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SHARED PRIORITIES TO TRANSFORM EDUCATION SYSTEMS

MAPPING RECOVERY AND TRANSFORMATION AGENDAS

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Shared priorities to transform education systems: Mapping recovery and transformation agendas

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1. Introduction

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will be felt for years to come. With 1.5 billion students affected and at least 463 million¹ unable to access remote learning, there is little wonder that education inequality is rising and young people around the world are significantly behind academically than where predicted without disrupted schooling.² Children's mental and physical health is also suffering because of course schools provide much more than academics: They are places to connect with peers and other adults in the community and for many to receive much needed nutritional support. The good news is that the challenges around education—and especially what to do about them—is on the global agenda, at least for the next several months. The UN secretary general has called for 2022 to be the year that the UN General Assembly turns its attention to transforming education systems in the wake of the pandemic with the Transforming Education Summit (TES) this September, and the global education community can come together to capitalize on this political moment.

However, to keep education on the global agenda after TES, the global education community will need to coalesce around a shared narrative on the importance of education and more importantly how education actors will work synergistically in education jurisdictions around the world to address the challenges at hand. There are many important priorities competing for attention from heads of state and ministers of finance—from the climate crisis to the rise of violence and conflict to increasing economic inequality to the spread of fake news through increasingly sophisticated technology. Education systems that are broadly inclusive and relevant—that help develop academic, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills—are essential for addressing many of the world's crises through, climate change and digital literacy education to preparing those left out of the current pace of economic progress for the world of work, among other things. Ensuring that this message is heard consistently by leaders in countries around the world is an essential part of converting the energy leading up to the TES into sustained change after it.

To help catalyze a discussion among the actors in the global education ecosystem to do just this—come together to make the most of this political moment for transformation—we at the Center for Universal Education have mapped the range of agendas and debates put forward by actors at the TES pre-meeting in Paris and beyond. Having different actors working on different agendas is a sign of the richness of the education sector and not in and of itself a problem. The problem comes when education actors compete for attention and resources in countries and jurisdictions around the world and run the risk of diluting a clear sense of urgency to senior leaders and fragmenting the energy and momentum needed to embark on serious education transformation. Sustained education system change requires deep partnership across many levels, including across actors working on complementary agendas.

In mapping, we found a distinction between those working on post-pandemic recovery as the most urgent priority and those working toward broader transformation agendas.

While both are obviously needed, pitting one vision against the other is ultimately unhelpful. Luckily, there is precedent within the global education community of coming together to develop a shared narrative that accommodates distinct visions. This is where I begin this brief. The first section covers the process, over a decade ago, of the global education community developing a shared narrative of “access plus learning” to weave together those worried most about the unfinished business of increasing access to education and those most concerned with tackling the poor learning outcomes of those already in school. The second section moves to a discussion of several of the agendas that have been prominently discussed around the TES process. While there are many agendas of importance and we could not cover them all in this brief, I focused on those with reoccurring debates and around them. Finally, in the hopes of helping weave together the recovery versus transformation debates, the final section proposes three main takeaways for the actors in the global education ecosystem to reflect upon and consider for further discussion. Ultimately, coming together across diverse sets of education actors on shared priorities will be important to ensure that this moment is not wasted and instead is leveraged for the true work of education system transformation to be supported in the years to come.

2. Education on the global agenda

A decade ago, many in the global education community were deeply worried that education would fall off the global agenda. Education had been an important agenda focus in the first decade of the new millennium, with a prominent role in the United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)—two of the eight focused on education. It was also widely viewed as one of the most successful MDGs, with important progress made in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) toward universal primary school completion and with increasing gender parity. By 2010, almost 90 percent of children around the globe were enrolled in primary school, with a majority of countries achieving gender parity at that level.^{3 4} As conversations in the halls of foreign ministries around the world turned toward the next set of global goals, a frequent refrain was that the education sector was a success story, the world’s educational problems had been solved, and any new global goals after the MDGs should focus on sectors where there were still urgent needs.

Of course, education actors around the world knew differently. While enrollment and gender parity in primary school certainly had impressive gains, there were still a number of burning concerns like the difficulties of going the “last mile” and enrolling the most vulnerable children and youth, limited access to quality early childhood education, poor learning outcomes in the early grades and high dropout rates as boys and especially girls failed to progress into junior and senior secondary, and the relevance of children’s learning to help them constructively contribute in life and work after they left school. While each of these crucial issues had constituencies focused on addressing them, there was a clear need to come together as an education community to identify shared

priorities and collectively communicate them to decisionmakers outside of the sector who were leading on the development of new global goals.

This was the impetus in 2011 for us at the Center for Universal Education together with over 60 organizations to develop the [Global Compact on Learning: Taking Action on Education in Developing Countries](#). Through a highly consultative process that involved input from hundreds of educationalists around the world, the Global Compact on Learning argued that any new global goals should include an educational focus on “access plus learning,” which in effect married the two biggest concerns voiced during consultations. Namely, global attention should not overlook the millions of children and youth who did not have access to education opportunities from early childhood through secondary, nor should it overlook the hundreds of millions of children who were in school but learning very little. The report also argued that education should be elevated as a topic of concern on the global stage. Fresh from the memory of the UN General Assembly meetings in 2010—where the main education discussion was hosted in a small basement room at UN headquarters with approximately 25 key education actors—the authors of the Global Compact on Learning recommended that leadership from the most senior levels, including the UN Secretary General, was needed to accomplish this.

Today, with the UN Secretary General convening the TES during this year’s General Assembly meeting, the sector has come a long way from the basement roundtable in 2010. Many actors have helped pave the way for this summit, especially UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon who socialized the importance of education with heads of state and the global community prior to the development of new global goals: He specifically focused on access plus learning plus global citizenship through his Global Education First Initiative led by UNESCO from 2012-2016 and created new organizations to advocate for education as a central concern to heads of state around the world, including the UN Special Envoy’s Office for Global Education. Ultimately, the development of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 means countries around the world commit to advancing lifelong learning for all alongside the other 16 important goals, squarely placing education as an important priority on the global stage.

3. Mapping the recovery and transformation agendas

However, the question remains, how will the global education community work together to achieve SDG 4—particularly in light of the massive educational impacts due to COVID-19 and in the face of global headwinds from the war in Ukraine, the global supply chain shortages, rising inflation, and massive floods and heat waves? UN Secretary General António Guterres was addressing this question when he called for the TES, hoping to “elevate education to the top of the global political agenda and to mobilize action, ambition, solidarity and solutions to recover pandemic-related learning losses and sow

the seeds to transform education in a rapidly changing world.”⁵ There is energy and momentum around this call for transformation, but as we saw in the diverse agendas at the summit pre-meeting in Paris in June this year, there is a wide variety of perspectives on what the focus of this recovery and transformation should be.

We at the Center for Universal Education suggest that, like in 2010, there is a need to map the various agendas and find shared priorities for making the most of this political moment for the global education community. However, this time—regardless of whatever dialogue process unfolds—there will need to be more inclusion of the voices inside education systems around the world including students, families, educators, local civil society organizations, and government teams. Ultimately, these are the stakeholders who are not only best informed about what the needs are to transform their education systems but also will be the ones at the forefront doing the day-to-day heavy lifting needed to implement transformation strategies.

Methods

This insight has informed how we have mapped the agendas unfolding around TES. Our methodology began with the TES presummit where we cataloged the topics and themes discussed through a review of the titles and summaries of the 20 publicly available sessions and 33 side meetings that occurred over the three-day presummit. We then reviewed the five thematic action track discussion papers and four national and regional consultation reports. Finally, we chose 22 events to analyze that represented a sample of the conversations happening across the presummit. These included opening and closing remarks, events across the five action tracks, and events led by specific actors like youth representatives. We then began to group the large number of topics and themes discussed into major agendas that actors are advancing. Given the wide range of subjects covered, we decided it would be unwieldy to cover all agendas emerging and opted to home in on those where the majority of discussion and debates occurred. Some of the agendas discussed, such as advocating for more and better financing to resource education systems or arguing for the urgent need to support teachers, received attention at the TES presummit and appeared to have broad agreement among the education actors present on their importance. But we chose not to highlight them—not because they are not essential—but because they are essential enablers to almost any other education agenda and the general recognition of their importance in the presummit discussion. We ultimately identified six agendas that captured the majority of the discussion and debate that we reviewed.

Then, to test if we missed any significant agendas, we conducted a deep dive on 50 education actors, some of whom attended the presummit and many of whom did not. Of the 50, we classified 25 as “global” actors, such as UN agencies, and 25 we classified as “voices inside the system,” such as student, family, educator, civil society, and government actors who are part of education systems in countries around the world. We worked through each of their websites, reviewing 25 strategic planning documents, 25 research publications, and 10 media publications. We plotted the level of engagement an

actor had with a given agenda on a four-point scale: 1) The actor does not mention the agenda in their work; 2) the actor considers this agenda part of their portfolio but among other priorities; 3) the actor considers this agenda a primary portfolio activity; and 4) the actor is a major driver of this agenda. For the purposes of this analysis, any actor that scored higher than a 1 on an agenda was considered supporting it. Ultimately, we found that instead of surfacing new agendas, these deep dives reconfirmed our original six agendas as major areas of interest and action. (See Annex for further information on methods).

We recognize that there is much that will be left out of this analysis. Many actors do not regularly update their websites and many education discussions and debates are not recorded publicly for review. The findings presented below represent an important slice of the debates and discussion among actors in the global education ecosystem but should not be interpreted as the final word nor a comprehensive census of the full spectrum of debates and discussion happening in education across the globe. Ultimately, we are sharing our findings to kickstart a dialogue on how to most effectively advance system transformation efforts coming out of TES in September. We are particularly interested in calling out areas of alignment and areas where dialogue is needed to uncover potential synergies. While indeed provisional, we believe our findings provide a useful starting point for discussion by pointing out key areas for action and dialogue.

| The six agendas

From June 28-30, 2022, 154 ministers of education and nearly 2,000 participants convened for the three-day presummit meeting hosted by UNESCO in Paris. Six main agendas were especially prevalent both at the presummit and in our deep dive studies of global education actors and actors representing voices inside the system. The agendas fall into two categories: 1) the competencies and capabilities education should aspire to develop in children and youth, including foundational learning, well-being and whole child development, and 21st century skills for work and citizenship and 2) the approaches by which education should deliver these competencies including equity and inclusion, technology, and purpose and power. Figure 1 provides a summary of these six main agendas on competencies and capabilities, and approaches.

FIGURE 1

The six agendas

	Competencies and Capabilities: What systems should prioritize for transformation			Approaches: How systems should prioritize delivering transformation		
Agenda	Foundational learning	Wellbeing & whole child development	21 st Century Skills for Work and Citizenship	Equity & inclusion	Technology	Purpose & power
Description	Scaling foundational literacy and numeracy in early learning	Supporting the development of student physical, social, and emotional health and wellbeing	Building skills for the future of work and citizenship in changing world	Building equitable and inclusive education systems that support and empower the vulnerable and marginalized	Harnessing technology to innovate education's approach and delivery	Focusing on the purpose of education through the empowerment of local-leadership and bottom-up movements
Example keywords	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foundational literacy and numeracy Basic education At grade-level learning outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student physical, mental, and social-emotional health Community schools School meals/nutrition Learner-centered education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21st century skills Future of work TVET Workforce development Climate education Civic education Digital skills SEL-g geared towards future skills/workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building equitable and inclusive education systems that support and empower the vulnerable and marginalized Education in crisis, conflict, and emergencies Gender education equity Disability education Mitigating incidence of out-of-school and drop-out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital connectivity Online learning Personalized learning Using technology as a vehicle for education delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determining the purpose of education Empowerment of local-leadership and bottom-up movements Community coalition building Student advocacy Teacher and student rights Network development between education delivery professionals, decision-makers Digital platforms for coalition-building Parental/caregiver engagement
Essential enabling agendas	Financing Teachers Curriculum and Materials Assessment and Data					

Source: Author's analysis.

The first category focuses on the level of aspiration for transformation in terms of the competencies and capabilities education systems should prioritize for children and youth to learn and develop. In one agenda, constituencies argue that the main focus of education systems that want to transform should be building strong foundations through mastery of literacy and numeracy in early elementary or by age 10. This constituency argues that it is essential to set up young people to progress through their educational career and address the inequalities in foundational learning, which COVID-19 has only widened and necessitated urgent action. A constituency prioritizing a different agenda argues that education systems should focus their transformation efforts on supporting children's physical, social, and emotional health and well-being, particularly using learning-centered instruction in schools. Children's well-being has been severely impacted by the pandemic, this constituency argues, with the most

marginalized children especially adversely affected. This constituency believes that supporting the well-being of children and youth is essential alongside academic instruction and helps drive progress on academic outcomes. A third constituency argues for an agenda where education systems focus their transformation efforts on ensuring young people are developing relevant skills and competencies for work and citizenship. This constituency argues that the 21st century requires a new set of knowledge and skills to thrive upon graduation into the workforce and that too many young people are entering the world ill prepared. Systems, they argue, should urgently focus on helping all young people develop knowledge, skills, and behaviors that help prepare them for work, as well as help them constructively navigate the world amid fake news, the climate crisis, and rising authoritarianism. This, they argue, is especially important for the most marginalized who need relevant skills the most but have the least opportunities to develop them.

Across these agendas, there is agreement that all three arguments are important, but debates occur over the right level of focus for post-pandemic recovery and transformation. For example, the constituency focusing on the foundational learning agenda recognizes the importance of supporting children's well-being and their need for relevant work and citizenship skills but argues that systems should focus their aspirations on shoring up literacy and numeracy in particular—in other words, on recovering post-COVID-19 learning loss. The constituency focusing on the well-being agenda argues that the most important priority post-COVID-19 recovery is in actively ensuring young people are fed, healthy physically and mentally, and developing socially. The constituency focused on the skills for work and citizenship agenda argues that this is an important moment to focus beyond recovery on the whole orientation of education systems and whether they even prepare young people for the world that awaits them.

The second category of agendas focuses on the transformative approaches that systems should use to deliver education. This includes many constituencies arguing that any approach to recovery and transformation must put front and center equity and inclusion strategies. Too many young people and their communities have been left on the margins of progress and transformation will be meaningless unless everyone—no matter where they are born—are included. It also includes a constituency arguing that technology plays a vital role in transforming education systems by offering both new ways of delivering technology that extends and expands what is possible with the current analog models and new ways of educating young people (e.g., personalized learning) that can improve outcomes efficiently. The third constituency argues that for transformation to truly take place, there needs to be a rebalancing of power around who determines the purpose of education systems and who is at the table to help shape the system toward this end. This constituency argues for an agenda where the voices inside the system—from students to educators to families to local and national civil society groups and government civil servants—need to have a greater role in determining transformation in their context.

While understanding the contours of the agendas attracting energy and attention at the TES presummit is helpful, it does not give us detailed insight into how these agendas play out across actors or across contexts. This is where we turn to next.

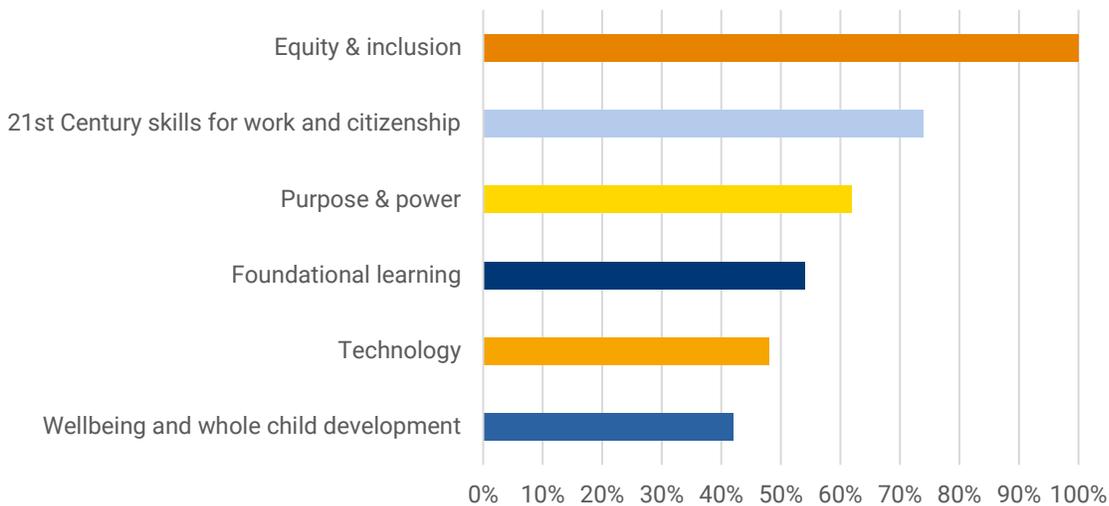
The six agendas in action

By looking more closely at how the 50 organizations we studied engage with these agendas, we can find patterns that illustrate where there is potential synergy and potential differences among actors in the global education community. While our findings provide useful insights into how these agendas are taking shape across actors and contexts, we again emphasize that they are illustrative of the dynamics playing out but in no way should be taken as a comprehensive assessment or the final word on them.

Across the six agendas, three emerged as a priority for more than 60 percent of the 50 organizations. These were equity and inclusion, which by far and away was the area where there was the highest shared focus with every single organization prioritizing it in some way. This was followed by 21st century skills for work and citizenship, with 74 percent of organizations advancing that agenda, and purpose and power, with 62 percent of organizations working toward that agenda. The three agendas with the least number of organizations driving change in them include foundational learning at 54 percent, technology at 48 percent, and well-being and whole child development at 42 percent. However, it is notable that for every agenda at least 40 percent of the organizations we studied were actively engaged in advancing it demonstrating the overall energy behind these six areas (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Organizational support for the six agendas in action



Source: Author's analysis.

While the six agendas did attract a great deal of support from the organizations we examined, there are some notable differences and similarities among organizations. We examined the themes in relation to organizations' positions in the ecosystem: global

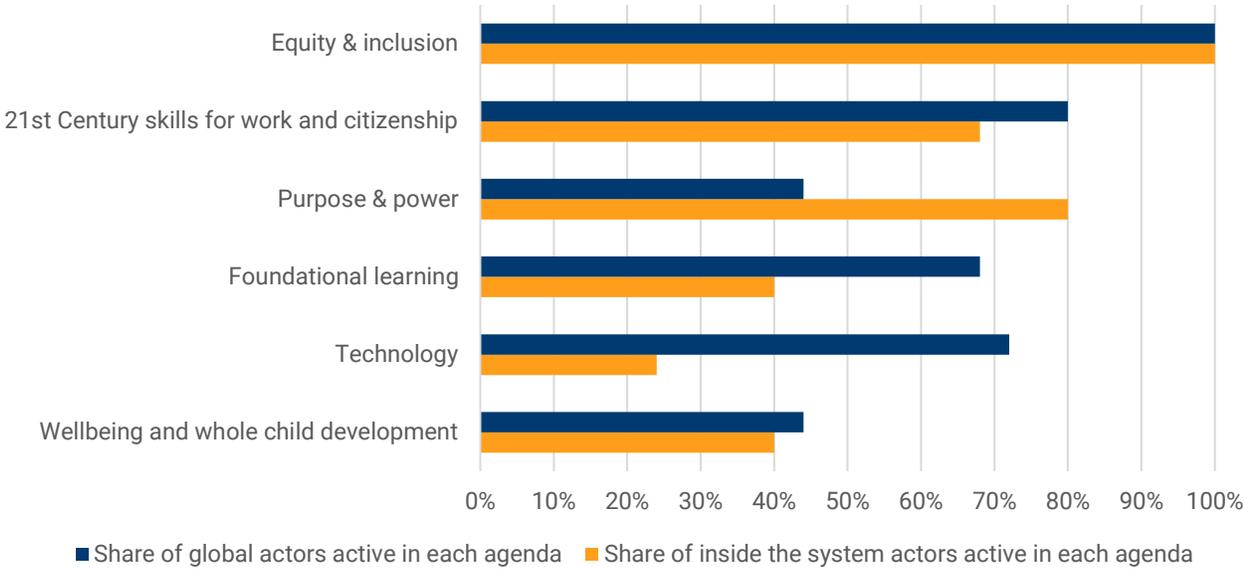
versus voices inside the system, operating in high- versus LMICs, and funding organizations versus non-funding organizations.

Global versus voices inside the system

Equity and inclusion, 21st century skills for work and citizenship, and well-being and whole child development were almost equally supported by global actors as those inside the system. However, for the remaining agendas, this was not the case and by very large margins. Technology and purpose and power both have massive differences—over 30 percent—between organizations representing global players and voices inside the system. While only 24 percent of voices inside the system were actively supporting technology as a lever of transformation, a full 72 percent of global players were doing so. Likewise, a full 80 percent of organizations representing voices inside the system were advancing shifts in purpose and power, but only 44 percent of global actors were. Another area of disconnect—although to a much lesser degree—is foundational learning, with 68 percent of global players advancing it versus 40% of voices inside the system actors (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Global versus inside the system actors



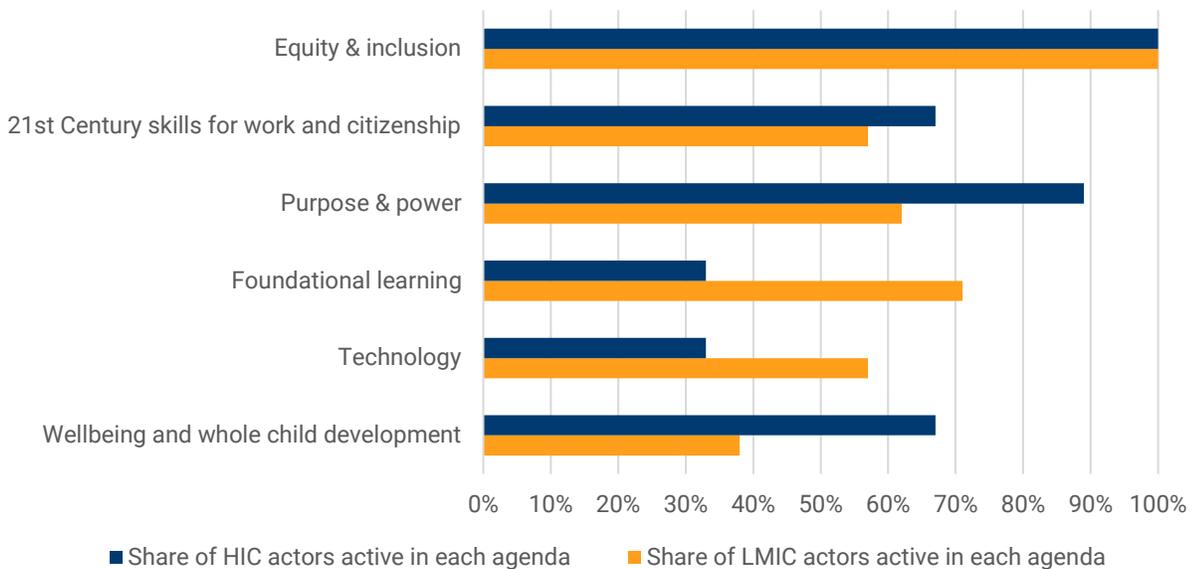
Source: Author’s analysis.

High- versus low- and middle-income countries

Actors working in high-income countries (HICs), as well as LMICs were close to equally supporting not only the equity and inclusion agenda but the 21st century skills for work and citizenship agenda. There were significant differences, however, across the rest of the agendas, with the largest difference being on the support of the foundational learning agenda by 71 percent of LMIC actors and only 33 percent of HIC actors. We saw relatively similar differences between two of the agendas, with more HIC actors supporting the purpose and power agenda (89 percent versus 62 percent) and the well-being and whole child development agenda (67 versus 38 percent). LMIC actors prioritized the technology agenda more frequently than HIC actors (57 versus 33 percent); See Figure 4.

Figure 4

High- versus low- and middle-income countries in each agenda



Source: Author's analysis.

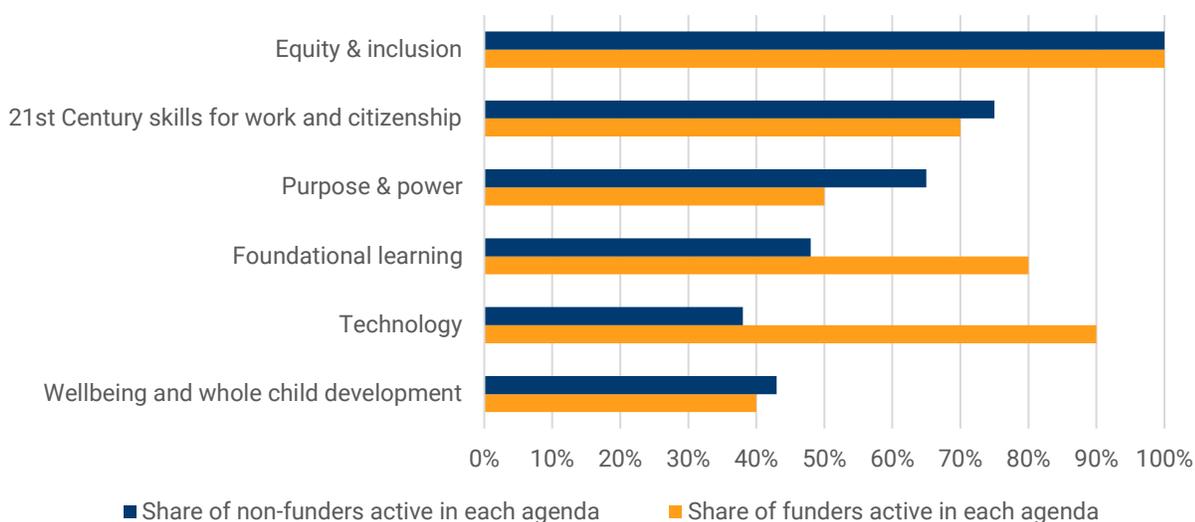
Funder versus non-funder

When examining what funders versus actors who were not funders prioritized, again we found some agendas supported at shared levels. In addition to equity and inclusion, the 21st century skills for work and citizenship and the well-being and whole child development agendas had close to shared support. By far the largest difference was in the prioritization of the technology agenda that 90 percent of funders support and where only 38 percent of non-funding organizations are active. Foundational learning was another area of significant difference, with 80 percent of funders supporting it and only 48 percent of non-funders supporting it. Purpose and power also saw differences but to

a lesser degree, with more non-funders supporting the agenda at 65 percent and only 50 percent of funders supporting it (See Figure 5).

Figure 5

Funder versus non-funder support for each agenda



Source: Author’s analysis.

There are a range of possible reasons why actors differ in their support of these six agendas depending on what contexts they focus and what position they inhabit in the global education ecosystem. For example, while many children in high-income country (HIC) contexts do struggle to master literacy and numeracy in the early grades, it is the most marginalized children who are farthest behind. However, in most low-income country contexts, the proportion of students who are struggling with literacy and numeracy is frequently much higher, with the vast majority of students in many countries not mastering these skills in the early grades or even by the end of primary school. Therefore, the increased support for the foundational learning agenda from actors in LMICs makes sense. Likewise, the increased support for the well-being and whole child development agenda by HIC actors may be because school plays an especially important role in these contexts in supporting children’s mental health and social development and therefore is seen as a crucial priority even with ongoing concerns over “learning loss” on subjects like literacy and numeracy. In addition to context, an organization’s internal incentives can also help explain the areas of divergence. For example, the stark differences in funders’ support for two agendas, namely technology and foundational learning, compared to the support for these agendas by the range of other organizations may be due to funders’ need to “show results” from their investment to taxpayers or boards of directors. Perhaps the technology and foundational learning agendas are seen as less risky for funders because they are focused with concrete and visible measures of progress.

Some differences, however, deserve further exploration. For example, why is it that so few—less than 1 in 4 that we studied—of the voices inside the system are supporting the technology agenda while so many—almost 3 in 4—of the global actors are? Is it because students, teachers, nonprofits, and governments have seen multiple waves of failed technology interventions in education and do not have the same level of optimism that global actors do about the potential of new approaches to bear fruit? Or is it because global actors have access to the technology that could be meaningful for education and the actors inside the system do not? Similarly, why is it that actors inside the system are less likely to prioritize foundational learning than global players? Is it that they believe sufficient attention is already paid to instruction on things like literacy and numeracy and too little on developing other skills like 21st century skills for work and citizenship? Or is it because they have less information on the extent to which children and youth are struggling with mastering literacy and numeracy than global actors do? Finally, the fact that actors inside the system are almost two times more likely to support the purpose and power agenda than global actors is perhaps on its face self-explanatory but, as we will see in the next section, also deserves further discussion.

Moving forward together: Three takeaways for debate

Having different actors working on different agendas is not in itself a problem. Issues arise when actors in the education ecosystem either intentionally or unintentionally work at compete against each other. The work of transforming systems, on a good day, is complex and requires multiple actors to work together. Systems change ultimately requires sustained shifts in the pedagogical core—namely the ways in which learners, educators, content, and resources interact. In other words, systems change depends on shifts in the teaching and learning experiences of students. This can often require a mix of supports and interventions and none is more important than investing in teachers' professional development to help lead this shift.⁶ Without this level of change, national policies and priorities remain words on a page and multiple studies have shown that many systems change efforts stop at the classroom door, ultimately resulting in little change in what systems do and accomplish.⁷ Systems change also requires partnership across many levels from community partners to parents.⁸ When families, teachers, and school leaders are able to work effectively together, it can provide crucial support for transformation efforts and drive improved outcomes for students.⁹ All of this becomes especially difficult in the context of pandemic recovery where education systems are facing what can often seem to many people inside it like a series of overwhelming challenges. Global shortages of personnel, long a problem in many parts of the world, has spread and been exacerbated. An estimated almost 70 million new primary and secondary school teachers will be needed by 2030 to meet the targets of the SDGs.¹⁰ Many students, especially those with the least resources, are struggling to have their basic needs met, with 1 billion children lacking in necessities like nutrition and clean water.¹¹ Competition for attention, time, talent, and resources is fierce in many education

systems around the world and the more that the ecosystem of education actors can find ways to work together and reinforce each other's needs, the more likely that we, as a global community, can harness this moment for not only pandemic recovery but long-lasting transformation.

Hence, we provide below three main takeaways that allow for further collaboration and deep discussion across the global education community. These are meant to inspire increased debate and discussion on how we might align efforts either in the pursuit of shared or complementary agendas.

Takeaway 1: Work together to advance equity and inclusion

The problems of growing education inequality are facing almost every country in the world. The deep alignment around this equity and inclusion agenda that we have seen across organizations in this study means this is likely to be an area ripe for shared action. Every organization should develop clear and specific strategies for reaching those left behind and collaborating with others to find ways to support each other. It could also be an agenda that the education community agrees to collectively hold itself accountable to delivering on. Are we really doing all we can to be as inclusive as possible? Additionally, it is an area that could easily inspire collaboration. Whether that is organizations with complementary skillsets working together (e.g., organizations with expertise in gender equality partnering with organizations with expertise in disabilities to address the needs of disabled girls) or organizations with shared goals working together (e.g., shared advocacy on inclusion from a coalition of organizations focused on child labor, early marriage, or humanitarian emergencies), there are plenty of ways aligned action can help advance this agenda.

Takeaway 2: Align complementary competency and capability agendas

The three agendas focused on competencies and capabilities (namely, helping young people develop foundational learning, well-being and whole child growth, and 21st century skills for work and citizenship) can be—and sometimes are—perceived as competing with each other for attention and support. However, they are in reality quite complementary and mutually supportive. Studies from the learning sciences demonstrate that children are social learners and their socio-emotional development is closely interwoven with their ability to develop academic skills like reading and writing. Children's physical and mental health also has a heavy influence on their ability to learn—regardless if it is literacy or 21st century skills.¹² Furthermore, a range of studies point to the role innovative pedagogical approaches can have in helping develop academic competence at the same time as 21st century skills. For example, students learning with interactive and inquiry-based approaches can acquire needed academic skills while also developing their abilities to think critically, collaboratively solve problems, and feel empathy for others.¹³ The ability to read with comprehension is a critical enabler in

developing skills for work and citizenship—from navigating fake news to learning skills needed for the green economy.

It is not just the science of learning that demonstrates the interconnectedness across these three competency and capability agendas. Education actors themselves are working across these three agendas often at the same time. Of the 50 organizations we studied, 85 percent of those that prioritize the foundational learning agenda also support the 21st century skills for work and citizenship agenda. So too with actors advancing the well-being and whole child development agenda: 67 percent of them also are prioritizing the 21st century skills for work and citizenship agenda in their efforts. Increasingly, there are illustrative models of how these three agendas can come together in practice from the community schools movement in the United States that weaves in whole child supports with academic development to the Escuela Nueva model that develops academic skills alongside independent learning and citizenship competencies.^{14 15} There is a need for the constituencies advancing these agendas to come together and frame their work as mutually reinforcing and identify areas of both synergy and complementarity. This will undoubtedly need to include open discussions around the ambition for education systems coming out of TES: Is the main goal recovery of lost learning from the pandemic or a transformation of the purpose of education to focus on a broader set of children’s needs? Questions of context, feasibility, sequencing, and resource allocation will certainly be important areas of discussion, but if the global education community successfully developed a shared vision around “access plus learning” more than a decade ago, it most certainly can come together now around how these three complementary areas of learning can be framed for greater collaboration and impact.

Takeaway 3: Engage in deep discussions on power

Of the organizations we mapped, almost two times as many inside the system actors were actively supporting the purpose and power agenda compared to global actors. This insight requires attention. It means that many organizations representing the voices of students, teachers, civil society staff, and government leaders are saying that they want a greater voice in determining the [purpose of education](#) systems and in influencing the resulting design and implementation processes. This is an important insight that global actors should not just note but also reflect upon, discuss, and debate. Giving more power to actors inside the system means that global actors will have to share power or in some cases relinquish it. The purpose and power agenda is advocating not just to transform what education systems deliver, to whom, and with what technology, but to fundamentally shift how systems are shaped and how decisions are made. This may be the most deeply transformative agenda of all. In systems change literature, shifting power in decisionmaking is seen as a strong lever for sustainable transformation.^{16 17}

The global education community would do well to take this issue of purpose and power seriously and organize a forum to engage in deep and reflective debate on this topic.

Annex: Methods

Criteria for determining global actors versus voices inside the system actors in the deep dives

Global Actors

- Predominantly either based in or funded from the Global North
- Have a mandate that encompasses multiple countries (and often includes the Global South)
- Have a decisionmaking and governance structure that is mostly or partially directed from a global headquarters
- Subtypes: Multilaterals, bilaterals, grant-making foundations, nonprofits, private sector companies, think tanks

Voices inside the system

- Predominantly based in the countries or regions where they operate and can speak on behalf of
- May have a global, regional, or country-specific mandate to represent actors participating in education systems
- Have a membership structure through which they speak on behalf of constituent members that are key stakeholders inside education systems
- Subtypes: Regional education ministry networks, unions and professional networks, private sector associations, nonprofit forums and associations

Selecting the actors

The 50 players selected diverged significantly across several criteria. We had 25 global actors and 25 “voices within the system” actors. Of those global actors, nine were multilaterals or bilaterals, six were nonprofits, four were foundations, three were private sector, and three were think tanks or research institutions. Of the voices inside the system actors, on the other hand, there were 12 nonprofits, seven regional education ministry networks, five unions/professional networks, and 1 private sector actor. We also had diversity across regions, with six actors who focused their work in Africa, seven in Southeast Asia, nine in Latin America, eight in North America, five in the Middle East and North Africa, and five in Europe. Finally, the focus of the actors’ work differed greatly. Ten acted as funders, 12 as implementors, 34 as advocacy organizations, 5 as educational providers, and six as researchers (some actors work in multiple areas, so therefore the total is >50).

List of organizations studied

The organizations chosen for the mapping exercise are as follows: The School Superintendents Association, Arab Campaign for Education for All, Association for the Development of Education in Africa, Aga Khan Foundation, Africa Network Campaign on Education for All, Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, BRAC, CIVICUS, Corporación Nacional de Colegios

Particulares AG, EcoPeace Middle East, EdTech Hub, Education International, European Commission, European Youth Forum, European Youth Parliament, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, Global Business Coalition for Education, GENE - Global Education Network Europe, Global Partnership for Education, Global Schools Forum, Global Student Forum, Google.org, INJAZ Al-Arab, International Labour Organization, Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, Khan Academy, Kenya National Union of Teachers, Mastercard Foundation, mEducation Alliance - The Mobiles for Education Alliance, Microsoft Education, National Education Union, National PTA, Organization of American States, OECD Education - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Our Turn, Red PaPaz, REDUCA - Latin American Network for Education, South African Democratic Teachers Union, Save the Children, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization, Sesame Workshop, Sindicato Único de Trabajadores de la Educación del Perú, Teach for All, Brookings Institution, The LEGO Foundation, The World Bank Group, UNESCO, UNICEF, and USAID.

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