Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all

The role of business

Education is a fundamental human right and is indispensable for the achievement of sustainable development. We are only able to empower girls, combat climate change, fight inequality and end extreme poverty if all stakeholders, including business, commit themselves to advancing the education goal. While education needs globally are immense, companies can leverage their resources and core competencies to support governments in delivering on their promise of education for all. Strong leadership by business can help unlock the necessary investments to ensure quality learning opportunities for all children and adults.

The business case to invest in education can range from improving brand leadership to developing the capacity of future employees and building a more diverse employee pipeline. Education can help address the mismatch between skills of the available workforce and job vacancies, which is a key problem in many markets. Business can make long-term strategic investments in education that will lead to a larger, more talented pool of future employees. Investing in education can be a source of innovation and facilitate access to new markets.

Education is often a local issue, which will require businesses to work within local education systems and in communities to determine the best utilization of resources. Business should apply best practices to engage responsibly in education, including promoting sustainable development topics in higher education, and support the public sector's ability to provide inclusive and equitable quality learning opportunities for all.

Key business themes addressed by this SDG

- Education for sustainable development
- Availability of a skilled workforce
- Capacity Building
- Indirect Impact on Job Creation
- Youth Employment

Examples of key business actions and solutions

The below examples are non-exhaustive and some may be more relevant to certain industries than to others.

- Establish relationships with government entities and higher education institutions to improve education curricula to better align with business needs including responsible management.
- Create programs (e.g., internships, work-study programs, traineeships, etc.) that give students earlier access to the corporate environment.
- Provide employees with continuous opportunities to improve their (job) skills for their current and future employment.
- Develop cost-effective education products and services that eliminate barriers to access and improve the quality of learning (e.g., ICT solutions to improve the delivery of education, innovative measurement tools, etc.).
- Ensure learning environments are clean and safe for children by mitigating business-related environmental hazards, like pollution and limited water access.

Examples of key business indicators

- The Women's Empowerment Principles: What is the business' policy and provision of childcare facilities and how many employees, if any, use this facility?
- GRI G4 Construction and Real Estate Sector Disclosures, CRE8: Type and number of sustainability certification, rating and labeling schemes for new construction, management, occupation and redevelopment
- UN Global Compact-Oxfam Poverty Footprint, PF-4.1: i) Approximate proportion of workers (m/w) along the value chain who receive training per year. ii) Average number of hours (or days) of training(s) provided to workers (m/w). iii) Provide details on the type(s) of training(s) provided
- GRI G4 Sustainability Reporting Guidelines, G4-LA9: Average hours of training per year per employee by gender, and by employee category
- GRI G4 Sustainability Reporting Guidelines, G4-43: Report the measures taken to develop and enhance the highest governance body's collective knowledge of economic, environmental and social topics

The complete overview of business indicators can be found at www.sdgcompass.org

Examples of key business tools

- Corporate Human Rights Benchmark (CHRB)
- Impact Reporting & Investment Standards (IRIS)
- UN Global Compact- Oxfam Poverty Footprint

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The SDG targets

4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

4.2 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

4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

4.4 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

4.5 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

4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and men, achieve literacy and numeracy

4.7 By 2030, ensure all learners acquire 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 cultures contribution to sustainable development

4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

4.b By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships for developing countries in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training, and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programs in developed countries and other developing countries

4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries, small island developing States