



The Future of Education Related to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)

¹Sultan Kowkas*, ¹Shaheen Shayeb, ¹Narmeen Bransi

Corresponding Author: * skowkas@gmail.com

¹ National University, Nablus, Palestine

Abstract

The spreading aspects of the seventeen sustainable development goals have been of concern to researchers in education worldwide. These goals have shed light on and captured the attention of very crucial issues. The significance of these issues (the core of each SDG) lies in their importance, connectedness, and mutual influence on each other. Education, the highest peak of achievement in every society, and hence in the whole (small) world, is directly affected by each SDG. That was the reason for considering the future of Education in sight of one of the most influential sustainable goals, namely, peace, justice, and strong institutions. The current paper is a position paper that discusses the float of the sixteenth sustainable goal along the future of Education. The researchers propose two statements: firstly, SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 possess a reciprocal interaction property (i.e., mutually impact each other). Secondly, this cyclic process has to start by first accomplishing SDG 16.

Keywords: Education; Future of Education; SDG4; SDG16; Sustainable development goals

Introduction

In September 2015, 193 countries agreed on a global goal set by all UN members. They are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) brought to light as part of Agenda 2030 on Jan. 1, 2016. All countries seek to take action in their national development to end poverty, protect the globe, and reach prosperity. SDG 16, Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, urges countries to approach safe, collaborative, caring, encompassing societies and go egalitarianism through institutions of well-structured systems [1]. As Agenda 2030 acknowledges that sustainable development would ensure and require such societies, SDG 16 is considered both an aim and a bridge to reach them.

On the other hand, many parties have begun working on the SDGs' goals for their interconnection and universality. However, noting that these goals will not be met if things are done the same way they have been, stakeholders such as Member States, UN agencies, and academia have managed new strategies and approaches [2]. One of these is combining different goals to boost the achievement of one of the combined goals or more, such as quality education (SDG 4) and (SDG 16) on peace, justice, and strong institutions. Given this and the inevitable concern about the future of education related to SDG 16, the researchers propose two statements: firstly, SDG 4 and SDG 16 possess a reciprocal interaction property (i.e., they mutually impact each other). Secondly, this cyclic process has to start by first accomplishing SDG 16.

SDG 4 and SDG 16 Possess a Reciprocal Interaction Property

UNESCO's 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report highlights the intersection of education and SDG 16 through their reciprocal nature. Education is not possible without safe, peaceful, and just societies, and on the other hand, education is essential for providing these values. Every country finds difficulties in dealing with corruption, crime, and human rights abuses for every citizen. Thus, establishing peace in societies is out of reach [3]. Meanwhile, local conflicts significantly affect international investments, destroying macro-economic development. As a result, poverty increases, life expectancy reduces, and low education results [4]. Such a brutal impact prolongs for a more extended range on the local economy and the industries' sectors, decelerating future development [5]. The pandemic lockdowns of COVID-19 caused severe financial problems for many people, creating personal stress and instability, increasing crimes and law-breaking on hand, and reducing security, life-saving services, and justice in addition to child abuse and misuse globally. The SDG framework is an initial step toward achieving a global citizenship education (GCE) through implementing an international spirit and intercultural mindset in schools and educational institutions worldwide [6]. This is done by engaging learners with national and international issues, penetrating countries' borders, and influencing everyone [7]. In addition, to achieve mutual reinforcement of SDG 4 and SDG 16, a multi-stakeholder strategy, including partnership with higher education institutions and scholars, is critical.

Impact of Education on SDG 16

Education is vital in promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions. Integrating the global ideals of peace, nonviolence, tolerance, and respect for human rights into all education curricula and methodologies will help establish a strategy to promote peace via education. There is UNESCO's Associated Schools Project, ASP, in schools (at all stages: primary – secondary). Projects produced by the ASP supplement schools with learning materials that stimulate SDG 16. These materials spotlight crucial global themes such as world concerns, human rights, democracy, intercultural literature, and international conflicts in a methodology that furnishes peace education (PE). PE generates awareness of the origins and causes of disputes and equips learners with the necessary skills and ideas to respond to these conflicts smartly and justly since conflicts are unavoidable while violence is. Only a few hundred schools worldwide are joining the ASP programs [8].

Higher education also contributes evidently to SDG 16 through its well-planned instructional programs and its precise scope of research. Such programs may contain modules on justice and governance (similar to those developed by Education for Justice - E4J). These curricula accentuate values relevant to peace-seeking, ending conflicts, and promoting critical thinking and globalized issues. By implementing these targets, HEIs are the changing agents in their countries since leaders, governors, politicians, stakeholders, and decision-makers would have mindsets created at HEIs [9]. Thus, HE's education should be free from prejudice and harassment and be ant violence to inspire respect for human rights and prevent violence [10]. The 21st-century education of digital programs in e-learning also facilitates SDG 16 using systematic approaches based on values such as justice, equality, tolerance, and responsibility integrated into courses' tasks assigned to pairs or groups of multinational students.

These programs bring different ideas and opinions closer and merge them toward shared goals [11]. The previously mentioned implementation and application of those procedural ideas are formulated regarding the learning objectives set for promoting SDG 16, namely Cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral learning objectives, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Impact of SDG 16 on Education

Summary of the learning objectives		
Cognitive	1.	Comprehension of justice, inclusion, peace, and their connection to law.
	2.	Comprehension of the local legislation, its representation, and the possibility of misuse by corruption.
	3.	The ability to compare local systems of Justice with those in other countries.
	4.	Realizing the significance of individuals and groups in retaining justice, inclusion, and peace and promoting strong institutions locally and globally.
	5.	Realizing the importance of human rights internationally.
Socio-emotional	1.	The ability to associate with others who can help facilitate peace, justice, inclusion, and strong institutions (PJI-SI) in the country.
	2.	The ability to debate local and global issues of (PJI-SI).
	3.	The ability to commiserate with those suffering from injustice locally and internationally.
	4.	The ability to reflect on someone's role in issues related to SDG 16.
	5.	The ability to reflect on someone's attitudes and affiliation with specific groups.
Behavioral	1.	The ability to critically assess issues of (PJI-SI) locally, regionally, and globally.
	2.	The ability to behest and support the progression of policies that call for (PJI-SI).
	3.	The ability to collaborate with those deprived of justice and suffering from conflicts.
	4.	The ability to participate actively in local parties, speak up, and stand against injustice.
	5.	The ability to contribute to conflict resolution nationally.

Note. Adapted from Education for sustainable development goals: Learning objectives, by M. Rieckmann, 2017, p. 42. Copyright 2017 by UNESCO Publishing.

There is a cyclical relationship between inequality and conflict in every sector of life. One of these is the growing inequality in education among ethnic, religious, or other identity groups. Such inequality contributes to the impetus and stimulates rebellion. In this context, unequal education is one of the direct sources of complaint and feeling oppressed. Gradually accumulated states of being would burst into uncontrolled expressions of rage resembling violent confrontation, destruction, and inhuman acts [12]. Accordingly, countries with greater inequality between groups have a higher risk of conflict than other conflict-predicting factors, such as wealth, political regimes, and geography [13]. Growing global interest applied many methods to improve the performance of educational institutions, such as the (Institutional Government) or 'Strong Institutions (SI)' as a contemporary global trend whose goal is improving educational effectiveness, development of outcomes, reduction of the abuse of power and comply with laws and standards of ethical behaviors [14]. These SIs help achieve transparency and legal responsibilities and reduce financial and administrative corruption [15],[16]. Moreover, SI's increase the production ability, dissemination, and beneficiary of information of all kinds.

By imposing effective policies, governments must ensure the adequacy of education systems to sustainability challenges. These policies include integrating Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into curricula and country standards for learning outcomes. ESD should not be supplementary to the existing curriculum but should be dominant in all components of education (learning content, campus operations, organizational culture, student participation, leadership and management, research, etc.) [17].

The Cyclic Process has to Start by First Accomplishing SDG 16

According to the previous two sections, there is a reciprocal interaction between SDG 16 and Education, which functions in a cyclic process, as shown in Fig. 1. It is reasonable that this cycle has to start by first accomplishing SDG 16. This is so since SDG 16 calls on UN member states to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies. . . provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.” Inclusive institutions' presence (or absence) influences the rest of the SDGs (which, in turn, also impact each other). This implies the necessity of achieving SDG 16 first. Moreover, SDG 16 urges collaborative political institutions to pursue the reduction of inequality in all its forms: political, social, financial, etc. [18]. In addition, SDG 16 has to start with an individual's inner satisfaction that considers remedial justice. The concepts and beliefs of SDG 16 could be improved by enriching autonomy, self-sufficiency, and decentralization among individuals. This is achieved by promoting recognition of the legal reconstruction elements that put forward the cultural aspects of human rights, remodeling a ‘human rights’-based culture directed toward a better future rather than a traditional one [19].

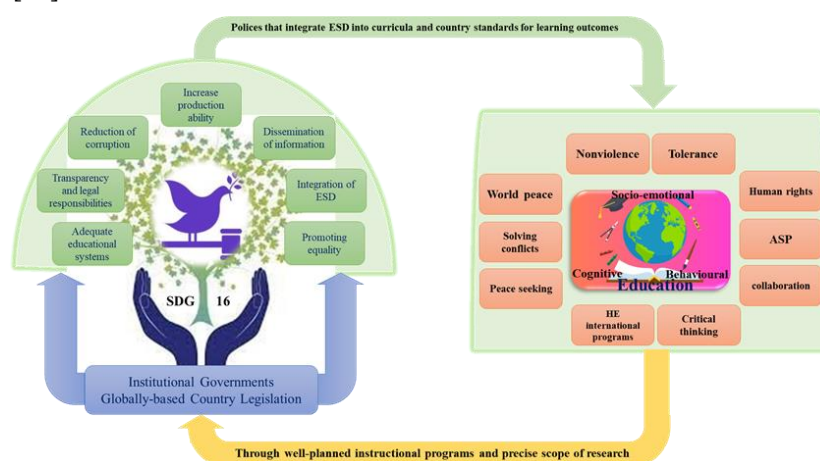


Fig. 1. The cyclic process of impact between SDG 16 and Education

Note. The cyclic process represents the reciprocal interaction between SDG 16 and SDG 4, showing the components of SDG 16 that would influence and impact education, whose components (are shown) contribute to empowering and enriching SDG 16.

Challenges in the Way of the SDG 4 – SDG 16 Process

Recent years have witnessed an increase in the number of violent conflicts worldwide, including high-intensity armed conflicts. There is still an uneven progression in promoting SDG 16 across many regions. SDG 16 is still the most challenging sustainable goal to accomplish. This has been interpreted and attributed to ‘Individualism’ [20]. Individualism resembles a single-person approach and a single group, party, county, and even country. According to people of public influence, such as philosophers, authors, historians, and politicians, there is no easy solution for individualism-based violence and conflicts [21]. However, governors and leaders must work more sincerely toward SDG 16 in their own countries first and internationally afterward, maintain justice for all with no biases in every sector of society, fight corruption firmly, and ensure safety, security, and peace. Investing in an educational system that can back up these steps would fruitfully support them.

Conclusion

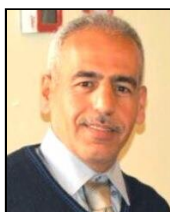
This paper discussed the relationship between SDG 4 and SDG 16 in an attempt to foresee the future of education related to SDG 16. As mentioned, SDG16 is considered the most difficult to achieve. Even though a cyclic reciprocal interaction property should be initiated by accomplishing SDG 16, especially justice and peace. As mentioned at the end of the previous section, these actions highlight diversity as a fundamental human value to be appreciated and accepted naturally. Encouraging and financially supporting collaborative projects that consist of various cultural backgrounds, both locally and internationally. To invest highly in educational systems that adopt the previously mentioned values and cooperate with multiple types of alternative education that emphasize global ethics, indigenous learning, eco pedagogy, and ecocentric education.

References

- [1] United Nation. (2016). *The sustainable development agenda*. Available at: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>. Accessed 1 Feb 2020.
- [2] Lawrence, A. W., Ihebuzor, N., & Lawrence, D. O. (2020). Comparative Analysis of Alignments between SDG16 and the Other Sustainable Development Goals. *International Business Research*, 13(10), 1-13.
- [3] IAE-SDGs. (2020). *Tier Classification for Global SDG Indicators* (as of 17 July 2020). Available at: [IAE-SDGs — SDG Indicators \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/). Accessed 10 January 2024.
- [4] Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2013). Economics versus politics: Pitfalls of policy advice. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 27(2), 173-92.
- [5] Ebrahimian, D.(2003) Conflict Prevention. Commission for Social Development in. Korten, D.C. The World According to George Soros. *Tikkun Magazine*. March/April 2001.
- [6] Pashby, K. (2012). Questions for global citizenship education in the context of the 'new imperialism.' In V. de Oliveira Andreotti and L. M. TM. de Souza (Eds.) *Postcolonial Perspectives on Global Citizenship Education*, (pp. 9–26). New York: Routledge.
- [7] Lee, S. S. (2020). Fostering “global citizens”? Trends in global awareness, agency, and competence in textbooks worldwide, 1950–2011. *Prospects*, 48(3), 215-236.
- [8] Amamio, M. C. (2004). *The role of peace education in preventing conflict*. UNISCA.
- [9] Milton, S. (2021). Higher education and sustainable development goal 16 in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. *Higher Education*, 81(1), 89-108.
- [10] Klima, N., Martins Vasconcelos Senra, J., & De Backer, J. (2021). Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and SDG 16: inter-and transdisciplinary cooperation towards impact. *Freedom From Fear Magazine*, 12, 159-169.
- [11] Zhang, T., Shaikh, Z. A., Yumashev, A. V., & Chład, M. (2020). Applied model of E-learning in the framework of education for sustainable development. *Sustainability*, 12(16), 6420.
- [12] Okpa, J. T., Ajah, B. O., Eze, O. J., & Enweonwu, O. A. (2023). Communal Conflict and Violence: Causes and Impact. In *Handbook of Anger, Aggression, and Violence* (pp. 1-17). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- [13] UNESCO (2019). Global Education Monitoring Report. Migration, displacement, and education: Building Bridges, not Walls. Paris, UNESCO. Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2019/migration>. Accessed 20 April 2023.
- [14] Muhammad, M. (2015). Governance of pre-university education institutions as an approach to promoting the ethics of the teaching profession in the Arab Republic of Egypt. *The Scientific Journal for The College of Education*, 31(4), 397-468.
- [15] Awad, A. (2011). Governance of NGOs and comprehensive quality assurance of pre-university education institutions. *Journal of Studies in Social Work and Human Sciences*, 30(2), 415-419.
- [16] Ibrahim, K. (2014). The experiences of some developed and developing countries in the field of implementing good governance in pre-university education. *The World of Education*, 47(5), 17-81.
- [17] Hajdukiewicz, A., & Pera, B. (2020). Education for sustainable development—the case of massive open online courses. *Sustainability*, 12(20), 8542.

- [18] The Global Observatory, 2019. Available at: <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2019/06/integrating-goal-16-human-rights-with-all-sdgs-vital-to-2030-agenda/>. Accessed 1 February 2022.
- [19] Johnson, J. (2004). Development as freedom, freedom as happiness: Human development and happiness in Bhutan. In *Gross National Happiness and Development—Proceedings of the first international conference on operationalization of Gross National Happiness* (pp. 457–471). Thimphu: Centre for Bhutan Studies.
- [20] Mintzberg, H. (2015). *Rebalancing Society: Radical Renewal Beyond Left, Right, and Center*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco.
- [21] Mukhi, U., & Quental, C. (2019). Exploring the challenges and opportunities of the United Nations sustainable development goals: a dialogue between a climate scientist and management scholars. *Corporate Governance: The International Journal of Business in Society*, 19(3), 552–564.

Authors



Sultan Kowkas is a Ph.D. Candidate in Teaching and Learning at An-Najah National University, Palestine. M.A. in Pure Mathematics from Birzeit University, Palestine. He has been a Mathematics and Teaching strategies instructor at Sakhnin College, Jerusalem, for preservice teachers since 2016, and he has been a high-school Mathematics teacher for 24 years. (email: skowkas@gmail.com).



Shaheen Shayeb is a Ph.D. Candidate in Teaching and Learning at An-Najah National University, Palestine. M.A. in Teaching and Learning (Arabic Language Teaching and Literature). He is a lecturer at Al-Qasemi Academic College of Education, Israel. He has been a high-school Arabic Language teacher for over 20 years. (email: shahen.gzali@gmail.com).



Narmeen Bransi is a Ph.D. Candidate in Teaching and Learning at An-Najah National University, Palestine. M.ED. in Teaching and Learning Arabic Language. M.A. in Assessment and Evaluation. She works as an educational member of the Israeli Program for Innovations in Education and is a trainer for linguistic enlightenment in the Arabic Language for primary schools. (email: narmeen954@gmail.com).