

Topic 1

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has protected the rights of global citizens since its inception March 16, 2005¹ by resolution 60/251. Although the council was founded only a little more than a decade ago, the human rights it serves to protect have been the subject of debate for centuries by nations. In the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the basic and inalienable rights of all human citizens were put forth. Before the UNHRC was founded, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as Amnesty International, Teachers Without Borders or the Red Cross have helped and continue to aid the protection of our freedoms and liberties. Issues such as guaranteeing gender equality or eradicating poverty were brought to the forefront of international attention as the world advanced into the technological age and more and more people grew aware about the issues facing our world. Yet, one issue that affects everyone in developed countries, no matter their age or gender is the lack of access to free, quality primary or secondary education.

Universal Primary education has made great leaps since 1999, in part due to the Millennium Development Goals, but there are still over 58 million children out of school². Achieving Universal Primary Education is not a single-faceted problem as there are numerous obstacles that prevent children of all ages from having access to proper schooling. Problems such as cost, location, language or gender have made it difficult for governments and NGOs to implement free primary education.

¹ *A/RES/60/251*. New York City: United Nations Human Rights Council Office of the High Commissioner, 3 Apr. 2006. PDF.

² "OOSCI Global Report." *UNESCO*. UNESCO 2017, n.d. Web. 27 Apr. 2017.

The majority of areas where children have a lack of access to primary education are Africa, East and Southeast Asia³. A large portion of the nations in these areas are Less Developed Countries (LDCs), and do not have the infrastructure or funding to implement universal primary education within their borders. The high costs of attending school drive many families away from sending their children to school. In LDCs opportunities are far and few between. Opportunities for a better life are almost non-existent without a college degree and due to the outrageously high cost of college, there are no clear benefits of sending a child to primary school from the perspective of the parents. Poverty is rife in LDCs and families need all the money they can get. Child labor is a massive problem in LDCs because parents choose to send their child to work to earn money instead of using their hard-earned cash on an education that provides no clear short-term benefits

In addition, the location of schools contributes highly to the lack of attendance at schools in LDCs. There are certain areas of the world where weather conditions make it very difficult for children to attend school, such as in high-altitude areas of India where severe weather for more than 7 months of the year forces children to remain at home. In rural areas, lack of funding means schools are far and few between. This means that children may have to travel long distances by walking due to the high cost of alternative sources of transportation. These long distances have negative physiological impacts that impact a student's learning ability and tires a child, which decreases a learner's concentration. Children who have to walk long distances can get distracted by small things or the weather and they are more likely to get to school late, which means missing a lesson. This can affect the student's overall learning in the long run. Moreover,

³ Roser, Max, and Mohamed Nagdy. "Primary Education." Our World In Data. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Apr. 2017.

long distances also means the schoolbag must be carried longer, students must get up earlier and homework is done later, which reduces the free time that is crucial for a balanced life, especially for children. Due to the high operating costs, school buses have not been implemented in most countries and students are unable to enjoy their benefits, such as the bonding opportunities they offer.

Within the UN, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) plays an important role in helping develop education in LDCs. This process was initialized when 1500 delegates from 155 countries⁴ met in Jomtien, Thailand at the World Conference on Education for All in 1990. The council called upon nations to universalize basic education. All conference participants adopted the World Declaration on Education for All and a Framework for Action: Meeting Basic Learning Needs. The declaration begins by stating that "Every person - child, youth and adult - shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs"⁵. This declaration was significant as it represented the first major gathering of nations in a conference regarding the need to raise education standards. In addition, the declaration stressed the need for high quality education and that intended learning outcomes were actually achieved. An interagency body called the International Consultative Forum on Education for All was established to ensure the proper execution of the actions from the World Conference.

⁴ "Outcomes on Education: Development." *United Nations*. United Nations, n.d. Web. 13 May 2017.

⁵ "World Declaration on Education for All." *UNESCO*. UNESCO 2017, Apr. 1990. Web. 30 Apr. 2017.

In addition, at the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, 164 nations⁶ pledged to help guarantee education for all. Six goals were identified to be achieved by the year 2015. The six goals highlighted that children need education of high quality, gender disparity in primary and secondary education should be eliminated, the learning needs of all students are met as well. Furthermore, one of the goals of the forum was to achieve Universal Primary Education, a goal in coordination with the second millennium development goal.

Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/32/L.33 as adopted during the 32nd Session and discussed the right to education⁷. The resolution put into place a regulatory basis for providers of education, whether they are operating independently or in cooperation with states through clause 2e. Furthermore, it also urged states to create a policy for using digital technology and resources to help all children receive primary education in their nation. In addition, the resolution reaffirmed many of the goals from the 2015 World Education Forum in Incheon and the sustainable development goals of 2030. Clause 3 emphasized the need for educational opportunities to be expanded and that no one should be discriminated against or left behind, one of the main themes from the 2015 Forum. Clause 6 called upon states to the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, especially goal 4, which promises to ensure inclusive and quality education for all. Overall, the resolution recognized the need for quality education for all children as well as the importance of having a structured policy for assisting organizations and the usage of technology resources.

⁶ "Education for All Movement." *Education for All | Education | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*. UNESCO 2017, n.d. Web. 13 May 2017.

⁷"Human Rights Council Resolution on the Right to Education." *Right to Education*. Right to Education 2013, 2016. Web. 29 Apr. 2017.

Education has a distinguished history in Mexico and the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico, founded in 1551⁸ is the oldest university in North America. Education has an important part in Mexican Society and Mexico has one of the highest enrollment rates in education for children under four as well as primary education. Mexico has achieved the universal primary education benchmark of over 99%⁹ and is one of the most efficient nations regarding education. It spends less than 3000 USD¹⁰ per child, according to statistics from 2009 and all secondary education (up to ninth grade) provided by the state is free.

Mexico believes that the greatest problem to be overcome in less developed countries is the lack of high-quality education and the poor educational outcomes. Since the education in many South American and African countries is so far from an expected or average standard, the educational outcomes are far from what they are in other nations and most children do not make it to college. Education does present clear benefits for the lives of people, but low-quality education will not have a massive impact. In developing countries, opportunities are far and few between and without a college education, it will be difficult for people to get those chances for a better life. Providing education for all children is important, but ensuring that their education amounts to something in their lives is even more valuable in the long run.

Another major problem that prevents countries from establishing a system of free primary education is the corruption within the government. Mexico has improved in many sectors during the past decade, but a part of its government that is comparable to many third world nations is its

⁸The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "National Autonomous University of Mexico." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., n.d. Web. 13 May 2017.

⁹"EAG 2012 Country Note Mexico." *OECD*. 2016 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012. Web. 30 Apr. 2017.

¹⁰ <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-education-spending-tops-global-list-study-shows/>

corruption. Corruption has been curbed in Mexico over the past half-century and improvements are being made. As a country that has experienced the devastating effects of a corrupt government, Mexico recognizes that transparency is key to success. Corruption had run unchecked in Mexico for more than a century, and it led to other problems such as extortion, kidnapping, the rise of drug cartels as well as the general acceptance within the government of bribes and a lack of transparency. The greatest threat of corruption is that if unchecked, it will create an atmosphere where people will grow accustomed to it. It is absolutely essential that corruption in developing and third world nations is removed as soon as possible as otherwise, the path to implementing high-quality universal education in all nations will only become steeper and steeper.

The final issue that many nations face is the question of whether to delegate the task of improving the education system to the federal or state government. During the 1980s and 1990s, a decentralization movement occurred in Latin and South America that was led by nations such as Mexico¹¹. This movement occurred because of the lack of coverage that education at the national level provided and the quality of education that children were receiving. More autonomy was given to local institutions and the federal government no longer dominated the central administration of education. However, reformers failed to improve the fundamental workings of the education system. Instead, the power was simply transferred from the national to state level. This process did expand coverage, but the quality of education continued to flatten while Europe and Asia raced ahead.

¹¹McBride, James, and Gabriel Zinny. "Mexico's Education Reforms and Latin America's Struggle to Raise Education Quality | Brookings Institution." *Brookings*. Brookings, 29 July 2016. Web. 13 May 2017.

Under President Pena Nieto, the Mexican government will recover some powers such as responsibility for teacher certification, evaluation and salary decisions. However, schools will be given more freedom on what they will use their resources for and also to establish their own curriculum. Basically, the government will set established standards, but local schools and districts will have more autonomy to find a learning environment that suits their students best and maximize educational outcomes. This system is one that would be very effective in other Latin American countries and especially in African nations because of the diversity of people and geographic features within a nation. The needs of every state or district are different so Mexico's educational system would give each area the independence to find a creative way to learn based on the demographics of that area. However, the basic educational outcomes for each region to fall below what is necessary because of the national guidelines. As long as the national guidelines are enforced and local regions are incentivized, high quality education will occur.

One of the biggest effects of corruption is the embezzlement of monetary funds, which cause to all sorts of problems such as the inadequate allocation of funds towards government programs as well as a loss in trust. As a result, solely relying on government organizations to dig out corruption is ineffective as they may have ties to corrupt officials and are more often than not, underfunded as well as understaffed. It is time for nations to cooperate with non-governmental organizations, both domestic and international, in order to root out corrupt officials. In order to curb corruption, a court system separate from the government should be established to ensure that officials who are caught will be tried adequately. Furthermore, the identity of the judges/jury will be kept secret until the day of the trial to ensure that there is no opportunity for extortion or bribery.

In addition, another important way to eradicate corruption is to empower citizens and have them be more involved with the government because they are the ones who are affected every day. Community monitoring initiatives have made contributions in some cases to the identification of corruption and the leakage of funds while improving the quantity and quality of public services. For example, the organization Transparency International Slovenia created an interactive map¹² that the public filled with pictures and reports of potential irregularities during local elections. This allowed the use of public funds for election campaigns to be spotted. In addition, governments can use the power of the internet and social media to create public forums for questions and for exchanges to occur between the government and citizens, businesses, civil society groups and other players in society.

Furthermore, in order to foster consistent international cooperation, the delegate of Mexico proposes the creation of an annual conference where developing and developed nations can share ideas on helping achieve universal education in their nation. Throughout the past three decades, there have been numerous world-wide conferences of education, but those conferences have mainly set in mind goals to be achieved by a certain date. The annual conference, to be known as the International Conference on Education Ideas (ICEI) will be open to all nations that are members of the United Nations. What is different about this conference is that nations will share ideas and their individual education policies in hope of finding a better solution by examining the work of others. Moreover, countries of the same region (eg: Latin America) will work together to help establish national education standards for things such as teacher

¹²E.V., Transparency International. "How to Stop Corruption: 5 Key Ingredients." *Www.transparency.org*. Transparency International 2016, 10 Mar. 2016. Web. 29 Apr. 2017.

certification and other proponents of the education sector. Most third-world nations are unable to solve the issue of education because they have no support and the ideas that they are implementing may not always work. It is difficult for many countries to help establish standards or think of solutions, but when countries work together, wonders occur.

One of the greatest problems that third-world nations have is that they have limited funds that can be used towards education and they have no way to implement measures that can help improve their situation. Thus, the delegate of Mexico proposes the creation of a "buddy program" where a developed nation will be paired with a developing nation that they are on friendly terms with. The developed nation will provide developed nation funds, help root out corruption and provide support in helping implement education in exchange for benefits such as beneficial trade deals or exclusive mining rights in certain parts of the country. In addition, the two nations will also work out a comprehensive plan that includes a timeline as well as the responsibilities of each nation. The organization Big Brother Educational Program (BBEP) will be created and is delegated the responsibility of receiving input and organizing the assignments for nations as well as provide a network of communication between the countries. Furthermore, the organization will help monitor the progress of education in the developing nation and the general situation to ensure that the developing nation doesn't abuse its position and violate the developing nation's sovereignty. This plan will help provide developing nations with the funding and support to help establish an educational system.

In order to help regions within a nation help reach educational standards, incentives should be used as one of the many ways to help a nation achieve universal high-quality education. Although incentives should not be the only solution that a nation implements, it is

useful because it can help a nation reach certain standards and it can also help other solutions reach their objectives. The delegate of Mexico suggests that governments establish certain incentives for school districts in their nation once they reach certain educational standards. For example, if the school scores in the top 75 percentile of a standardized test for more than half of the grades it teaches, teachers and administrators receive a salary bonus. Another solution could be if the school district has a high school graduation rate of over 75%, then additional funding or other resources such as newer editions of textbooks could be provided to the school district. As the school district improves its quality, the goals it needs to reach will also change. These numbers will be different for every region and nation but the same basic idea remains: if educational outcomes are higher, the more benefits the staff and the students will receive.

Finally, in order to help educational systems reach out to everyone, especially in nations with diverse ethnic roots, the delegation of Mexico urges for certain standards be set in addition to the benchmarks for educational system. To begin with, in areas where most people speak a native language in addition to the official language, instruction should be provided in both. Although this will require more work, teaching two languages will also motivate parents to send their children to school as they know that by going to school, they will also learn to improve their communication skills with the language that they speak at home with their elders. Furthermore, in order to improve accountability, schools, if not the government, should publish quarterly reports to inform parents about the school situation. If schools want parents to send their children there, they have to be open about their actions and keep the guardians of their children informed.

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