

The Education Commission: Creating a Learning Generation

→ OUR JOURNEY, OUR IMPACT 2016–2021



Gordon Brown

Chair
UN Special Envoy for Global Education, Former Prime Minister,
United Kingdom

Anant Agarwal

CEO, edX; Professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

José Manuel Barroso

Non-Executive Chairman, Goldman Sachs International;
Former President, European Commission

Felipe Calderón

Honorary Chair, Global Commission on the Economy and
Climate; Former President, Mexico

Kristin Clemet

Managing Director, Civita; Former Minister of Education and
Research and Former Minister of Labour and Government
Administration, Norway

Aliko Dangote

CEO, Dangote Group

Julia Gillard

Chair, Global Institute of Women's Leadership; Former Prime
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Baela Raza Jamil

CEO, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA)

Amel Karboul

CEO, Education Outcomes Fund; Former Minister of Tourism,
Tunisia

Jakaya Kikwete

Board Chair, Global Partnership for Education;
Former President, Tanzania

Jim Kim

Vice Chairman and Partner, Global Infrastructure Partners;
Former President, World Bank Group

Yuriko Koike

Governor of Tokyo and Former Minister of Defense, Japan

Anthony Lake

Former Executive Director, UNICEF

Ju-Ho Lee

Chairperson, Education Commission Asia; Former Minister
of Education, Science, and Technology, South Korea

Jack Ma

Co-Founder and Former Executive Chairman, Alibaba Group

Graça Machel

Founder, Graça Machel Trust; Former Minister of Education,
Mozambique

Strive Masiyiwa

Executive Chairman and Founder, Econet Wireless

Teopista Birungi Mayanja

Founder and Chairperson of Board of Trustees, Uganda National
Teachers' Union (UNATU)

Shakira Mebarak

International Artist; Founder, Fundación Pies Descalzos

Patricio Meller

Professor, University of Chile; President, Fundación Chile

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

Director-General, World Trade Organization; Former Minister
of Finance, Nigeria

Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi

Former Minister of State for Tolerance and Former Minister of
International Cooperation and Development, United Arab Emirates

Kailash Satyarthi

Founder, Bachpan Bachao Andolan

Amartya Sen

Thomas W. Lamont University Professor and Professor of
Economics and Philosophy, Harvard University

Theo Sowa

Former CEO, African Women's Development Fund (AWDF)

Lawrence Summers

Charles W. Eliot University Professor and President Emeritus,
Harvard University; 71st Secretary of the Treasury for President
Clinton; Director of the National Economic Council for President
Obama

Helle Thorning-Schmidt

Former CEO, Save the Children International; Former Prime
Minister, Denmark

Liesbet Steer

Executive Director

2016

The Commission's
Learning Generation report

2021

12 recommendations to
get all children learning



Transformation Areas

I. Performance

Successful education systems put results front and center

- 1 Set standards, track progress, and make information public
- 2 Invest in what delivers the best results
- 3 Cut waste

II. Innovation

Successful education systems develop new and creative approaches to achieving results

- 4 Strengthen and diversify the education workforce
- 5 Harness technology for teaching and learning
- 6 Improve partnerships with non-state actors

III. Inclusion

Successful education systems reach everyone, including the most disadvantaged and marginalized

- 7 Prioritize the poor and early years – progressive universalism
- 8 Invest across sectors to tackle the factors preventing learning

IV. Finance

Successful education systems require more and better investment

- 9 Mobilize more and better domestic resources for education
- 10 Increase the international financing of education and improve its effectiveness
- 11 Establish a multilateral development bank (MDB) investment mechanism for education
- 12 Ensure leadership and accountability for the Learning Generation



Delivery

Empowering leaders with evidence on what works to implement policies and deliver results

PAGE 8



Workforce

Catalyzing new thinking to expand, strengthen, and diversify the education workforce

PAGE 7



Learning

Reimagining how children learn by harnessing technology and rethinking the role of the teacher in developing students' 21st century skills

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Finance

Mobilizing more and better investments in education through innovative finance

PAGE 9



Cross-sectoral collaboration

Working with and for sectors beyond education to create a Learning Generation

26 high-level Commissioners

— and an online community of —

130,000+

dedicated to inclusive and equitable quality education for all

FLAGSHIP REPORTS

300+ global researchers

contributed to the 2016 *Learning Generation* report and other landmark publications

6+ million

views of TED talk and video featuring Shakira and other Commissioners calling for increased investment in education to create a Learning Generation

#SAVEOURFUTURE CAMPAIGN

Spearheaded the award-winning



Save Our Future campaign and White Paper

to highlight education as the key to the COVID recovery

160+

countries reached

600+

partners and global advocates

100+

media outlets covered
#SaveOurFuture

25+ billion

social media impressions



LEARNING

Education Commission Asia (ECA) hub in South Korea launched



High Touch High Tech (HTHT)

national and global consortiums in December 2020 and organized HTHT 2021 Summit with

150+

international speakers

90,000+

views

COUNTRY IMPACT

In Vietnam,

an HTHT prototype increased students' math test scores by the equivalent of

2 years of learning gain

→ **1** in one semester

In Uruguay & South Korea,

the HTHT approach is being piloted in

100

schools

28

universities



DELIVERY

Policymakers from

10+ African countries

COUNTRY IMPACT

are part of our bi-monthly African Policymaker Forum on Delivery Approaches and COVID-19 Response

In Ghana, Jordan, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania, we're researching promising delivery approaches

In Brazil and beyond,

we're designing a program to train education leaders, test education policy delivery, and assess impact



WORKFORCE

Ghana, Lebanon, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Vietnam,

COUNTRY IMPACT

and other countries are translating the Commission's education workforce research and evidence into action

Transforming the Education Workforce: Learning Teams for a Learning Generation (2019)

This flagship report put forward new evidence-based visions for strengthening, diversifying, and reimagining an education workforce



GIS for Education Working Group

We established and co-lead a working group dedicated to cutting-edge geospatial data and analysis to solve big education challenges like workforce allocation



FINANCE

With four MDBs, the Commission led the design of the

International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd)—

an innovative financing mechanism that will soon unlock

up to **\$5 billion**

in new funding for education by 2030



Global Education Forum

Convening biannual meetings of 30+ donors to coordinate and collaborate on the Save Our Future action agenda

Introduction

“Education is the key that unlocks all our human development goals.”

GORDON BROWN, Education Commission Chair
and UN Special Envoy for Global Education

In 2015, the world committed to a bold vision to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the heart of the SDGs and critical to the achievement of the entire agenda is SDG 4: *ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all*.

The Education Commission was established to identify pathways to secure greater progress on SDG 4 through more effective reform and investment. The Commission’s 2016 report *The Learning Generation* delivered a stark warning: if nothing changes by 2030, 825 million young people – about half of today’s young generation – will reach adulthood without the skills needed to thrive. It also presented a clear 12-point action plan to address this learning crisis. But in 2020, the COVID pandemic exacerbated existing challenges and created a global education emergency. The risks of long-lasting setbacks in education are significant, and we must turn this crisis into an opportunity for faster progress and impact at scale. There is no time to waste.

Over the past five years, the Commission has evolved from an organization that delivered a groundbreaking report to one that turns big ideas from the report into results on the ground through analysis, action, and amplification.

This report – *The Education Commission: Creating a Learning Generation* – sets out our journey, celebrates our achievements, and presents a bold vision for the next decade.

The Commission’s work has been relentlessly focused on impact. We did not limit ourselves to producing a global report and action plan but wanted to develop our capacity to collaborate with organizations and countries and translate the recommendations into action. We have developed an interactive and iterative approach to:



research and **analyze** problems and potential solutions



act on the ground to test new ideas in new contexts to influence decisions



and **amplify** by building coalitions at national and global levels.

We’ve delivered impact by using three important assets:

OUR COMMISSIONERS – An influential group of 26 high-level *Commissioners*, chaired by the UN Special Envoy on Global Education Gordon Brown, includes former heads of state and government ministers, Nobel laureates, and leaders in education, business, economics, finance, development, health, security, and even an international pop star (Shakira). The Commissioners are uniquely positioned to promote innovative solutions, broker relationships, generate political momentum at the country level, and influence action by international organizations.

OUR COMMISSION TEAM – Behind the Commissioners is a small, dynamic team with skills and experience in research, partnerships, coalition-building, country work, education policy implementation, communications, and advocacy. This core team leads the research for the Commission’s reports, oversees our key action initiatives, and is responsible for the overall management of the Commission’s work.

OUR COMMISSION PARTNERS – The Commission’s analytical and influencing work has been supported by a rich network of local and global *partners* in research and academic organizations, country governments, national and international institutions, civil society, youth advocates, and the private sector. This network includes, for example, more than 300 partners who contributed to the *Learning Generation* report and subsequent flagship reports. It also includes the multilateral development banks and bilateral donors that helped to design the International Finance Facility for Education as well as the country governments that are working with us to co-develop a new vision for the education workforce and new models of learning.

Mobilizing action around big innovative ideas

“The Learning Generation report has had an important impact on the academic community – stimulating high-quality, evidence-based policy debates.”

PAULINE ROSE, Director, Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre, University of Cambridge



“Amidst the current global crisis in education, we are far past the point of reform...We need an education revolution.”

JIDENNA, Save Our Future Global Ambassador, rapper, and singer

Since its inception, the Commission has worked with partners on several transformative ideas which are being embraced by the wider education and development community, and taken forward as part of the Commission's continued work. For example, the Commission developed the idea of *learning teams* – the promotion of new roles and collaborative teams in education, moving from a teacher-centered to a child-centered approach to learning. This idea was proposed by the Commission's [Transforming the Education Workforce](#) report, endorsed by the [Save Our Future](#) coalition, is being tested in specific country contexts, and guides the work of [GreaterShare](#) – a new philanthropic fund.

The Commission also introduced a *new form of quasi-equity* for the multilateral development banks – a pioneering financial innovation that underpins the [International Finance Facility for Education \(IFFEd\)](#). This new concept of capital received a very strong evaluation by credit rating agencies (S&P and Moody's).



Photo: AFP



TRANSFORMATION 1

Learning



Left photo: Tom Perry/World Bank. Right photo: Dominic Chavez/World Bank

The Commission has been reimagining how children learn to improve educational equity, inclusion, quality, and results. Building on a growing body of research, it is testing and scaling new and more personalized, flexible learning solutions, together with innovative pedagogies, to equip students with the 21st century skills needed for future work.

A BIG IDEA

Based on existing evidence around the impact of personalized learning approaches, [High Touch High Tech](#) (HTHT) seeks to combine adaptive technology (High Tech) with the personalized teaching and cultivation of students' higher order skills and socio-emotional growth (High Touch). [The HTHT initiative](#) was established in response to *The Learning Generation* report recommendations to harness innovation in three key areas: the education workforce, the use of technology, and the role of non-state partners. HTHT uses these three elements to explore how we can leverage technology and the human touch of teachers to transform learning at scale.

DEMONSTRATED IMPACT ON THE GROUND

In partnership with Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training and Arizona State University, the Commission implemented a prototype HTHT program for grade 7 math in urban schools in Vietnam. The prototype demonstrated promising results with an increase in treated students' math test scores by an equivalent of two years of learning in just one semester, and with positive teacher satisfaction and adoption after just one semester. In partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank and Plan Ceibal, an HTHT pilot is testing the approach in math and critical thinking in 100 schools in Uruguay. In South Korea, the Commission has launched an [HTHT consortium](#) with 28 universities now implementing the approach. The ecosystem for scale, cost effectiveness, and potential solutions and impact in different contexts is being studied further.

“It is time that we admit the need for a change in the paradigm of education and build a new one together.”

JU-HO LEE, Chairperson, Education Commission Asia and former Minister of Education, Science, and Technology, South Korea

AMPLIFICATION ACROSS GEOGRAPHIES AND INDUSTRIES

To expand the work in Asia and across the world, the Education Commission Asia ([ECA](#)) [hub](#) was established in South Korea and is led by Commissioner and South Korea's former Minister of Education, Science, and Technology Ju-Ho Lee. In July 2021, ECA convened diverse actors from the ecosystem and co-hosted [HTHT 2021](#) – a four-day global summit on leveraging AI to narrow the achievement gap in education. The hybrid summit included more than 150 international speakers and the sessions have been viewed more than 90,000 times on [YouTube](#). To further support and amplify the work, the Commission launched a [High Touch High Tech for All Global Consortium](#) – a multisectoral, multidisciplinary effort across governments, EdTech innovators, industry providers, CSOs, and educators to develop a rigorous evidence base, engage partners, and develop a collaborative network to support bold ways to address the digital divide.



TRANSFORMATION 2

Workforce



A BIG IDEA

In 2019, the Commission's [Transforming the Education Workforce report](#) put forward a new vision to reimagine an education workforce, including the creation of learner-centered *learning teams* as part of a resilient and flexible education system. This vision emerged from global evidence on designing, diversifying, and strengthening the education workforce. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the critical importance of teamwork and the need for teachers to be supported by school leaders, parents and caregivers, community volunteers, community health workers, and the rest of the education system to ensure learning continues and no child is left behind.

FURTHER INNOVATIVE ANALYSIS

In response to the pandemic, the Commission partnered with the Rwanda Education Board (REB), WISE, and the Education Development Trust to undertake [research](#) on school and system leadership in Rwanda during COVID-19 closures and as the schools were reopening. We used an innovative [learning partnership approach](#) so the research could inform the REB's real-time decision-making and lead to concrete actions.

We also partnered with the Global Partnership for Education to research diagnostic and analytical tools to help governments better understand the quality of teaching and the broader education workforce, and to help pioneer more holistic education workforce planning. A report will be published in late 2021.

TESTING ON THE GROUND

The Commission's Education Workforce Initiative (EWI) is working with [Ghana](#), [Sierra Leone](#), and [Vietnam](#) to translate this vision into action at the country level.

In [Ghana](#), the Commission collaborated with the Ghana Education Service (GES) and PwC Ghana to redesign the education workforce, including new functions and organizational structures at each level to reorient the system towards learning. The former education minister saw this as one of the most important items on his menu of reforms. Elements of this are now being implemented and plans are underway for large-scale implementation of this reform.

*"EWI has provided technical support for the redesign of the workforce of the largest employer on government's payroll. **This program will impact the planning of labor to plan for the nation.**"*
- GES Director of Human Resource Management & Development

In [Sierra Leone](#), the Commission worked with the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) and our partner Fab Inc. to research, analyze, and propose solutions for improving the supply and demand of teachers in the most disadvantaged areas, drawing on the latest data-driven techniques such as GIS and preference-matching algorithms for a more equitable teacher workforce. Based on this analysis, the World Bank agreed a new funding trigger for the FREE project to increase the supply of qualified teachers to rural areas. This work led to the development of the Catchment Area Planning Policy and the School Approval policy guidelines which put the education workforce at the heart, and to the development of a vulnerability index to support responses to the COVID-19 crisis. More recently a data dashboard has been developed to help the TSC with data-driven decision-making.

AMPLIFYING OUR REACH THROUGH POLICY DIALOGUES AND HIGH-LEVEL CHAMPIONS

We have held policy dialogues (e.g. in [Southeast Asia](#) and [Lebanon](#)) with key decision-makers to share and translate the latest evidence, catalyze new thinking, and support action on the ground. These dialogues have been supported and facilitated by a [High-level Steering Group](#) which includes several of our Commissioners. We established and are co-leading the GIS working group and have led education workforce working groups for Save Our Future and the Global Education Forum to ensure that teachers and the broader education workforce are on the global agenda.

As the African proverb says, "It takes a village to raise a child." When this ethos of collaboration and care is applied to the learning process, we believe it takes a team to educate a child.

THEO SOWA, Education Commissioner and former CEO, African Women's Development Fund



TRANSFORMATION 3

Delivery



DR. JAKAYA KIKWETE

Left photo: Lana Wong Right photo: Leigh Vogel

“I realized the problems may not necessarily lie in the quality of policymaking processes or policies themselves, but in the mechanisms in place for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.”

DR. JAKAYA KIKWETE, Global Partnership for Education Board Chair, former President of Tanzania, and Education Commissioner

Many governments lack an understanding of how they can truly deliver better education outcomes, despite the political will to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all their students. Together with local and global partners, the Commission has gathered evidence and created a community of engagement to build an understanding of how to most effectively implement policies that address the learning crisis.

A BIG IDEA

In partnership with Oxford’s Blavatnik School of Government, the Commission launched the [DeliverEd initiative](#) to review global evidence on delivery approaches and identify effective policy implementation solutions with in-depth country work in Ghana, India, Jordan, Pakistan, and Tanzania. DeliverEd aims to address whether and how delivery approaches work to improve education service delivery in low- and middle-income countries. We conducted detailed analysis and produced a [systematic interactive global map](#) of more than 150 instances of delivery approaches used across 80 different countries to share data, examples, and trends in delivery approach design.

ACTION ON THE GROUND TO ASSESS IMPACT

The Commission is partnering with the Lemann Leadership Center for Equity in Education to design a program to train

education leaders and test education policy delivery in Brazil and beyond. In a series of workshops, we are working to inspire and support the design of a leadership training program that will be complemented with active testing of the approach in different districts and a research program to assess impact.

AMPLIFYING THROUGH A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

With the heightened urgency to improve education service delivery across Africa, the Education Commission and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) launched a community of practice which brings policymakers from across the continent together every two months to discuss delivery challenges and strategies to address them. These regular sessions are designed around country needs and informed by the ongoing DeliverEd research on delivery approaches used in Ghana and Tanzania. These convenings of the [African Policymaker Forum on Delivery Approaches and COVID-19 Response](#) include education ministry representatives from Angola, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, and Sierra Leone.

“Investing in team-building, meeting stakeholders’ needs, listening in a deep and honest way, inviting active participation, building collaborative spaces, and co-creating policies is what allowed for creating sustainable public policy.”

MERCEDES MIGUEL, former Secretary of State for Innovation and Quality in Education, Argentina and DeliverEd High-Level Advisory Group Co-chair



TRANSFORMATION 4

Finance



“As a former finance minister of an African country, I know how important the International Finance Facility for Education will be to generate advances in learning for the next generation of young people. It is time that education harnesses financial innovation to deliver on our promise of equitable and inclusive education for all.”

NGOZI OKONJO-IWEALA, World Trade Organization Director-General, Former Minister of Finance of Nigeria, and Education Commissioner

The Commission has emerged as a leader in mobilizing education investments and transforming financial mechanisms to reach SDG 4 through innovative finance. It has worked with partners on the development of new global financial instruments and created a high-level forum to coordinate education investments, increase aid impact, and influence policy.

A BIG IDEA

After years of vigorous analysis of the gaps in the education financing landscape, the Commission called for the establishment of the [International Finance Facility for Education \(IFFEd\)](#). IFFEd is fully designed and ready to be operationalized. It provides a powerful new financing engine to tackle the education crisis in lower-middle-income countries (LMICs) which are home to 80% of the world's children. By using a combination of catalytic grants and guarantees, IFFEd will multiply scarce donor resources by a factor of between five and eight, and help close the massive education financing gap.

The Commission also called for the scale up of impact investment and results-based financing in education. This led to the development of the [Education Outcomes Fund \(EOF\)](#).

CO-DESIGN AND OPERATIONALIZATION

Since 2016, the Commission has led the development of IFFEd through extensive consultations and negotiations with a variety of technical and political stakeholders. Four major MDBs agreed to co-design IFFEd, along with a group of technical experts from potential donor countries. The process resulted in high-level political support from potential donor and beneficiary countries. In 2019, IFFEd secured a pledge of \$600 million from founding donors and an anticipated strong credit rating from S&P and Moody's for its establishment. In September 2021, the UN Secretary-General called for the operationalization of IFFEd in his *Our Common Agenda* report. EOF was established in 2018 and is now an independent global trust fund hosted by UNICEF that will soon be launching two multimillion-dollar programs in Ghana and Sierra Leone to bring children back to school.

AMPLIFICATION THROUGH GLOBAL COORDINATION

The Commission's work has led to a global call-to-action on education finance, which contributed to the first increase in education funding in seven years. In addition to developing new financial mechanisms, the Commission is also hosting the secretariat of the [Global Education Forum \(GEF\)](#) to improve collaboration between major bilateral and multilateral education donors and to raise awareness of the education financing crisis.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission mobilized the historic [#SaveOurFuture](#) global coalition to sound the alarm on the education emergency and urge leaders to protect investments. A [white paper](#) was issued by 14 of the world's biggest education organizations and the campaign – supported by more than 600 CSO partners and global advocates – reached more than 160 countries.



Photo: @geyoel.kahssey - photographer

Looking ahead to the Learning Generation Institute

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has compounded and intensified the global learning crisis. Building on insights developed and cross-sectoral coalitions we've created over the past five years, we are working with our partners to evolve and meet this moment by establishing **the Learning Generation Institute**. This new entity will continue the Commission's work and provide a stronger institutional platform to make the ambition of translating bold, evidence-based ideas into action a reality around the world.

Translating big ideas into real progress towards inclusive and equitable quality education requires an integrated approach. One that not only translates rigorous research into policy tools, but also learns from testing ideas on the ground and builds buy-in from global decision makers.

We are most effective when we work in partnership with others at the country and global levels. When building knowledge, designing programs, raising funds, and engaging with decision-makers, we always aim to do this in partnership with other leading players in the field. We have a track record of working intensively with a large number of partners, having collaborated with 14 leading multilateral

organizations and more than 200 CSO partners on the [Save Our Future](#) work alone. We expect to continue deepening our relationships with the key multilateral players in education, as well as governments and leading academic researchers from around the world.

Unique influencers, such as our Commissioners, are key to promoting innovative solutions, spearheading cross-sectoral partnerships, generating political momentum at multiple levels, and influencing action by international organizations.

Transforming education outcomes will require scaling up multisectoral platforms and approaches that can change many parts of the system. Investment is needed in solutions that will help tackle several challenges at once. The Commission has been exploring new ways of developing such multisectoral approaches through its work on the Global Coalition on School Feeding and our emerging work on climate and education.

With less than a decade remaining to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is critical to prioritize approaches to achieve learning outcomes for the furthest behind, including the poor and most vulnerable.

As we move forward we will reinforce our threefold interactive and iterative approach to change



Working towards impact for those furthest behind

Activities will be focused on the rural and urban poor, refugees and displaced populations, girls, the disabled, and other disadvantaged groups.

Funders

We are grateful for the generosity of a growing number of partners and donors including private foundations, governments, international institutions, corporations, individuals, and non-governmental organizations. Thank you for making our work possible.

Ark	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands
Asian Development Bank	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway
Atlassian Foundation	Inter-American Development Bank
Dubai Cares	The LEGO Foundation
Echidna Giving	Lemann Foundation
Education Cannot Wait	Mastercard Foundation
Deloitte	Qatar Foundation
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office of the United Kingdom	Reed Smith
Global Business Coalition for Education	Rockefeller Foundation
Goldman Sachs	UNICEF
	WISE

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**the
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Photo: Hector Reyes