performance is partly driven by disadvantage within the home or family, but is amplified by deficiencies in the school environment (Gonski, 2011). Schools that lack the resources to meet the educational needs of their students are handicapped in their efforts to provide high-quality schooling. Less privileged students, particularly those who come from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and Indigenous backgrounds, receive fewer educational advantages than their more privileged peers, to their detriment and that of the community as a whole (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015).

Only significant government intervention has the capacity to remove these inequalities from the whole education system, but this would require a major shift in policy and funding regimes. Public expenditure on education in Australia is already well below the OECD average of 11% and falling; spending on all non-tertiary education sectors has decreased from 73%-66% (OECD, 2018b). At the same time, the percentage of public money being spent on private schooling in Australia has continued to increase and is currently around 6% of the GDP, higher than in any other advanced economy. The overall impact is to shift the cost of education to the community and hamper Australia's ability to meet SDG 4 – quality, inclusive education for all.

Higher Education (HE)

Since 2016, successive cuts to higher education funding amounting to some \$2.9 billion have had a deleterious effect across the higher education sector that has disproportionately affected women students and staff.

University fees will increase by 1.8% each year starting in 2018, rising to a 7.5% increase by 2021. This translates to fee increases ranging from \$2,000 to \$3,600 for a four-year degree. The average student share of fees will increase from 42% to 46% (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a; Commonwealth of Australia, 2016b; Commonwealth of Australia, 2016c; Commonwealth of Australia, 2017). Taxpayer funds given to the private sector through tuition or student subsidies now accounts for 37% of all expenditure; globally, Australia ranks second in terms of private university funding (OECD, 2018b). The overall impact is that university education in Australia is becoming more expensive.

At the same time, Higher Education Participation and Partnerships program (HEPP) funding, which supports outreach programs and support programs for students from low SES and CALD backgrounds, has been cut. At present the majority of undergraduate (58%) and postgraduate students (48.6%) are women (Department of Education and Training, 2016). Once again, the lack of accurate, disaggregated data makes any analysis of these changes based on gender very difficult, but the implication is that if the majority of students are women, then the majority who benefit from HEPP programs are also likely to be women. Research also suggests that the majority of mature-age students are women and they are more likely to gain entrance to university through alternate pathways (Stone & O'Shea, 2012). Consequently, they may need more support than students entering directly from school. Cuts to HEPP funding are likely to reduce support services to disadvantaged students, including mature-age students, with adverse effects on retention and completion rates.

Changes to the repayment of HELP debts also discriminate against female graduates who, in general are paid less than male graduates (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). The repayment threshold has been lowered to \$42,000, with a 1% repayment rate and a maximum threshold of \$119,882 with a 10% repayment rate. Unlike normal income tax, the HELP loan repayments apply to a person's entire income. Graduates will not just begin repaying HELP loans sooner, but lower paid graduates will pay a higher proportion of their income. Students enrolling in enabling programs are now liable for a student contribution through HELP meaning that the overall cost of an undergraduate degree will increase for students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The impact of these cuts has fallen disproportionately on women, both university staff and students. The overall cuts to university funding are likely to lead to further increases in class sizes and in the casualisation of academic staff. Women are already concentrated in lower-paid and less secure positions, even in faculties where female students predominate. For staff entering the education sector now as academics or teachers, prolonged periods of casualization and insecure employment and the emphasis on acquiring research grants all have a biological impact in making them delay motherhood or forego the industry-supported maternity leave that was supposed to generate more family-friendly workplaces for all women and better outcomes for children.

Many junior academic staff also have ongoing HECS debts. Jericho (2017) argues that women graduates are more vulnerable to changes to the HELP program as they are more likely than men to be the second income earner in a family and are more likely to earn less than the median taxable income. He notes that Family Tax Benefit Part A begins to decrease at \$51,903, which will also have a negative impact on household budgets. It appears that some graduates earning \$51,000 will have less disposable income than someone earning \$32,000. Increases in the cost of university degrees may have the effect of deterring women students. Research undertaken in the UK indicates that female students are more debt averse than students and when they received financial support, they were more keenly aware of their responsibility for any help received (Kettley, Whitehead and Raffan, 2008). Some women may delay enrolling in the hope that university study will become more affordable in future, or be deterred altogether. It is likely that these women will be the ones who would benefit most from completing a degree – low SES, rural, Indigenous women, women with disability and women from other vulnerable populations.

Vocational Education and Training (VET)

VET plays an important role in building the skills and capabilities of the workforce and in driving economic productivity. A comprehensive and coherent workforce framework is urgently required, underpinned by a full assessment of Australia's long term labour market needs, to assist VET in meeting industry and community requirements. The importance of VET educational qualifications and opportunities needs to be better understood by school leavers in assessing career progression.

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) has recognised the problems relating to a marketised approach to education, as in the current policy framework for vocational education and training in Australia. GCE recognises that 'creating a market for outcomes contributes to the commercialisation and commodification of education that undermines the right to education', and that 'the provision of basic & second chance education should not be reliant/based on for-profit provision'.

The 4th Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030 in 2018 (APMED4) resulted in a range of recommendations relating to VET and the implementation of SDG targets 4.3 and 4.4 in the Asia Pacific region, including:

- Establish and implement realistic quotas and targets to increase and maintain enrolments for job-related training for women and girls, especially in emergent and non-traditional jobs, occupations and industries.
- Develop appropriate policies, programmes and communication strategies to provide women, girls, youth and persons with disabilities, with equal opportunities to learn, develop and strengthen their knowledge, skills and competencies.

These recommendations are particularly appropriate to Australian education sectors.

Funding for vocational education and training in 2015/16 was 4.7% below its level in 2005-06, according to the Mitchell Institute (2017). Current Federal funding is in the main delivered through the National Partnership Agreement of the Skilling Australians Fund, \$1.2 billion from 2018-2022. This funding is prioritised towards apprenticeships and traineeships across a range of industry areas including tourism, hospitality, health, ageing and community services, engineering, manufacturing, construction, digital technologies and agriculture.

Whilst a number of these areas include many female workers, such as the health, ageing, and community and social services, there appears to be no recognition by the Federal Government of the need for funding for specific strategies to support women and girls in either many of the current male dominated trades or those industry areas where the need for more highly skilled workers, such as aged care.

Governments must fund targeted programs for women and girls in vocational and adult education, including in skills shortage areas. Funding for such programs could be allocated through the Skilling Australians Fund, with a focus on new apprenticeships.

Simon and Clarke (2016) have identified the need for a range of support mechanisms to ensure successful take-up of careers through apprenticeships for women and girls. This support includes career advice and development whilst at school, and mentoring, role models and network organisations in relevant industry areas. The specific needs of women and girls in undertaking apprenticeships and other training in rural and remote communities should also be taken into account through appropriate curriculum, funding and support mechanisms. Governments need to make these opportunities available and sustainable.

VET and adult education plays a key role in providing opportunities for many women and girls to train and retrain, often commencing with access courses that develop confidence and foundation skills. When faced with tight funding restrictions, these courses are often the first to disappear. VET has an important social inclusion role that needs to be specifically funded and recognised. VET and adult education courses need to be accessible in terms of fees and locations, to ensure women and girls are able to attain initial skills and continuing education.

Adult and Community Education (ACE)

Adult and community education provides a structure for realising the promise of lifelong learning articulated in SDG4. However, funding for community education in Australia is precarious with much provision relying on tenders, projects and critical support of volunteers.

ACE providers are a disparate group that go by various names, including Neighbourhood Houses or Centres, Aboriginal or community learning centres, community men's sheds, the University of the Third Age, Community Colleges and various other names.

Women are more likely than men to participate in adult and community education. For example, there are about 1200 Neighbourhood Houses and Centres nationally according to the results of the Australian Neighbourhood Houses and Centres (NH&Cs) survey undertaken in late 2010/early 2011 (ANHCA 2011). The 2011 national survey of NH&Cs indicates that women are the predominant users of NH&Cs, with those aged between the ages of 45–64, most highly represented.

ACE therefore becomes crucial to enhancing women's capabilities to be able to organise themselves, to improve their skills for generating income, to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make decisions or choices, and to be able to control resources which will assist them in challenging and eliminating discrimination.

ACE also provides opportunities for women to undertake collaborative learning, build confidence and self esteem, create social networks and develop and extend leadership skills.

ACE, when sufficiently resourced, can contribute to improving gender equality and the empowerment of women through the following priorities:

- Supporting the literacy of women, particularly financial literacy
- Identifying and responding to the challenges and opportunities for women in rural and remote regions
- Advancing the leadership capacity of women in all aspects of civil society

Recommendations

- Formally acknowledge the importance of gender equality in achieving the right to education for all, and develop a national, gender-sensitive education policy with a cross-cutting intersectional analysis.
- Ensure State/Territory and Federal governments collect and publish detailed disaggregated data on all education sectors, including participation, attainment and funding, to allow for meaningful analysis and support high-quality policy-making.
- Fund research into the education and training-related status of Australian women and girls in all their diversity, and the issues confronting them. This should be considered a matter of urgency.

Early Childhood Education (ECE)

- Recognise early childhood education as an integral part of the education sectors.
- Recognise the professionalism of early childhood education teachers in terms of qualifications, pay and conditions.
- Ensure accessible gender-neutral quality educational programs for all children through adequate funding and regulation.

School Education

- Implement needs-based funding for all Australian schools, as recommended in the *Review of Funding for School – Final Report*.
- Examine school practices and policies through a critical gender lens to ensure that schools are actively working to promote gender equality.
- Examine ways of supporting girls through transition from school into tertiary education and employment.

Higher Education (HE)

- Undertake a comprehensive, independent evaluation of university funding with a special focus on the practice of cross-subsidisation of courses and the reliance on casual staff.
- Reverse the cuts to the HEPP program made in the 2017-2018 budget.
- Reverse the discriminatory repayment changes to the HELP program.
- Allocate funding for a successor to the Office of Learning and Teaching to support and disseminate research that will improve the quality of university teaching and learning.

Vocational Education and Training (VET)

- Increase government funding for vocational education and training, including targeted funding to provide courses, gender-appropriate curriculum, and support mechanisms for women and girls undertaking skills qualifications and access courses.
- Conduct a comprehensive independent review of the tertiary education sector, focusing on access and equity, and the increasing marketisation of education.

Adult and Community Education (ACE)

- Recognise and fund the crucial role played by adult and community education in empowering women, as part of a national, gender responsive education policy.

International Commitments

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

SDG Goal 4 (Quality Education)

- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes
- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education
- By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
- By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
- By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
- By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development
- Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

SDG Goal 5 (Gender Equality)

- End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

SDG Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)

- By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value
- By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training

Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979

Article 10

State parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, including:

- a) ... equality shall be ensured in pre-school, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in types of vocational training;
- b) The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods,
- c) SDGs can be found [here](#)
- d) Concluding Observations on Australia from Human Rights Treaty Bodies can be found [here](#)
- e) The Beijing Platform for Action can be found [here](#) and CSW Agreed Conclusions can be found [here](#)
- f) The same opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programmes, particularly those aimed at reducing, at the earliest possible time, any gap in education existing between men and women;

1979, A/RES/34/180, Art.10

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995

80(a) Advance the goal of equal access to education by taking measures to eliminate discrimination in education at all levels on the basis of gender, race, language, religion, national origin, age or disability, or any other form of discrimination and, as appropriate, consider establishing procedures to address grievances.

80(d) Create a gender-sensitive educational system in order to ensure equal education and training opportunities and full and equal participation of women in educational administration and policy – and decision-making;

82(a) Develop and implement education, training and retraining policies for women, especially young women, and women re-entering the labour market, to provide skills to meet the needs of a changing socio-economic context for improving their employment opportunities;

82(k) Ensure access to quality education and training at all appropriate levels for adult women with little or no education, for women with disabilities and for document migrant, refugee and displaced women to improve their work opportunities.

83(a) Elaborate recommendations and develop curricula, textbooks and teaching aids free of gender-based stereotypes for all levels of education, including teacher training, in association with all concerned – publishers, teachers, public authorities and parents' associations;

84(a) Provide the required budgetary resources to the educational sector, with reallocation within the educational sector to ensure increased funds for basic educations, as appropriate;

1995, A/RES/50/42, pp.80-84

In **Agreed Conclusions of the 61st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**, Australia committed to,

Promote and respect women's and girl's right to education throughout the life cycle at all levels, especially for those who have been left furthest behind, by providing universal access to equality education, ensuring inclusive, equal and non-discriminatory quality education, promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all and the completion of primary and secondary education and eliminating gender disparities in access to all areas of secondary and tertiary education, promoting financial and digital literacy, ensuring that women and girls have equal access to career development, training, scholarships and fellowships, and adopting positive action to build women's and girls' leadership skills and influence, and adopt measures that promote, respect and guarantee the safety of women and girls in the school environment and that support women and girls with disabilities at all levels of education and training.

2017, E/CN.6/2017/L/5, para. 40(k)

In its **concluding observations on Australia's eighth periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women**, the Committee recommended that Australia,

42(a) Ensure that its multi-agency data integration project includes data on the educational enrolment and attainment of girls and women at all levels of education, disaggregated by age, ethnicity, disability and migration status;

2018, CEDAW/C/AUS/CO/8, Para.42(a)

The Thirty-fifth session of Human Rights Council, issued a draft resolution on the Elimination of discrimination against women and girls, in which Australia committed,

8(a) To ensure the equal enjoyment of girls and boys to quality education at all levels and the elimination of discriminatory laws and practices, school-related gender-based violence and gender stereotypes that prevent girls from having access to, completing and continuing their education and to provide incentive mechanisms to this end;

8(b) To develop and implement programs that specifically aim to prevent and eliminate gender disparities in enrolment and gender-based bias and stereotypes in education systems, curricula and materials, whether derived from any discriminatory practices, social or cultural attitudes or legal and economic circumstances;

2017, A/HRC/35/L.29, Para.8(a), (b).

Incheon Declaration – Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all.

7. Inclusion and equity in and through education is the cornerstone of a transformation education agenda, and we therefore commit to addressing all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes. No education target should be considered met unless met by all. We therefore commit to making the necessary changes in education policies and focusing our efforts on the most disadvantaged, especially those with disabilities, to ensure that no-one is left behind.

8. We recognize the importance of **gender equality** in achieving the right to education for all. We are therefore committed to supporting gender-sensitive policies, planning and learning environments; mainstreaming gender issues in teacher training and curricula; and eliminating gender-based discrimination and violence in schools.

2015, ED/WEF2015/MD/3, Para.7, 8

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