

SDG 4: Quality Education

This module focuses on SDG 4 which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” Stories include a young Indigenous women in Guatemala, a refugee from South Sudan, and a United Nations presentation on transforming education globally. Activities include a debate, group work, and an applied community research activity.

Link to Subjects	Economics, Geography, Government, Humanities, Social Studies		
Link to Indiana High School Core	TBD Economics (E.1.8); Employability (9-10.SE.4);	Link to International Baccalaureate	TBD
Story	Story #1: Isabel's journey to pursue education in Indigenous Guatemala Story #2: School was a safe place: How education helped Nhial realize a dream Story #3: UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser for the Transforming Education Summit, Leonardo Garnier		
Activities	Activity #1: Quality and Access Debate	Activity #2: Jigsaw the Complexity of Education	Activity #3: Access and Quality in my School
Type of Activity	Class Informal Debate	Group Work With Movement	Research Activity
Time of Activity	1 class	1 class	Multiple Classes

Key Questions & Terms

Key Questions	Key Terms
How has access to education expanded over time?	Educational access
How has the policy discussion shifted from educational access to educational quality nationally and internationally?	Educational quality
What personal characteristics affect educational equity/equality in your community and globally?	Educational equity

Story Summaries

Story #1: Isabel's journey to pursue education in Indigenous Guatemala

Isabel's journey to pursue education in Indigenous Guatemala is part of a project that aims to establish a local educational model in rural areas for indigenous girls and women. The Center in Santa María Chiquimula, one of two centers established in Guatemala, plays a crucial role in this initiative.

[Story #1: Isabel's journey to pursue education in Indigenous Guatemala](#)
[Isabel's journey to pursue education in Indigenous Guatemala | United Nations](#)

Story #2: School was a safe place: How education helped Nhial realize a dream

Nhial Deng, a 23-year-old South Sudanese refugee, shares his inspiring journey of pursuing education in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. Despite the limited educational opportunities, Nhial recognized that education was the key to realizing his dream of becoming a journalist. His story exemplifies the transformative power of education in challenging circumstances.

[Story #2: School was a safe place: How education helped Nhial realize a dream](#)

Story #3: UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser for the Transforming Education Summit, Leonardo Garnier

The video script discusses the five action tracks of the Transforming Education Summit. It emphasizes the importance of education, the role of teachers, the use of digital tools, financing education, and the need for economic transformation.

[Story #3: UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser for the Transforming Education Summit, Leonardo Garnier](#)

Opening Discussion

Divide your students into two groups. Assign group 1 to read story #1 and group #2 to read story #2. After they have read these stories of individual experiences of education, lead a discussion about the topic using questions such as the following:

1. What does the story show about whether or not everyone has access to education?
2. What does the story show about the educational quality?
3. What does the story show about the role of education in personal and national development?

Through the discussion try to draw out the following concepts

1. There is **unequal access** to education.
2. That people experience different levels of **quality of education** and might have different definitions of quality.
3. That the **language of instruction** in a country can affect learning and that there are advantages to learning in your **mother tongue**.
4. That the long term **purposes of education** might be linked to employment outcome, personal development, or social outcomes.

That education plays an important role in **sustainable development**.

Activity #1: Quality and Access Debate

Students engage with policy materials related to SDG 4 and quality education and then have a debate about potential trade offs between education quality and education access, this links to SDG 4.1, but also relates to all other targets.

Activity Learning Objectives

1. Students understand that there are unequal levels of education quality and access within and between countries.
2. Students engage critically with trade offs between expanding educational access and increasing educational quality.
3. Students gain some familiarity with international organizations involved in education policy (e.g., UNESCO, Global Partnership for Education, World Bank, etc.).

Teacher preparation

1. Decide if you will have students read transcripts or watch videos.
2. Look up some statistics on how access to education has changed radically over the past 200 years, for example using data from OurWorldInData: <https://bit.ly/4ciPFrm>
3. You can also explore how education inequality appears in different countries by using the: <https://bit.ly/3XuopCb>.

Lesson Flow

If possible use two class sessions to have more time to discuss the topics that emerge.

1. Ask students what they know about what funds their own education system and how those funds are spent. For example, you can discuss local/state/federal taxes, grants, and parent contributions and how they are spent.
2. Explain to students that you will be having a debate on the relative importance of spending money to expand education access or spending money to improve education quality.
3. Before moving on, confirm basic comprehension by asking several students to explain their understanding of the following:
 - a. expanding education access,
 - b. improving education quality,
 - c. how there might be trade offs between access and quality
4. Have the students read (or watch) Story #3 and half of the students create arguments in favor of expanding access and the other half create arguments in support of prioritizing an improvement in education quality.
5. Alternating back and forth between the groups ask them to present arguments in favor of one side or the other. Optionally you could have a more formal debate structure and include rebuttals.
6. Have a classroom discussion about how they see these tradeoffs occurring in their community. (10 mins)

References

- World Bank. (2022). 70% of 10-Year-Olds now in Learning Poverty, Unable to Read and Understand a Simple Text. World Bank. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3KKsESA>
- World Bank. (2018). *Learning to Realize Education's Promise*. World Bank. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3Rx3Jpj>

Activity #2: Jigsaw the Complexity of Education

In this activity students will work in teams to identify the indicators that are being used to measure the various parts of SDG 4.

Activity Learning Objectives

1. Understand the complexity of education
2. Understand the various elements of SDG 4
3. Explore how difficult it is to measure goals across contexts

Teacher preparation

1. Create cut outs / papers each with one single indicator explanation but without the corresponding SDG 4 target. The indicators are here underneath each target: <https://bit.ly/4b7KkCz>
2. Tape these randomly around the room.

Lesson Flow

1. Provide a brief introduction to the “Targets” of SDG 4, e.g., target 4.1 is “By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.” You do not need to explain each target now, this will emerge through the activity.
2. Divide the classroom into 10 groups (if you are including targets 4.a, 4.b, and 4.c; otherwise, 7 groups for targets 4.1 to 4.7) and assign each group to one target.
3. Within each group, assign one student to be the writer and one (or several) to be the data collector. Explain that the writer must stay seated while the searchers look around the classroom to find the indicators that they think would measure their target. Make sure that students are not using phones or laptops – they should use logic to determine the match. The searchers cannot bring any writing materials, they must find the indicator, memorize it, and return back to the group to report it. For students with mobility or visual restrictions, pair them with another student. (20 mins)
 - a. For groups that finish first, ask them to develop their own explanation for the target based on the indicators that they found. Would they keep the same name or change it? Why?
4. Ask each group to report back by explaining their target and the indicators that measure it as well as providing their opinion about whether or not the indicators are a fair measurement of the target. (10 mins)
5. Have a discussion about whether the indicators would be a relevant way to measure education in their community (10 mins)

Activity #3: Access and Quality in my School

Students will work in groups to determine how access and quality differs in their school (or their community). This will help them apply the learning about the key dimensions of SDG 4 (access, quality, and equality) to their own local area.

Activity Learning Objectives

1. Apply how the educational development goals (SDG 4) to their local context
2. Understand how inequalities can appear inside of a single school
3. Identify ways of improving education in the context

Teacher preparation

1. Make sure you have any necessary permissions to do this activity
2. Explore completing this activity jointly with other teachers, especially teachers from programs at the same school (e.g., between honors and vocational teachers)

Lesson Flow

1. Review the concepts of education access and education quality (5 mins)
2. Discuss with students how access and education applies to their school using questions such as the following: (15 mins)
 - a. Who is able to attend this school? [Does it matter where you live? Does it matter how much money you have? Does it matter what age you are? Does it matter what language you speak? Does it matter if you committed a crime?]
 - b. How does quality differ in this school? [Are there different levels of teachers? Of classes? Or learning outcomes? Of extracurricular activities? Are there other things that represent “quality” for the students?]
3. Divide the students into groups and task them with visiting other sections of the school (e.g., other tracks, other teachers, other levels) to interview students in that other section to ask them how they were able to “access” that section and what they think the “quality” of the section is.
 - a. You can provide students with a model [“interview” guide in the Resources](#) below.

References

- CEPA. (n.d). Racial and Ethnic Achievement Gaps. Center for Education Policy Analysis. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/4ejEjW9>
- Pohl, J. (2023). What School Discipline Disparities Look Like in Real Time. *Greater Good Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3yY6sBK>
- World Bank. (2018). Learning to Realize Education’s Promise. World bank. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3Rx3Jpj>
- Hanford, E. (2019). Why Millions Of Kids Can't Read And What Better Teaching Can Do About It. *NPR*. Retrieved from <https://n.pr/3RzwYb5>

Advanced Approaches

More advanced approaches could include comparative analysis of countries' education systems using data from PIRSL, PISA, PISA-D, or TIMSS. Such an approach might be useful for mathematics classes. For activity #3, teachers might replace this with a longer project that includes visiting other schools in the area to collect data and compare who goes there and what the learning outcomes are for those schools.

Full Story Texts

Story #1: Isabel's journey to pursue education in Indigenous Guatemala

Original story: <https://bit.ly/4b7GOIn>. The following version of the story was simplified using Microsoft Copilot:

Isabel Aracely Tzoy Tzoc grew up in a modest family. She got married at the age of 15, which meant she couldn't finish school. But Isabel didn't give up on her dreams. She found hope at the UNESCO Malala Center in Santa María Chiquimula, Guatemala.

In Guatemala, many girls and women face obstacles to education. Poverty, long distances to schools, early marriages, and traditional gender roles limit their opportunities. In Santa María Chiquimula, only 18% of girls attend middle school, and just 1.36% continue to secondary school. Imagine the challenges faced by those living in remote mountainous areas, an hour's walk from the town.

The UNESCO Malala Center was established in 2018 to address this. It's one of two centers in Guatemala, focusing on indigenous girls and women. The programs are taught in indigenous languages, celebrating local culture while building essential life skills. Thanks to the Malala Fund, the Center provides information on flexible education options and personal development workshops.

Isabel's life changed when she joined the Center. After escaping an abusive marriage, she gained self-esteem through workshops. She now studies at the National Institute for Radiophonic Education, determined to become a doctor and secure a better future for her son. Malala's words resonate: "If you're serious about a safe and sustainable future, be serious about education." Isabel embodies that spirit.

Story #2: School was a safe place: How education helped Nhial realize a dream

Full story here: <https://bit.ly/3Vq4guo>. Tenth grade version generated using Copilot.

Nhial Deng, a 23-year-old South Sudanese refugee, has overcome immense challenges to pursue his dream of becoming a journalist. Growing up in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, Nhial knew that education was his ticket to a brighter future. But the camp, home to over 230,000 refugees from various countries, offered limited educational opportunities.

Nhial's father, a storyteller, fueled his passion for stories. Listening to BBC news anchors on his father's radio, Nhial dreamed of one day reporting on his community. In 2010, after fleeing an armed militia attack in Ethiopia, Nhial arrived in Kakuma traumatized but hopeful. School became his safe haven—a place where he found courage and solace.

Nhial's classmates, fellow refugees, shared their own traumatic experiences. Inspired by their resilience, Nhial founded the Refugee Youth Peace Ambassadors. This youth-led initiative created a safe space for healing, promoting peace, and developing solutions within the camp. By the end of 2021, they had reached over 6,000 young people through various programs.

Nhial's journey exemplifies the transformative power of education. Despite adversity, he remains committed to making a difference. His story echoes the UN's call to create inclusive, safe, and healthy schools for all. Nhial's dream of telling stories now extends beyond his community—he's become an advocate for education and peace.

Remember, education can change lives, even in the most challenging circumstances. Nhial's resilience reminds us that no exclusion is acceptable, and every girl, boy, and young person deserves quality education. Let's continue transforming education to transform the world!

Story #3: UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser for the Transforming Education Summit, Leonardo Garnier

Original source: <https://youtu.be/FONbLgaDcfk>. Transcript below generated by Youtube Transcript Generator and sentence flow improved using Copilot.

We're here to discuss the five action tracks related to education. It's challenging to divide education into distinct parts because it's inherently interconnected. However, having these five distinct groups working on specific aspects of education has proven very useful.

1. Action Track One: Defining Education: This track focuses on understanding the meaning of education, its purpose, and how it should be delivered.
2. Action Track Two: School Transformation: Here, we explore how schools can be transformed into caring, healthy, and inclusive spaces for learning. We consider the physical environment, time allocation, and overall well-being.
3. Action Track Three: Empowering Teachers: Teachers play a crucial role in education. This track emphasizes transforming teaching methods and empowering educators. We've discussed these transformations for years, yet the need persists to guide students effectively.
4. Action Track Four: Digital Tools for Learning: In response to Action Track Three, we address the tools available to both teachers and learners. How can we harness the digital revolution to enhance education?
5. Action Track Five: Financing Education: Finally, we tackle the critical issue of funding. Without adequate investment, quality education remains elusive. We'll explore how to allocate resources effectively to ensure education for all.

As an economist, I'd like to reflect on this. While it's evident that education should be financed, let's consider the incentives faced by finance ministers. Balancing budgets is essential, but equally important is allocating resources wisely. Education consistently offers the highest return on investment, especially when we start early.

However, some countries face a challenge—an equilibrium where cheap labor and natural resources drive investments. These activities don't necessarily require an educated workforce, leading to a lack of incentive for tax-funded education. It's a complex issue, but recognizing education's value is crucial for sustainable development.

Education isn't just about textbooks and classrooms; it's about shaping futures and empowering generations. When we consider low wages or the cheap cost of natural resources, certain economic activities lack the incentive to pay taxes for education. These activities operate as if they don't need any education—akin to Pink Floyd's famous line: "We don't need no education."

However, there's a crucial lesson here. East Asian countries have demonstrated that transforming education requires an overhaul of their economies. Without economic transformation, securing the necessary investments in education remains elusive. But there's more complexity to this issue.

In these countries, we often find a race to the bottom. Instead of competing through increased productivity, nations compete by devaluing their currencies. For instance, Colombia might devalue its currency to sell more coffee than Costa Rica, which then responds by devaluing its own currency. It's not the most intelligent strategy, but it happens.

Additionally, tax exemptions attract investments. In South America, Mexico, and Africa, corporations exploit resources without paying taxes locally. This creates a political economy problem: insufficient resources for education financing.

Lastly, let's talk about human rights. Education is indeed a human right, but history shows that no right has been graciously granted. Women's rights, the fight against slavery, and civil rights—any human right was fought for. So, one of the results of the summit has to be a movement for the transformation of education. If we want universal education and if we want education as a human right in the world, we have to fight for it. The students will have to fight for it. The teachers will have to fight for it. The families will have to fight for it. So we need that movement if we are going to solve the problem.

Resources

Model Interview Guide: Access and Quality in Our School

Introduction:

- Introduce yourselves and the purpose of the interview.
- Ensure the interviewee feels comfortable and encouraged to share their thoughts openly.
- You might even want to see if the interviewee would be more comfortable with one longer interview or multiple shorter interviews.

Section 1: Access

1. Can you tell us a bit about yourself and your experience at our school?
2. How did you come to attend this school? Ask for deeper clarification:
 - a. Location or proximity to work/school?
 - b. Financial situation?
 - c. Age?
 - d. Language?
 - e. Any other factors influence your access?
3. Did you face any challenges in accessing certain sections of the school? If so, what were they?

Section 2: Quality

1. How would you describe the quality of education you receive here? Ask for further clarifications:
 - a. Any variations in the quality of teaching?
 - b. Course Offerings?
 - c. Extracurricular activities?
 - d. Other aspects?
2. In your opinion, what factors contribute most to the quality of education in our school?
3. Have you noticed any disparities in the quality of education between different sections or tracks within our school?
4. Does the overall social or academic environments affect the overall quality of education?

Section 3: Suggestions for Improvement

1. Based on your experience, what changes or improvements would you suggest to enhance access and quality in our school?
2. How do you think we can ensure that all students have equal opportunities to access high-quality education?

Conclusion:

- Thank the interviewee for their time and insights.
- Offer the opportunity for any final comments or questions.

Notes for Interviewers:

- Be attentive and respectful throughout the interview.
- Encourage the interviewee to elaborate on their responses.
- Take notes to capture key points and insights, but not so much that they think you are writing down more than you are listening. Take in their comments.
- Maintain confidentiality and assure the interviewee that their responses will be used constructively to improve the school environments.
- Offer the interviewee a copy of the notes you took and final product, ie. essay, report, etc.